



By: TA | AP Brief

Somalia rethinks trade routes as Houthis disrupt shipping channels



Somalia's business community is seeking alternative shipping routes due to disruptions and security concerns around the Bab al-Mandab Strait and the Strait of Hormuz after **Iran-backed Houthis** captured a key port city and an island, sending thousands of Yemenis fleeing to neighboring Djibouti.

Companies have traditionally imported goods from Asia through Gulf countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. Now, some are trying a more direct approach.

"The latest tensions in the Bab al-Mandab Strait, as well as those in the Strait of Hormuz, have negatively impacted us," said Mohamed Ali Nur, director of Mogadishu Seaport. "But we have also taken measures to avoid that disruption."

Nur said his port has worked with exporters to find alternative routes.

"For the first time, we brought a ship carrying sugar directly from Sri Lanka," Nur said. "This could be a strategy we developed because of these tensions."

Yemen's internationally recognized government and Saudi Arabia have been battling the Houthis for 12 years.

The recent **escalation** has ended a **ceasefire** that had largely stopped civil war across Yemen since 2022.

Now the number of people from Yemen fleeing the fighting is soaring.

On Sunday, the International Organization for Migration said over 85,000 people have been displaced since the beginning of the month.

More than 2,000 people have reached Djibouti, which neighbors Somalia, the agency said.

Somalia is dependent on maritime trade

At Mogadishu's busy seaport, cargo ships

continue to unload food and other commodities. Somalia is particularly dependent on maritime trade for many of the goods its people use every day.

For ordinary Somali consumers, changes in shipping routes can eventually be felt in the markets, where imported food and other goods are sold.

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Capt Ali Jemdi, who is originally from Syria and ships cargoes of sugar, said uncertainty in the region is already creating concerns for ships operating along the routes.

"There is some trouble over there because of the war," he told The Associated Press, referring to the Arabian Gulf and surrounding waters. "The Bab el-Mandeb may also have some issues for the vessel."

He said the instability could make maritime transportation and trade more difficult.