

Saudi-GCC Coalition Bombs Airport in Sanaa to Block Humanitarian Relief

Iran sends humanitarian assistance through Oman

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Fighter aircraft from the Saudi-GCC coalition continued its massive bombing operations in Yemen during late April by attacking the international airport in the capital of Sanaa.

These attacks on the airport are designed to block aid coming in from the Islamic Republic of Iran which is supporting the Ansurallah Movement (Houthis) who have taken large swaths of territory throughout the country. Saudi Arabia backed by the United States views the current struggle in Yemen as a proxy war against Tehran.

Despite the recent agreement between Washington and Tehran over Iran's nuclear energy program, the administration of President Barack Obama has not lessened its hostility towards the country. The Pentagon is providing re-fueling for the Saudi-GCC war planes as well as intelligence support which has resulted in the massive destruction carried out since the bombing began on March 26.

An article published in the Guardian newspaper noted that "Iran's state news agency IRNA said Saudi jets tried to force what it said was an aid plane back after it entered Yemeni airspace, but the pilots had ignored these 'illegal warnings.' The jets then bombed Sanaa airport as the plane was making an approach to land, forcing it to turn back, IRNA added." (April 28)

Saudi Arabia wants to re-install the fugitive President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi who they claim represents the only "legitimate" government in Yemen. The Ansurallah has formed a coalition with loyalists of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was forced to resign amid mass protests during 2011.

Civilians Suffer the Most From Air War

Although the Saudi-GCC coalition claims that its air campaign is restricted to military targets only, reports from numerous humanitarian organizations have documented attacks on civilians and residential areas. Even the strikes on the Sanaa airport was a deliberate attempt to prevent much needed medical supplies and relief from reaching those in need.

News reports broadcast over the Yemeni-based al-Masirah television indicated that an Iranian plane which turned around at the Sanaa airport was slated to transport injured victims of the Saudi-led bombings for medical treatment in Iran. One aviation official said another airport in the Red Sea city of Hodeidah had also been bombed, but appeared to be still operational.

Officials said aid flights would be diverted to Hodeidah pending the large-scale repairs

needed at Sanaa airport for it to become functional again. On May 3, Saudi-GCC war planes bombed Sanaa's al-Dulaimi military airbase as well as another location in the Arhab district targeting camps where soldiers still loyal to former President Saleh are stationed.

Further attacks were carried out in residential areas in several provinces. On April 28, Saudi-led jets attacked a home that neighbors said was owned by Abdullah Yahya Hakim, a leading Houthi official. Hakim was one of several Ansurallah officials subjected to international sanctions by the United Nations Security Council in November.

Additional reports revealed that there was intense fighting on April 28 in the oil-producing Marib province east of Sanaa, in the city of Taiz in central Yemen, and in the southern port city of Aden.

Reports Surface of Saudi-GCC Ground Forces Being Deployed

Aden was the scene of fierce clashes on May 2-3 in the central Mualla and Khor Maksar districts which are located near the commercial port. Reports have surfaced that Saudi-GCC Special Forces have landed in Aden and are fighting alongside the anti-Houthi militias known as the Southern Popular Resistance.

A spokesman for the Southern Popular Resistance, Ali al-Ahmadi, withdrew an earlier statement that 40-50 Saudi-GCC Special Forces troops had landed but instead said that "Special Forces from the southern fighters have been prepared and trained for an operation to attack Aden airport." (Reuters, May 3)

Riyadh also refuted the reports that it has landed ground troops in Aden. The Asharq Al-Awsat news agency indicated that the Saudi Defense Ministry spokesman Brig. Gen. Ahmed Asiri denied that the Saudi-GCC coalition forces had troops on the ground in Aden, instead saying this was the role assigned to the Southern Popular Resistance.

"The coalition provides all kinds of support to the Popular Resistance who have now begun to achieve positive results in the vicinity of Aden International Airport, where a large number of Houthi fighters were evicted, as well as the Mualla district (in Aden)," said Asiri.

Amid the intensification of the fighting in Aden, a split within the General People's Congress (GPC) party may have taken place between former President Saleh and other leaders. The GPC had been viewed as being in alliance with the Ansurallah fighters in the struggle against the Saudi-GCC Coalition efforts in Yemen.

Nonetheless, an Arab News report from May 4 said that "Yemen's ruling General People's Congress (GPC) party has announced it is backing the internationally recognized government of President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, directing a powerful blow to his rival and former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. In a statement issued by the GPC's second-in-command, the ruling party declared its support for President Hadi, calling on the Houthi movement to withdraw their militias from the areas they have controlled and put down their weapons in compliance with the UN Security Council Resolution 2216."

There are reports that three Saudi troops were killed on the border with Yemen. Such attacks reveal that despite the intensive bombing by Riyadh and its allies, the Ansurallah fighters are still capable of striking in the border areas. (Associated Press, May 1)

Al-Qaeda elements, financed by Saudi Arabia, are also involved in the war against the Ansurallah Movement which is allied with Iran. Although the U.S. says that its war on terrorism is targeting Al-Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), within the context of Yemen this position seems to have taken a different course with the focus principally on the Ansurallah.

There is speculation that the war against Yemen is related to the recent shake-up in the monarchy in Saudi Arabia. The bombing of Yemen has still not produced the results sought by Riyadh and its allies.

Egyptian Government Extends Mandate in Yemen

Egypt's military-dominated government of President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi announced on May 3 that it would continue its intervention in Yemen in alliance with Saudi Arabia. There has been some debate within the Egyptian state media questioning the whether this policy will end in disaster as the 1962-67 deployment under the late former President Gamal Abdel Nasser where thousands of troops lost their lives.

Reuters reported on May 3 that "The Egyptian government said it had extended by three months the deployment of 'some elements of the armed forces' abroad, enabling it to continue participating in a Saudi-led coalition that has been launching air strikes in Yemen. Egypt, which has one of the Middle East's largest military forces, is a close ally of Saudi Arabia and has said it is participating in the alliance targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels, who are allies of Iran."

Since the overthrow of the government of Hosni Mubarak over four years ago the economic situation in Egypt has worsened. Under the previous Muslim Brotherhood administration of Mohamed Morsi, which was overthrown nearly two years ago, the country received support from Qatar.

At present the Egyptian regime is largely dependent upon assistance from the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. Consequently, the stakes are high in the Washington-backed war in Yemen where the defeat of the Saudi-allied forces would be a tremendous blow to imperialist objectives in the Middle East.

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