

# Saudi Arabia, GCC Launches Bombing Campaign in Yemen

Egypt calls for regional force to conduct ground invasion

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*On March 26 the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), under the direction of Saudi Arabia, announced that it began to bomb Ansurallah (Houthi) positions in Yemen.*

This Shiite-led movement has been in conflict with the western-backed Yemeni government for over a decade.

The capital Sanaa was lost to the Ansurallah fighters in September 2014. Recently Taiz was taken by the Houthis and the southern port city of Aden is under siege.

Saudi Arabia has framed the current conflict as a battle against Iranian influence in Yemen. A series of aerial bombardments have killed and injured dozens of Yemeni civilians.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) announced on March 30 that 45 people were killed and 65 others wounded in air attacks on the northwest of the country. Those who suffered in the bombings were taking refuge from the ongoing conflicts which have intensified in the last six years. (AFP)

Another humanitarian organization, Doctors Without Borders, also known as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), reported that the airstrike killed at least 15 people. MSF's manager of programs in the Middle East, Pablo Marco, indicated that the corpses of the civilians and those injured in the airstrike were taken to Haradh Hospital near the al-Mazrak camp in the province of Hajja.

"It was an airstrike," Marco declared, noting that he was anticipating that "more dead are at al-Mazrak camp." The al-Mazrak camp has been providing shelter to the people dislocated by the struggle pitting the Houthi fighters against the central government since 2009.

Press TV stated on March 30 that the bombing of al-Mazrak camp represented an escalation of the Saudi operation. The monarchy has intervened in Yemen before seeking to bolster the previous government of former President Saleh who was forced to resign after a nationwide uprising in 2011.

Recent reports suggests that Yemeni military forces loyal to former leader Ali Abdullah Saleh have opposed the Saudi airstrikes and are working with the Ansurallah fighters. This alliance has given the Houthi forces a decisive advantage in their offensive in the south of the country. (New York Times, March 25)

According to Press TV

“The airstrikes began late Sunday (March 29) and continued unabated for almost nine hours, with Saudi bombers targeting positions of the Houthi fighters and the soldiers from the Republican Guard around the presidential palace. A base operated by the Republican Guard in southern Sanaa was also targeted by the strikes.”

This same articles goes on to note that

“Riyadh says it has launched the airstrikes, the first round of which was carried out on March 26, to defend the ‘legitimate government’ of Yemen’s fugitive president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, who fled to the Saudi capital on the same day. Riyadh has vowed to press ahead with the bombing until Hadi is reinstated.”

Ansarullah (Houthis) are a Zaidi Shia group operating in Yemen. The movement takes its name from Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, who launched an uprising in 2004 and was said to have been killed by Yemeni army forces that September. Led by Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, the movement made substantial gains beginning in Sept. 2014 continuing through the current period.

At present Ansurallah controls of the Yemeni capital Sanaa including the parliament. Saudi Arabia took action when the movement was on the verge of a major offensive in the southern port city of Aden.

### **United States Foreign Policy Destabilizes Yemen**

This bombing operation by the GCC represents the collapse of US foreign policy in Yemen. The Pentagon withdrew 100 special forces and diplomatic personnel in recent weeks.

U.S. State Department spokesman Jeff Rathke was quoted by the British Broadcasting Corporation as saying that “Due to the deteriorating security situation in Yemen, the U.S. government has temporarily relocated its remaining personnel out of Yemen.” (BBC, March 25)

He went on to stress that the Obama administration would continue to support Yemen’s “political transition” and monitor “terrorist threats” emerging from the Middle Eastern state, the most underdeveloped in the region. Nonetheless Rathke added that “There is no military solution to Yemen’s current crisis.”

The Pentagon’s withdrawal from the al-Anad air base took place after an alleged offensive by al-Qaeda fighters in the nearby city of al-Houta. Additional reports said that al-Qaeda was soon forced to retreat from the city as a result of the defensive operations carried out by Yemen’s military forces.

Pentagon military forces stationed at the base, including special forces, were conducting training operations for Yemeni soldiers to allegedly support their fight against al-Qaeda. The U.S. has engaged in drone attacks, targeted assassinations and other counter-insurgency efforts for several years.

The struggle in Yemen involving the Ansurallah movement is being framed by the western media as being representative of a proxy war between Saudi forces seeking to curb Iranian

and other Shiite influence in the region. Washington is closely allied with the Saudi monarchy and supplies weapons, military and intelligence support to the ruling family.

In addition to the struggle between the Ansurallah fighters against the Hadi government, a secessionist movement is also rising in the South where a socialist-oriented republic existed between 1967 and the late 1980s. Large demonstrations have been held in recent months where the flag of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen has been flown.

### **Egypt Calls for Ground Intervention at Arab League Summit**

Egyptian military leader turned civilian president, Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi, presented a proposal to the Arab League Summit in Sharm el-Sheikh on March 28 to establish a regional military force that would intervene in states facing internal conflicts.

It is quite obvious that Saudi airstrikes will not be enough to halt the advances of the Houthi fighters or to stabilize the security situation in the country based on U.S. interests. Al-Manar Television of Lebanon said in a report that thousands of Islamic Sunni rebels are being deployed by Saudi Arabia to fight against the Ansarullah movement.

The report said that

“Five Persian Gulf States — Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait — backed by the U.S. have declared war on Yemen in a joint statement issued earlier Thursday (March 26). U.S. President Barack Obama authorized the provision of logistical and intelligence support to the military operations, National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan said late Wednesday night. She added that while U.S. forces were not taking direct military action in Yemen, Washington was establishing a Joint Planning Cell with Saudi Arabia to coordinate U.S. military and intelligence support.” (March 29)

At the same time there is the ongoing war of regime-change in Syria where Islamic State fighters and other opposition groups are continuing to seek the overthrow of President Bashar al-Assad. In Iraq, the Pentagon has carried out aerial bombardments alongside those taking place in neighboring Syria, as well as the deployment of over 3,100 U.S. troops under the guise of providing training to Iraq forces.

“The challenges facing Arab national security are immense,” Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sissi said during the final session of the Arab League summit. The Egyptian leader said such a regional force was essential to “defend our [Arab] nation. . . and gives it an active role in the future of human civilization.” (Washington Post, March 30)

Objectively such a regional military force would be compelled to carry out the foreign policy aims of Washington and Wall Street since the bulk of arms and intelligence sharing is provided by the U.S. in both Egypt and the GCC states. With the U.S. military being tied up through airstrikes and ground operations in Iraq and Syria, the Obama administration is attempting to utilize pro-western regimes in the region to implement both aerial campaigns and ground invasions designed to support imperialist interests.

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