



SAUDI ARABIA

and

THE YEMEN CONFLICT

IRANIAN SUPPORT OF HOUTHİ MILITIAS

APRIL 2017

“Iranian influence, Iranian support, infiltrating weapons that have been caught in transit by the French navy, by the Australian navy, by the U.S. Navy, shows that Iran once again is no help. So we will make progress on this. The international community will make progress on it. We'll have to overcome Iran's efforts to destabilize yet another country and create another militia in their image of Lebanese Hezbollah.”

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JIM MATTIS SPEAKING ABOUT YEMEN

APRIL 19, 2017

Iranian Aggression in Yemen

After the fall of the Yemeni government at the beginning of 2015, Iran increased political and financial support for the Houthi rebel militia. In turn, Houthi violence has been directed at Saudi targets: In July 2015, Houthi military units shelled Saudi military sites in Jizan province. Between May 2015 and January 27, 2017; the Kingdom intercepted over 40 missiles launched at Saudi territory; nine other missiles have struck. A convoy of Iranian ships headed to the Gulf of Aden in April 2016 carrying weapons to that group's militia was intercepted by US carriers responding to Saudi Arabia's request. The Kingdom has also prevented or eliminated the presence of hundreds of Iranian military personnel in Yemen sent there by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard for the training of those Houthi forces.

Documented examples of Iranian support for the Houthi militia in violation of UN Security Council Resolutions 2216 and 2231

Iran has provided military support to the Houthi militia years before the launch of Operation Decisive



Storm. The Iranian attempt to control Yemen started in the Summer of 2014, culminating in the Houthis taking over the government in Sana'a in January 2015.

- March 2016—USS Sirocco, operating as part of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, intercepted and seized the shipment of weapons hidden aboard a small, stateless vessel. The arms cache included 1,500 AK-47s, 200 RPG launchers and 21 .50-caliber machine guns.¹
- March 2016—The French frigate FS Provence stopped a vessel off the Yemeni island of Socotra, seizing AK-47s, sniper rifles and anti-tank missiles.²
- February 2016—Australian frigate HMAS Darwin of the Royal Australian Navy seized a cache of arms from a vessel 313 km off the coast of Oman, including machine guns, rocket-propelled grenade launchers, and mortars.³
- September 2015—Coalition naval forces seize Iranian-registered fishing boat southeast of Salalah, carrying 18 Konkurs anti-armor missiles and 54 BGM-17 anti-tank missiles.⁴
- December 2014— Senior Iranian official told Reuters that the Quds Force, the external arm of the Revolutionary Guard, had a "few hundred" military personnel in Yemen who train Houthi fighters and that 100 Houthis had traveled to Iran for training at a Revolutionary Guards base near the city of Qom.⁵
- October 2014— Khamenei advisor Ali Akbar Velayati told the delegation of Yemeni clerics and cultural figures visiting Tehran: "Just as Hizbullah in Lebanon fights and defeats the terrorists and its enemies, Ansar Allah (Houthis) must also continue its struggle against Yemen's terrorists... The Islamic Republic of Iran supports Ansar Allah's wise struggle in Yemen and sees it as part of the success of the Islamic Awakening movement... Ansar Allah and the Zaidis will undoubtedly win, and this victory is near."⁶

1 America's Navy. "Third Illicit Arms Shipment in Recent Weeks Seized in Arabian Sea" Apr 04, 2016. http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=93990

2 Naval Today. "French Warship Seizes Somalia-Bound Weapons" Mar 29, 2016. <http://navaltoday.com/2016/03/29/french-warship-seizes-somalia-bound-weapons/>

3 Navy Daily. "HMAS Darwin Seizes Large Weapons Cache" Mar 07, 2016. <http://news.navy.gov.au/en/Mar2016/Operations/2744/HMAS-Darwin-seizes-large-weapons-cache.htm#.WP5sJE05DxM>

4 U.S. News. "Yemeni-Bound Ship Stopped" Sep 30, 2015. <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2015/09/30/saudi-led-coalition-says-it-seized-iran-arms-bound-for-yemen>

5 Reuters. "Iranian support seen crucial for Yemen's Houthis", Dec 15, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-houthis-iran-insight-idUSKBN0JT17A20141215>

6 ISNA (Iran). October 18, 2014.



- September 2014— After the Houthi occupation of the capital Sana'a, the Yemeni government freed at least three suspected Iranian Revolutionary Guard members and two suspected members of Lebanon's Hezbollah group.⁷
- September 2014—Ali Reza Zakani, Iranian MP who is close to the Iranian supreme guide Ali Khamenei, said: "Three Arab capitals have today ended up in the hands of Iran and belong to the Islamic Iranian revolution". He noted that Sana'a has now become the fourth Arab capital that is on its way to joining the Iranian revolution. The Iranian Rasa News Agency quoted Zakani saying to the Iranian parliament that Iran is passing through the phase of "grand jihad." He added "The Yemeni revolution will not be confined to Yemen alone. It will extend, following its success, into Saudi territories. The Yemeni-Saudi vast borders will help accelerate its reach into the depths of Saudi land."⁸
- March 2013—Yemeni naval forces seize Jihan 2 in Bab al Mandab strait while unloading weapons onto a Yemeni fishing boat.⁹
- January 2013—Yemeni naval forces seize Jihan 1, carrying surface-to-air missiles and 16,716 blocks of C4 explosive.¹⁰

U.S. Documentation of Iranian Aggression

On March 24, 2017, the U.S. State Department issued a press release on non-proliferation that reads in part: "As part of the March 21st sanctions, a group of eleven entities and individuals were sanctioned for transfers of sensitive items to Iran's ballistic missile program.[...] As an example, we have seen indications Iran is providing missile support to the Houthis in Yemen. This destabilizing activity only serves to escalate regional conflicts further and poses a significant threat to regional security. We will

7 Reuters. "Yemen frees members of Iran Revolutionary Guards-sources" Sep 25, 2014. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-yemen-iran-idUKKCN0HK1K320140925>

8 Middle East Monitor, "Sana'a is the fourth Arab capital to join the Iranian revolution," September 27, 2014

9 The New York Times. "Seized Chinese Weapons Raise Concerns on Iran" Mar 02, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/03/world/middleeast/seized-arms-off-yemen-raise-alarm-over-iran.html>

10 The New York Times. "Yemen Seizes Sailboat Filled With Weapons, and U.S. Points to Iran" Jan 28, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/29/world/middleeast/29military.html>



continue to take steps to address Iran's missile development and production and sanction entities and individuals involved in supporting these programs under U.S. law. The imposition of sanctions against these eleven foreign entities is a continuation of our commitment to hold Iran accountable for its actions".¹¹ The Congressional Research Service, in a memo to U.S. Senators on July 31, 2015 entitled Iranian Support for Groups in Yemen, Syria and Iraq, cited a Wall Street Journal article in which it was noted: "According to the Wall Street Journal, a Houthi official said the group received assistance from Iran in the form of logistics, intelligence, and cash, and that over the past couple of years the group had received "tens of millions of dollars" in cash from Tehran."¹²

International Documentation of Iranian Aggression

A 105-page declassified report to the United Nations Security Council published in August 2016¹³ documented violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law committed by the Houthi-Saleh forces, noting assistance from Iran. In a September 14, 2016 letter to the Council president, Saudi Arabia asserted that Iran had supplied weapons and ammunition to the Houthi rebels in Yemen. While Saudi Arabia reported the transfer as a violation of Resolution 2216, which imposed an arms embargo on the Houthis and forces loyal to former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh, it would also contravene Resolution 2231. In a September 27th letter, Iran firmly rejected "the pure fabrications and unsubstantiated allegations" made by Saudi Arabia. Around the same time, in a November 21st letter to the Secretary-General and Council president, Israel alleged that Iran's Quds Force was using commercial flights from Iran to Lebanon to transfer arms and related material to the Shia militant group Hezbollah and called on the Council to condemn both Iran and Hezbollah for the violation of its resolutions.¹⁴

11 United States Department of State, "Iran, North Korea and Syria Non-Proliferation Act Sanctions"; 24 March 2017; at: <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/03/269084.htm>

12 See the citation in this memo by the Congressional Research Service at: <http://freebeacon.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/20150731-CRS-Memo-to-Senator-Kirk-Iran-Financial-Support-to-Terrorists-and-Militants-1.pdf>

13 Please see the following list of reports on the conflict in Yemen and Houthi violations at the UN Security Council publications site at: <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/search.php?search=Houthi+&Template=globalsearch&IncludeBlogs=18%2C19%2C20%2C21%2C23&limit=20&x=0&y=0>

14 United Nations Security Council, Monthly Report: Iran; January 2017. At: http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2017-01/iran_14.php



“In Yemen, Iran continues to support the Houthis’ attempted overthrow of the government by providing military equipment, funding, and training, thus threatening Saudi Arabia’s southern border. Interdictions by Emirati forces in Yemen and coalition forces in the Arabian Sea have revealed a complex Iranian network to arm and equip the Houthis.”

SECRETARY OF STATE REX TILLERSON

APRIL 19, 2017

“Everywhere you look, if there’s trouble in the region, you find Iran.”

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JAMES MATTIS

APRIL 19, 2017

“[I]n the past six months, Houthi forces trained and armed by Iran have attacked Emirati and Saudi vessels and threatened U.S. and allied vessels transiting the Red Sea, and they continue to threaten U.S. friends and allies in the region.”

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL ANNOUNCING SANCTIONS ON IRAN

FEBRUARY 3, 2017

“We are aware that Iran provides lethal support to the Houthis.”

FORMER U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN JOHN KIRBY

OCTOBER 24, 2016

“We are well aware of the support that Iran has been giving to Yemen, and Iran needs to recognize that the United States is not going to stand by while the region is destabilized, or while people engage in overt warfare across lines – international boundaries of other countries.”

FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN KERRY

APRIL 8, 2015