

War in the Red Sea: Houthis Shoot Down 21 US Reapers with Low-Cost Weapons

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A silent war is being fought in the Red Sea, involving drones, ballistic missiles, and electronic countermeasures. Incidents like the downing of a Houthi drone by a French FREMM frigate, armed with an Italian Oto Melara cannon, are now frequent. While Western forces showcase their technological superiority, the surprising effectiveness of the Houthis in conducting an asymmetric war is striking.

Since the attack on the *Galaxy Leader* in November 2023, Yemeni rebels have multiplied operations against commercial shipping. Two ships have sunk, a third has been seized, and four crew members have been killed. It's not just about targeting Israel-linked objectives: even ships with no ties to Tel Aviv have been targeted, indicating that the goal is to destabilize global commerce as a whole.

The United States and its allies – the United Kingdom, France, and others – have responded with an extensive air campaign against missile bases, radars, depots, and even the Ras Isa oil facility. However, the military effectiveness of these operations is limited. The rebels, although under pressure, are still capable of launching drones and missiles: they have fired 85 in just one month.



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The Pentagon's Nightmare: Reapers Shot Down by Low-Cost Techniques

The most troubling fact for the Pentagon is the Houthis' ability to shoot down US MQ-9 Reaper drones. Since October 2023 alone, a total of **21 Reaper drones have been destroyed**. These are highly advanced platforms costing $30 million each, the backbone of American surveillance and attack operations. Yet, they fall one after another under the fire of an irregular militia.

How do they succeed? With an unexpected but lethal combination: upgraded old Soviet SAM-6 missiles, Swiss and Chinese radars, mobile missile launchers, and especially Iranian Saqr systems. The entire apparatus is mounted on trucks, making it difficult to locate and destroy. Mobility is their secret weapon.

But the real breakthrough is electronic: the Houthis have developed **countermeasures capable of jamming GPS** and interfering with the Reapers' guidance channels. The result? The drones lose control, crash, and become easy targets. No million-dollar weapons are needed to hit them: just technical intelligence, adaptation, and a good underground logistics network.

Adding to this are sophisticated security tactics: weapons depots are hidden in mountain tunnels, commanders move frequently and do not use electronic communications. It's a high-tech guerrilla, combining tribal cunning with electronic warfare.

Western raids are not enough. The decentralized structure of the Houthis and their resilience make every bombing a blow to the dragon's tail, never to its head. And a ground offensive remains unlikely, given the weakness of Yemeni forces and internal rivalries within the anti-Houthi front.



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The Western Response: Deterrence and Direct Threats to Tehran

In an attempt to reestablish supremacy, the United States has strengthened its military presence in the region. Two aircraft carriers, *Truman* and *Vinson*, operate in the Red Sea with extensive air and naval support. At Diego Garcia, six B-2 bombers are deployed, equipped with GBU-57 bunker buster bombs capable of destroying deep underground targets.

The return of Donald Trump to the White House marked a change in tone. On March 15, 2025, he authorized new attacks against the Houthis, declaring: “Many of their commanders are no longer with us.” He then sent a direct message to Tehran: “Stop supporting your puppets, or you will feel real pain.”

Trump also accused the Biden administration of allowing Iran to strengthen, promising a new strategy based on “peace through strength.” Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell reiterated that

the goal is to reestablish deterrence by any means necessary.

The stakes are enormous: about 15% of global maritime traffic passes through the Red Sea. Continuous attacks have forced many companies to avoid the route, significantly impacting costs and timelines of global logistics.

The conflict now risks expanding. The effectiveness of the Houthis against American drones, symbols of Western technological superiority, has challenged an entire military paradigm. If Iran were to become directly involved, the crisis could explode far beyond Yemen's borders, turning into a geopolitical storm with global consequences.