



MV SULTAN 2 INTREP ICOD 041600JAN17

The Certainty Yardstick						
Qualitative Statement	ALMOST CERTAIN	HIGHLY LIKELY / VERY PROBABLE	PROBABLE / LIKELY	REALISTIC PROBABILITY	IMPROBABLE / UNLIKELY	REMOTE / HIGHLY UNLIKELY
Probability Range	>90%	75-80%	55-70%	25-50%	15-20%	<10%

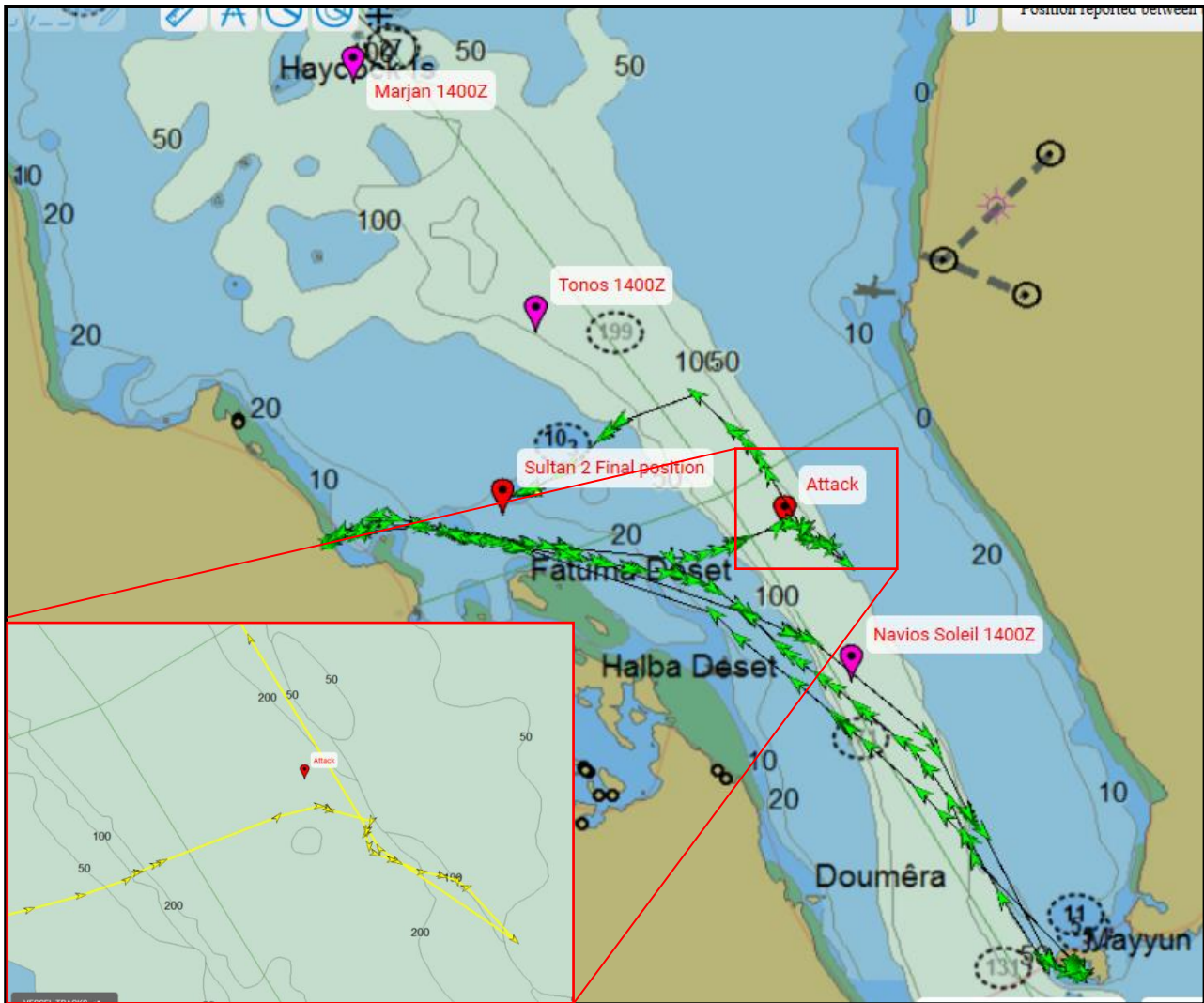
1. The MV SULTAN 2 (TOGO Flag, Landing Craft) was reportedly attacked at 03 1400Z JAN17. The attack occurred in transit corridor and was initially attributed to pirates. The vessel has conducted several NW / SE transits but had been heading EAST when it was attacked. The conflict in Yemen has seen an increase in attacks and collateral damage to MVs operating in vicinity of the coastline. The most significant confirmed recent attack was against the MV SWIFT which occurred on 01 Oct 16 where Houthis attacked a UAE logistic vessel causing severe damage. More recently on 21 Dec 16 open sources reported that an unidentified aircraft targeted the Iranian flagged MV JOUYA outside Al Hodeida port. Seven Pakistani sailors were assumed dead after the incident. Evidence remains unclear as to why this vessel would have been targeted in a kinetic strike; however it is HIGHLY LIKELY to be attributed to the ongoing conflict in Yemen.

COMMENT: The MV SWIFT was targeted by threat groups who employed an anti-ship missile in their attack. The vessel had been tracked on AIS prior to the attack and was LIKELY shadowed by a small craft prior to and after the attack. This incident demonstrated that Yemeni based threat groups possessed both the capability and intent to conduct attacks in the maritime domain and would exploit opportunities as they presented themselves.

COMMENT ENDS

ASSESSMENT: Given the nature of the SULTAN incident, and the similarities between it and the MV SWIFT it is assessed as HIGHLY LIKELY that this attack was conducted by groups with a similar profile and objectives as those involved in the YEMEN conflict. The vessel was transmitting live on AIS and would therefore be visible to anyone accessing the AIS website. Whilst speculative it is a REALISTIC PROBABILITY that the change of direction from NE/SW to E was in response to a visible threat to the SULTAN 2 by threat groups. If so then this represents a dynamic targeting planning and operational cycle, but may also be representative of a lack of other options (such as anti-ship missiles). It is also HIGHLY LIKELY that vessels, whether military or chartered, involved in operations in support of either side in the Yemen conflict will continue to be targeted by those threat groups who possess the capability and intent to do so. **ASSESSMENT ENDS**

2. The SULTAN's behaviour would have been easy to associate with the support of government forces and it had been using the same routes and ports routinely. Whilst it is natural that such an attack would cause alarm amongst the maritime community it must be remembered that the SULTAN (like the SWIFT) had a military profile; both in terms of physical appearance and behaviour and would therefore present itself as a 'legitimate' and actionable target for threat groups. Wherever possible vessels should avoid mirroring or mimicking such profiles so as to reduce the likelihood of attack, which will be LIKELY accidental or mistaken in nature. Vessels should also be mindful of conditions that interfere or impact identification, such as night or poor weather conditions.



The graphic has been derived from EMSA IMDatE which utilizes Sat-AIS and LRIT data. It shows the movement information of the SULTAN II for the last week. Prior to the 3rd JAN 2017 the vessel conducted three transits between Mayyun (PERIM) island and ASSAB, a known Arab Coalition base. On the 3rd Jan the vessel conducted a transit at 1.5-3kts which caused it to close the Yemeni coast (CPA 10nm), the vessel was subsequently attacked at approximately 1440Z in position 13.06N 043.07E.

Three merchant vessels were reported in the area of the attack and heard the VHF Distress call from the SULTAN II. The vessels were identified as MV TONOS, MV MARJAN and MV NAVIOS SOLEIL;

- a. **MV TONOS:** Vessels captain reported as follows “received distress piracy attack relay by VHF, Ch. 16 that the MV SULTAN II” in GPS psn: Lat. :13 06.3 N Long.: 043 07.1E . 17:42(Local) was under fire by grenade. The relay came from the vessel NAVIOS SOLEIL, IMO9558892 under Panama Flag”. The MV TONOS was transiting south and later came across the SULTAN II reporting “The attacked vessel was just 1.86 nm from the MV TONOS. Crew saw some smoke and helicopters above the attacked vessel”.
- b. **MV MARJAN:** Vessels captain reported regarding the attack “Ch/Off called me on the bridge at around 16:25hr LT When I came to the bridge the conversation between Korean warship and one of the vessel who was in the vicinity of SULTAN -2 was in progress. At this time we were 58nm North-West of the incident. As I understand from VHF

conversation small cargo vessel SULTAN-2 was attacked by pirates, Look(ed) like they use(d) RPG causing late flooding of SULTAN -2 E/R. At 16:30 - 16:40hrs LT vessel in the vicinity of SULTAN-2 relayed on VHF Ch16 that pirates Boarded the vessel and crew lock themselves at citadel". The Captain also reported information about the SULTAN II prior to the attack "I can say that we passed SULTAN-2 before 13:00hrs LT while she drifting at our lane. It is a small cargo vessel, with crew I believe not more than seven persons. Red or deep orange colour hull, looks fresh painting. Two containers was on board as a cargo, one – white another one – blue. One tanker ahead of us called SULTAN-2 on VHF-16 asking about her intention. They said that drifting for a while in order to adjust ETA. Person spoke with Filipino dialect."

c. **MV NAVIOS SOLEIL:** Did not as of the time of writing respond to enquiries, she was approx 2nm from the incident.