

U.S. and British forces bomb Yemen amid surge in Red Sea ship attacks

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Smoke rises in the sky following U.S.-led airstrikes on Sana'a, Yemen, on February 25, 2024.

(Photo by Reuters)

Sanaa, February 25 (RHC)-- The United States and the United Kingdom have bombed more than a dozen Houthi sites in Yemen, officials said, as the Yemeni rebel group stepped up its attacks on ships in the Red Sea in protest against Israel's war on Gaza.

In a joint statement on Saturday, the US and UK said their military action targeted 18 Houthi sites across eight locations in Yemen, and included attacks on underground weapons and missile storage facilities, air defence systems, radars and a helicopter.

The operation marked the fourth time that the U.S. and UK militaries have carried out joint attacks against the Houthis since January 12. Apart from the joint action, the U.S. has also been carrying out almost daily raids to take out Houthi targets, including incoming missiles, rockets and drones targeting commercial and other Navy vessels.

The raids, however, have so far failed to halt the Houthis' attacks, which have upset global trade and raised shipping rates.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the latest wave of strikes were meant "to further disrupt and degrade the capabilities of the Iranian-backed Houthi militia." "We will continue to make clear to the Houthis that they will bear the consequences if they do not stop their illegal attacks, which harm Middle Eastern economies, cause environmental damage and disrupt the delivery of humanitarian aid to Yemen and other countries," he added.

The attacks were supported by Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands and New Zealand.

The Houthis responded with defiance. Yahya Saree, a spokesman for the group, pledged that the rebels would "confront the American-British escalation with more qualitative military operations against all hostile targets in the Red and Arab Seas".

The Houthis will "persist in upholding their religious, moral and humanitarian duties towards the Palestinian people, and their military operations will not stop unless the aggression stops and the siege on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip is lifted," he added.

According to a tally by The Associated Press news agency, the Houthis have launched at least 57 attacks on commercial and military ships in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden since November 19th. And the pace of attacks have picked up in recent days.

A spokesman for the Houthis claimed an attack on MV Torm Thor, a U.S.-flagged, owned and operated chemical and oil tanker, on Saturday, saying the group targeted the vessel using a "number of appropriate naval missiles."

The U.S. Central Command confirmed the attack, saying its forces downed an antiship ballistic missile launched from Houthi-held areas in Yemen towards the Gulf of Aden, adding that the missile was likely targeting MV Torm Thor. The tanker was not damaged and there were no injuries, it said.

British maritime security agency UKMTO also reported another attack on an unspecified ship near the port of Djibouti on Saturday night, saying there had been an "explosion in close proximity to the vessel, no damage is reported to the vessel and there are no injuries to the crew." "Vessel is proceeding to next port of call," it added in a bulletin.

The Houthis meanwhile claimed responsibility for an attack on a UK-owned cargo ship and a drone assault on a U.S. destroyer last week, and said they also targeted Israel's port and resort city of Eilat with

ballistic missiles and drones.

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