

Operation Prosperity Guardian

Why In News

- US Defense **Secretary Lloyd Austin** announced a new maritime task force intended to protect commercial vessels traveling through the Red Sea from attacks by Houthi militants.

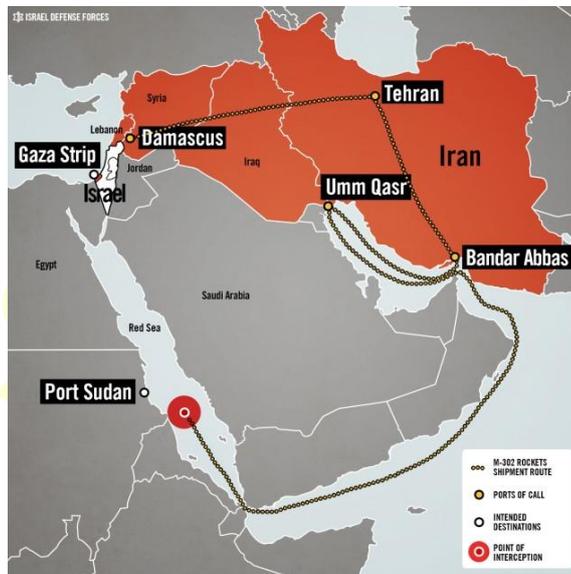


- “The recent escalation in reckless **Houthi attacks originating from Yemen** threatens the free flow of commerce, endangers innocent mariners and violates international law,” Austin said in a statement. “This is an international challenge that demands collective action.”



What It Is All About

- The **attacks in the Red Sea**, which handles about **12% of world trade** as a key waterway for goods and energy, have emerged as a fresh threat to global supply chains and an extension of the hostilities in the Gaza Strip.
- Austin said the countries involved in **the new task force** — dubbed Operation Prosperity Guardian — include the US, the UK, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, the Seychelles and Spain.
- It will be run under the umbrella of a pre-existing grouping in the region, the Combined Maritime Forces, and the leadership of its **Task Force 153, which focuses on the Red Sea.**



- The US has been consulting with **Gulf allies** about potential military action against the Houthis in response to their increasingly brazen attacks.
- The Houthis have claimed repeated attacks in the Red Sea on **commercial vessels** in the last several days, incidents that the US and allies say are intended to provoke a wider **Middle East War.**
- In an interview Houthi leader **Mohammed Al-Bukhaiti** said the group has had indirect communication with the US and other countries via Oman.



- Al-Bukhaiti said one message received by the Houthis had been an offer to seek a peaceful end the conflict in Yemen in exchange for stopping attacks in the Red Sea. He said the group rejected that idea.
- **Oil prices gained** Monday after BP Plc said it's pausing all shipments through the Red Sea and Norwegian energy company Equinor ASA said it's diverting vessels away from the region.
- **Brent crude futures rose as much as 3.9%** in London trading. The disruption also impacted the European natural gas market, with benchmark prices jumping as much as 13% in Amsterdam.
- Liquefied natural gas tankers often travel between the Middle East and Europe via the Red Sea and Suez Canal.

