

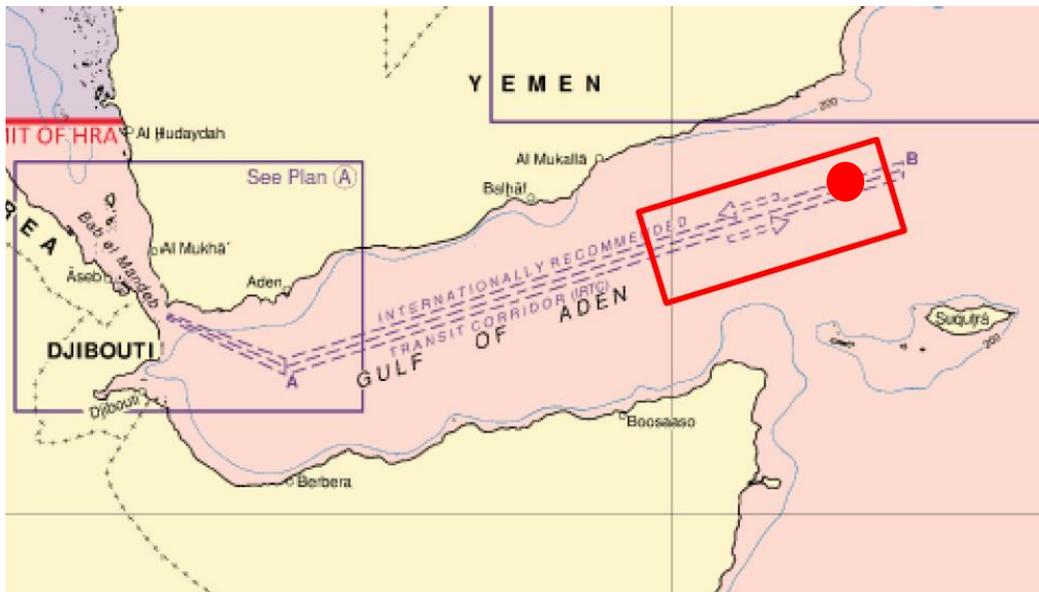


Industry Releasable Threat Bulletin (IRTB) 018 (to IRTA 1 Mar 20)

Issued: 10 Mar 20

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- 1. Foreword.** This IRTB has been written by Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) and European Union Naval Force (EU NAVFOR). It is intended to help shipping operators who are responsible for merchant and large commercial fishing vessels that pass through or operate in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (GOA).
- 2. Purpose.** The purpose of an **Industry Releasable Threat Bulletin (IRTB)** is to bring a specific incident or threat to the attention of the shipping industry in advance of the publication of our next quarterly Industry Releasable Threat Assessment (IRTA).
- 3. Incident.** Interaction between a MV, which was reported to MSCHOA as being KSA flagged, and three skiffs, two of which were possibly unmanned, in the Eastern end of the IRTC.
- 4. Date/time.** 031012Z to 031124Z MAR 20.
- 5. Location.** Eastern end of the IRTC (Gulf of Aden), 14°18.7'N, 052°28.4'E



Approximate location of incident

- 6. Incident Description.** At 1030Z MAR 20, a MV was approached at speed by three skiffs. Initially, warning shots were fired by the MV's Private Armed Security Team (PAST) but the behavior of the skiffs did not change. The PAST then fired upon the nearest of the two

apparently unmanned skiffs on the port side, but the skiff eventually collided with the hull of MV on the port side below the boat deck. The second unmanned skiff closed the MV to 10-15m but did not impact the hull. The skiff on the MV's starboard side appeared to have 2 persons on board and closed to a distance of 1.5nm. At 1100Z, all three skiffs left the area.

7. **Outcome.** At 1056Z MAR 20: MV activated SSAS and proceeded at maximum safe speed to Bab Al Mandeb. The MV remained on high alert and maintained a vigilant watch to ensure no recurrence. At 1124Z, another MV in the area observed a skiff travelling in circles before exploding.

8. **Comment.** This is the first incident in the IRTC involving a highly likely unmanned boat in an area previously assumed to be safe from terrorist or conflict related activity. CMF and EUNAVFOR will continue to investigate the incident and will issue a further report if necessary.

9. **Assessment.** It is likely that the incident was an attack by a regional terrorist organization or by a party engaged in the Yemen conflict. It is highly unlikely that the incident is piracy-related. Whilst the overall threat to merchant traffic not directly involved in the conflict in Yemen remains unchanged, this incident highlights the continued threat of conflict spilling over into the maritime domain. EU NAVFOR and CMF assess that vessels not directly linked to the conflict in Yemen are unlikely to be targeted deliberately, however there is a small risk of misidentification or collateral damage.

10. **Recommendations.** MVs are advised to remain alert and to adhere to BMP5 when transiting the area. CSOs and Masters should note that a citadel located at or below the waterline may not offer the best protection against an unmanned waterborne IED (WBIED) and should consider using an alternative Safe Muster Point. We request that during an incident, when feasible and without endangering the vessel or her crew, imagery and/or video is taken of the incident and provided in any subsequent reporting.

11. **Publication.**

- a. Produced by CMF and EU NAVFOR.
- b. Published by MSCHOA.

12. **Feedback.**

- a. Enquiries about the content of this bulletin should be directed to MSCHOA.
- b. Incidents and suspicious activity should be reported to UKMTO and/or MSCHOA.

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