

# International Maritime Organization (IMO)

## Maritime Security Committee - Special Task Force on the Red Sea

### Crisis

#### *I. Introduction:*

One of the most significant achievements of neoliberal globalization in the 21st Century has been the creation of new supply chains facilitated by the shipping industry that emerged to meet the demands of transportation of goods, materials, and fuel across the globe. However, as the reliance on these crucial supply chains continues to increase, so do the risks associated with them, especially in important trade lanes as demonstrated by the obstruction of the Suez Canal in 2021 by the Ever Given Container Ship. In addition, the activities of Somalian pirates that flared up in the late 2000s became major examples of asymmetric naval warfare and security issues faced by many countries. Thus, maritime security through important sea lanes and trade routes have become a matter of great concern for both state and private actors alike.

The TOYO MUN 2024 Crisis, while fictional, draws its inspiration from the Suez Canal Crisis in 1956 and the current ongoing Red Sea Crisis. As one of the most important trading lanes in the world, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal, approximately 15% of all global trade passes through the Red Sea<sup>1</sup>, thus instantly giving it a significant role in geopolitics and in maintaining the global supply chain. And with the volatility of regional politics, security in the Red Sea and its adjacent areas such as the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aden have become major concerns for many countries. The incidents in the area since October of 2023<sup>2</sup> highlight

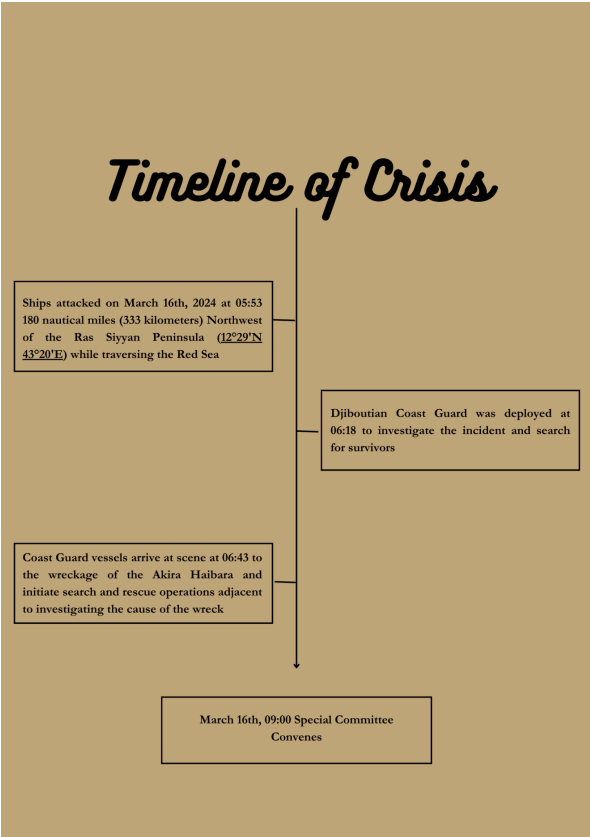
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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Brusuelas, "How Attacks on Ships in the Red Sea Are Affecting Trade," The Real Economy Blog, January 17, 2024, <https://realeconomy.rsmus.com/how-attacks-on-ships-in-the-red-sea-are-affecting-trade/>.

<sup>2</sup> Dan Sabbagh, "Three Commercial Vessels Attacked in Red Sea by Houthi Rebels, Says US," The Guardian, December 4, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/03/us-warship-in-red-sea-reportedly-attacked-by-drones-from-yemen>.

the fragile state of matter for regional governments, private entities, and companies as well as the use of piracy acts as a part of naval warfare. Thus, this Crisis Committee seeks to underline the importance of maritime security and demonstrate to delegates how state actors handle these crises as well as the significance of sea lane trade routes. In this Crisis Committee, delegates will be granted functions and abilities different from that of a regular General Assembly Committee and are expected to make the most of these abilities to explore means of resolving the Crisis.

**II. Timeline of Crisis:**



- Ships attacked on March 16th, 2024 at 05:53 180 nautical miles (333 kilometers) Northwest of the Ras Siyyan Peninsula ([12°29'N 43°20'E](#)) while traversing the Red Sea

- Djiboutian Coast Guard was deployed at 06:18 to investigate the incident and search for survivors
- Coast Guard vessels arrive at scene at 06:43 to the wreckage of the Akira Haibara and initiate search and rescue operations adjacent to investigating the cause of the wreck

### ***III. Keywords and Definition:***

- The Red Sea: The body of water is a seawater inlet of the Indian Ocean that separates the African and Asian continents. The Red Sea connects the Mediterranean Sea with the Indian Ocean through the Suez Canal, the Bab al-Mandab Strait, and the Gulf of Aden. It is one of the crucial waterways that enable global trading.
- The Suez Canal: an artificial sea-level waterway that connects the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea, and thereby the Indian Ocean. Since its opening in 1869, the Suez Canal has become a major channel for global shipping and transportation. The Canal is currently administered by the Arab Republic of Egypt through the national Suez Canal Authority.
- Bab al-Mandab Strait: Also known as the Gate of Grief or Lamentation in Arabic, is the maritime strait of the Red Sea that separates the Arabian Peninsula side of Yemen and Djibouti.
- United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS): is the international legal treaty governing the laws and conducts of states when traversing the sea as well as in administering their maritime features and exercising their rights over these features and accompanying resources. In addition to personal powers, delegates may also refer to the UNCLOS and other legal documents including, but not limited to, Rome Statute and the

Statute of the International Court of Justice as legal instruments to initiate legal or investigative actions against suspicious parties and one another or as a means of negotiating with different parties involved in the Crisis.<sup>3</sup>

- **NOTE:** Important Articles of the UNCLOS include: Articles 21 through 23, Articles 29 through 32, Articles 37 through 44, and *Articles 100 through 115 (Specifically regarding the definition of piracy and accompanying legal actions)*.
- Houthi Movement: The Houthi Movement was originally an opposition movement against then President of the Republic of Yemen Ali Abdullah Saleh, before emerging as Islamist political and military organization. The Movement operates out of Yemen and is purported to be allied with a number of other organizations throughout the Middle East and is currently a party involved in the current Red Sea Crisis.
- Piracy: Piracy or acts of piracy, as defined in Article 101 of the UNCLOS, refers to any illegal actions of violence or detention for private ends on ships, aircrafts, persons or properties on the High Seas or of a State.<sup>4</sup>
- Freedom of Navigation: The concept and maritime law of Freedom of Navigation refers to the ability of ships and aircraft to navigate an overfly over the High Seas and Exclusive Economic Zones of a strait used for international navigation. As defined in Subsection (2) of Article 38 of the UNCLOS, ships and aircrafts exercising this right must do so through transit passage or a continuous and expeditious transit through the strait.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Overview and Full Text,” United Nations, July 21, 2023, [https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/convention\\_overview\\_convention.htm](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_overview_convention.htm).

<sup>4</sup> United Nations, “United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Full Text,” United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Overview and full text, July 21, 2023, [https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos\\_e.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf), p. 60.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, “United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Full Text,” United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Overview and full text, July 21, 2023, [https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos\\_e.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf), p. 37.

- Anti-Ship Missile (AShM): missiles and projectile weapons capable of causing damages to ships, including warships and civilian maritime vessels.
- Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile (ASBM): long-range warheads and projectile weapons that can be launched through delivery means such as rockets, torpedoes, bombs, and missiles with the assistance of stationed or mobile delivery platforms.
- Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV): drones and other aerial vehicles that can be operated remotely or artificially.
- Unmanned Surface Vessels (USV): boats and small-scale vessels with operations similar to that of their aerial counterparts. These USV, however, can be upgraded or modified and used as improvised explosive devices and ordnances.

***IV. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) - Maritime Safety Committee Special Task Force on the Red Sea:***

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is a one of the many specialized agencies of the United Nations, it is the premier authority in charge of shipping and associated activities, especially with a focus on the safety and security of container ships and other maritime transports for goods and supplies.<sup>6</sup> It is governed by a council of 40 elected member states, divided into three categories that are (a) states with the largest interests in providing international shipping, (b) states with the largest interests in maritime trading, and (c) states that do not have the largest interest as in categories (a) and (b) but have special interests in maritime navigation, safety, and, governance.<sup>7</sup> The primary committee tasked with the responsibilities of facilitating, maintaining, and regulating maritime safety and security is the Maritime Safety Committee

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<sup>6</sup> International Maritime Organization, “Brief History of Imo,” International Maritime Organization, 2023, <https://www.imo.org/en/About/HistoryOfIMO/Pages/Default.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> International Maritime Organization, “Council Members,” International Maritime Organization, 2023, <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/ERO/Pages/Council-Members.aspx>.

(MSC).<sup>8</sup> The MSC deals in all manners of activities and issues concerned with the maritime safety and security of shipping including the protection of lives on the sea, the safety of vessels, and prevention against unlawful acts and piracy.<sup>9</sup> In this Crisis Committee, the role of the Maritime Safety Committee has been expanded and the responsibilities and powers of the delegates will be put under the auspices of a specialized Task Force to resolve the ongoing Crisis.

#### ***V. Background and Developments:***

Following the attack by Hamas on Israel on October 7th, 2024, a number of allied partners of Hamas came out in support of the organization, this includes the Houthi Movement in Yemen. As part of their support for Palestinian independence and to Hamas, the organization has begun conducting drone strikes and attacks on ships and vessels in the Red Sea, aiming to obstruct transportation and the flow of goods throughout the region. Independent and multilateral actions have been taken by different states with interests and companies traversing through the Red Sea; however, the attacks continue to be carried out. Since then, the United Nations Security Council has adopted resolution S/RES/2722 on January 10th, 2024, calling for the maintenance of international peace and security in the region and demanding the Houthi Movement to cease all attacks in the Red Sea.<sup>10</sup> However, on January 12th, the US and UK began carrying out airstrikes on selected Houthi targets.<sup>11</sup> Although these attacks have had varying degrees of

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<sup>8</sup> International Maritime Organization, "Maritime Safety Committee (MSC)," International Maritime Organization, 2023, <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/MeetingSummaries/Pages/MSC-Default.aspx>.

<sup>9</sup> International Maritime Organization, "Maritime Security," International Maritime Organization, 2023, <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Security/Pages/Default.aspx>.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations, "Adopting Resolution 2722 (2024) by Recorded Vote, Security Council Demands Houthis Immediately Stop Attacks on Merchant, Commercial Vessels in Red Sea | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," United Nations, January 10, 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15561.doc.htm>.; Xinhua News, "UN Security Council Adopts Resolution on Red Sea Attacks by Houthis," Xinhua, January 11, 2024, <https://english.news.cn/20240111/1e781d854ede49aa8072e218915d3d68/c.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Oren Liebermann et al., "Yemen: US and UK Carry out Strikes against Iran-Backed Houthis," CNN Politics, January 11, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/11/politics/us-strikes-houthis-yemen/index.html>.

success, the Houthi Movement has yet to cower and continues to carry out attacks in the Red Sea. Thus, the true success rates and influence of these attacks remain ambiguous at best. Delegates are encouraged to look for alternatives to resolving the crisis.

#### ***VI. Economic and Political Significance:***

As one of the world's most important sea routes and trade lanes, the Red Sea and its adjacent areas have significant impacts on the global economy in general and of the Middle East and North African region. The obstruction of the Suez Canal in 2021 by the Ever Given resulted in approximately 9.6 billion US dollars in goods being stuck per day during the blockage.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, the Suez Canal Authority reported that the revenue lost in transit fees through the Canal was almost 15 million US dollars.<sup>13</sup> The ensuing domino effects on supply chain resilience and productions would be months later in the aftermath of the blockage. Thus, the incident demonstrated the fragility of the global supply chain resilience and its economic impacts on production and distribution of goods. And a major worry and threat that was brought up by concerned private actors at the time was the potential rise in acts of piracy and related activities in not only the Red Sea but also in the West African region.<sup>14</sup> This incident has also prompted speculations of trading and network choke points such as the Suez Canal being weaponized to achieve political goals or as a form of economic coercion by state actors.<sup>15</sup> Although the current situation in the Red Sea has yet to cause such a mass disruption of supply chain and goods, these

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<sup>12</sup> Justin Harper, "Suez Blockage Is Holding up \$9.6bn of Goods a Day," BBC News, March 26, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-56533250>.

<sup>13</sup> Tarek El-Tablawy and Alex Longley, "Egypt Seizes Suez Ship 'ever given' Pending \$900 Million Compensation," Bloomberg.com, April 13, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-04-13/egypt-seizes-ever-given-pending-900m-compensation>.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Hart, "Shipping Companies Stuck near Suez Are Reportedly Alerting U.S. Navy over 'Piracy Risks,'" Forbes, March 26, 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/roberthart/2021/03/26/shipping-companies-stuck-near-suez-are-reportedly-alerting-us-navy-over-piracy-risks/?sh=7a5e0ada3e36>.

<sup>15</sup> Filip Medunic, "A Glimpse of the Future: The Ever given and the Weaponisation of Choke-Points," ECFR, May 5, 2023, <https://ecfr.eu/article/a-glimpse-of-the-future-the-ever-given-and-the-weaponisation-of-choke-points/>.

incidents do highlight both the fragility of current supply chain resilience and their vulnerability to be exploited by both state and non-state actors in achieving their agenda.

## ***VII. State of Matter:***

### **Summary:**

In the early morning hours on March 16th, 2024, an oil tanker sailing under the Greek flag along with its IMR support vessel under the Japanese flag were attacked by unknown assailants. The oil tanker Dimitris Vaggelis of the Tsakos Energy Navigation was captured while the Eneos Holdings' Akira Haibara under the Japanese Flag was sunk. Roughly 30 minutes after the incident took place, the Djiboutian Coast Guard was alerted and deployed their vessels to the scene. All other vessels traversing from the Suez Canal and to the Bab al-Mandab Strait have been put on high alert. Meanwhile, the 100-men multinational crews of the two vessels, composed of sailors from Russia, China, Japan, Turkey, Egypt, Israel, Canada, and South Korea, remain unaccounted for. All eyes turn to the region and eagerly await the response of involved parties.

## ***VIII. Involved Actors:***

The following content includes the different state actors that are directly involved in the ongoing crisis and their stances. Delegates will be provided with a separate Country Stats Sheet on March 14th, 2024, 2 days in advance before the official start date (March 16th). The Country Stats Sheet will provide delegates with two important pieces of information: Agenda and Abilities. The Agenda section, as self-explanatory, will highlight the important strategic objectives and goals that delegates should strive to achieve. The accomplishments of these goals will count towards evaluation. The Abilities section will include the different tools and auxiliary



powers that the delegates can exercise throughout the committee sessions to achieve their objectives.

**State Actors (20):** States actors retain the right to vote on both procedural and substantive matters throughout the crisis.

1. United States of America
2. Arab Republic of Egypt
3. United Kingdom
4. Canada
5. Australia
6. State of Israel
7. Japan
8. South Korea
9. People's Republic of China
10. Russian Federation
11. European Union:
  - a. France
  - b. Federal Republic of Germany
  - c. Hellenic Republic (Greece)
  - d. Italian Republic
12. India
13. Türkiye
14. Adjacent Arab League countries:
  - a. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- b. Republic of Djibouti
- c. Federal Republic of Somalia
- d. Republic of Yemen

**Non-state Actors (5):** Unlike their state counterparts, non-state actors only retain the right to vote during procedural matters such as opening the debates, vote to signify presence status.

1. Private companies and entities
  - a. Eneos Holdings
  - b. Tsakos Energy Navigation
  - c. Shell Inc.
  - d. Maersk Line
  - e. Zim Integrated Shipping Services
2. Non-governmental Organizations<sup>16</sup>
  - a. International Maritime Rescue Federation
  - b. International Association of Airport and Seaport Police
  - c. International Union of Marine Insurance
  - d. International Group of Protection and Indemnity Associations
  - e. World Shipping Council

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<sup>16</sup> International Maritime Organization, “Non-Governmental International Organizations Which Have Been Granted Consultative Status with Imo,” International Maritime Organization, 2023, <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/ERO/Pages/NGOsInConsultativeStatus.aspx>.

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