

# After Yemeni regime's collapse, calls mount for US military escalation across Middle East and Africa

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One day after Yemeni President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi announced his resignation amidst the occupation of his government's central facilities and his private residence by Houthi militants, a chorus of voices from the US political establishment and punditry are calling for expanded US and NATO military operations across the Middle East and Africa.

The collapse of the Yemeni regime, which was previously sustained by hundreds of millions in military aid flowing from Washington, represents another major debacle for US imperialism in the Middle East. In the face of popular hatred, the US relied on Hadi and his predecessor, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to rubber-stamp authorization for drone missile strikes and cover up the civilian death toll.

Yemen was previously upheld as a successful model of the Obama administration's "intelligence-driven, dynamic targeting," strategy, in which a relatively "lite" US military presence collaborates with local forces to coordinate air strikes and special forces raids.

Now these methods have succeeded only in completing the implosion of Yemeni society and the creation of a political situation in which the major contending forces consist of a Shia militia aligned with Iran and the local affiliate of Al Qaeda, with the country's partition a real possibility.

Remarks late this week from Obama administration officials, legislators, and a small army of former military officials and security experts made clear that together with the Charlie Hebdo attacks - now commonly attributed to the Yemen based Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula - the Houthi takeover is to serve as the pretext for new wars and interventions directed against Iran and its regional allies and proxies in Iraq, Lebanon and Syria, as well as against extremist groups including Islamic State

in Iraq and Syria, Yemen's Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and Nigeria's Boko Haram.

The Houthis, a movement based in Yemen's Zaidi Shia minority, seized power in part by successfully exploited hostility to the US drone war and military presence in the country.

In the wake of Hadi's ouster, the US military ordered emergency deployments near Yemen in preparation for a range of contingencies. "We are continuing to closely monitor the situation in Yemen," a Pentagon spokesman said Wednesday.

"The unrest in Yemen is a concern overall. The [USS] Iwo Jima and [USS] Fort McHenry are on station, and between those two warships, there's enough combat power to respond to whatever contingency may come up," the US military spokesman said.

During remarks at the World Economic Forum in Davos Friday, US Secretary of State John Kerry and French President Francois Hollande issued similar calls for a comprehensive expansion of NATO military and intelligence operations throughout the Middle East and Africa.

Kerry cited numerous countries as prime targets for new Western military incursions. "We must eliminate Daesh [ISIS], strengthen Somalia, intensify our efforts in Nigeria, and strike at the tentacles of al-Qaeda in Yemen, the Maghreb, and wherever else they appear," Kerry said.

Kerry also pointed to Central African Republic, Libya, and Afghanistan as countries where new "long term" military interventions had become necessary. The NATO powers must focus their operations on "zones of greatest vulnerability," including "the Horn of Africa, segments of the Swahili coast, the area around Lake Chad, and certain parts of the greater and south central Asian region," Kerry said.

In high-flown rhetoric evoking an epochal struggle, Kerry compared the fight against Islamic extremist groups to the US military campaign against Nazi Germany, saying that Islamic State, Boko Haram, and similar groups pose an existential threat to the US-dominated political order established after World War II.

“This is a threat to the entire structure that we have worked so hard to put in place since the end of World War II. It’s a threat to nation-states. It is a threat to rule of law,” Kerry said.

The representative of US imperialism attributes to a handful of Islamist militants the crisis of the capitalist nation-state system that has arisen out of the contradictions of the capitalist system itself, giving rise to a new era of militarist aggression and drive toward world war.

Kerry also announced Friday that he will travel to Nigeria to confer with officials there about further US involvement in the Nigerian government’s war with the Islamist militant group Boko Haram.

Also speaking in Davos, French President Hollande vowed that France will steadily escalate its already substantial military presence in Africa. “In Africa, France is on the ground and it will continue to be so more than ever before. It will be present to bring help to those countries who are having to deal with the scourge of terrorism,” Hollande said.

“I’m thinking of the Sahel, in particular, but also the situation in Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, and Chad, who are under attack from Boko Haram,” he said.

Kerry’s and Hollande’s remarks were accompanied by an appearance by Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who demanded that the Western military alliance supply more aid to his government’s fight against ISIS.

Numerous other voices from the US political and military elite argued that the collapse of Yemen’s officially recognized government posed the necessity for aggressive new US military action.

“AQAP is fresh off its attack on Paris and has grown since 2009 into the most dangerous al-Qaeda affiliate in the world. It has attacked Detroit and Chicago. It is dedicated to overthrowing the House of Saud,” former CIA and Pentagon official Bruce Riedel wrote in *Al Monitor*.

US Representative Ed Royce, the Republican chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said that the Houthi coup in Yemen represents “a big step forward for Al Qaeda” and a “win for Iran.” He repeated the mantra that AQAP constitutes the “most toxic, most lethal Al

Qaeda affiliate.”

Royce praised the deposed Yemeni president for his collaboration in the US drone war. “Hadi was particularly helpful to the US in assisting us in targeting drone strikes against Al Qaeda” and was a “very close ally and partner,” Royce said.

The “global jihadist threat” is “greater than at any time in our history,” senior Defense Department official Michael Vickers said Wednesday in remarks to the Atlantic Council.

“Attacks on the West in particular are very high on their list and increasing in priority,” said Vickers, the Pentagon’s undersecretary for intelligence.

“Few on the ground see anything but an Islamic State on the move,” the *Wall Street Journal* warned.

US counterterrorism policy in Yemen is “in tatters,” the *Washington Post* reported. “If order and a friendly regime are not restored soon in Yemen, the White House may be confronted with a difficult choice: keep flying the drones even if they violate Yemeni sovereignty, or halt the operations and ease up on al-Qaeda,” the *Post* argued.

Former US Ambassador to Yemen Stephen Seche told the *Post* that the Houthi coup marked a turning point in US policy.

“I don’t think we’ll just want to continue running operations like we have done the last several years,” Seche said, suggesting that a considerably more aggressive intervention is on the agenda.

Meanwhile, an Oxfam report published Friday found that Yemen faces a “humanitarian disaster” that places “millions of lives at risk.” Some 50 percent of Yemenis require some form of humanitarian assistance, with nearly a million children in the country subsisting on the verge of starvation, Oxfam found. Saudi Arabia, which provided much of the funding for Yemen’s government, cut off most of its aid after the Houthis seized control of the capital in September.



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