

Dozens killed in airstrike on dairy factory in Yemen

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The Saudi-led war in Yemen continued Wednesday, with the bombing of a dairy and juicing factory near the western port city of Hodeida killing at least 37 workers and injuring 80 others. The factory was hit by two bombs dropped by warplanes from the Saudi-led coalition, according to a Yemeni army newspaper.

According to statistics reported by UNICEF and the Field Medical Organization, the Saudi-led air raids as well as fighting between the Houthis, members of a minority Zaydi Shiite group, and military units loyal to President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi have already killed at least 102 Yemeni civilians, including at least 62 children.

Since Thursday, air force units from Kuwait, Sudan, Jordan, Morocco, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Egypt have taken part in the assault, in addition to Saudi Arabia.

US officials have confirmed that American forces are playing a direct support role in the operations by providing “logistical and intelligence” aid to the Saudi coalition of Persian Gulf Sunni monarchies.

While care has been taken to ensure that there is “no overt sign of US partnership,” as the *Washington Post* has noted, the Saudis and their allies are armed to the teeth with new weaponry and are deploying battle tanks, attack helicopters, and state of the art warplanes for a massive onslaught against targets throughout the country.

Coalition planes have launched repeated strikes in support of Hadi loyalists as they engaged in urban gun battles with Houthi riflemen in areas north of Aden. Arab League planes also launched strikes at targets in the central highlands, along the coast, and in the northern and eastern provinces. Strikes are also reportedly planned against the “security belt” of Houthi entrenchments around the outskirts of Sanaa, the capital

city.

The Saudi air campaign has failed to halt the southward drive of the insurgents, and Houthi infantry and armor moved into central Aden Wednesday. Houthi forces, which are loosely tied to Iran, seized government fortifications that look down upon the strategic Bab el Mandeb strait Tuesday night.

The occupation by the Houthi forces of a strategically critical portion of the Arabian peninsula, sitting alongside the main US ally in the region and overlooking the narrow waters of the strait where huge volumes of oil, grain, and other commodities pass daily, makes clear the regional and global ramifications of the ongoing crisis.

There have been numerous reports that Saudi Arabia and Egypt would spearhead a ground invasion once military planners have determined that airstrikes on military bases, weapons stockpiles and air defenses have made the Houthis sufficiently vulnerable. Yemeni Foreign Minister Riyadh Yassin, loyal to Hadi, repeated calls for an invasion on the grounds that “at some stage air strikes will be ineffective.”

Plans for the impending invasion reportedly outlined by Saudi military planners would aim to reconquer southern areas of the country from the Shiite militants, and use these areas as staging grounds for the creation of a new proxy army inside Yemen.

US officials announced Tuesday that they would approve arms and equipment shipments to the Egyptian military government of President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, whose regime has overseen mass killings, detention and torture of tens of thousands since coming to power in 2013. With the shipment of arms and weaponry, the US is giving its assent to preparations for a ground invasion of Yemen, which would draw in troops from throughout the region.

The threat of a massive new ground war in the Arabian peninsula, with the potential to kill tens or hundreds of thousands of Yemenis, comes amid broader preparations for escalating US military intervention in Syria and growing clamor within sections of the US ruling elite for war against Iran.

The Pentagon is deploying the Army's 5th Special Forces Group to Jordan to establish a "multinational special operations task force," which will train fighters for the civil war the US has fomented against Syrian President Bashar Al Assad since 2011. US military leaders are increasingly demanding that the White House authorize the deployment of "large formations" of Special Operations troops to CIA and Pentagon-run training camps in Jordan and Iraq which serve as staging areas for the war against Assad, according to a high ranking Special Forces officer who spoke to *Foreign Affairs*.

The crisis in Yemen is an acute manifestation of the intensifying breakdown of the US-dominated political order in the Middle East. In spite of intense efforts by the US to prop up the dictatorship of Ali Abdullah Saleh, destabilized by Arab Spring demonstrators in 2011, the longtime leader was pushed from power and eventually replaced by then Vice President Hadi.

While Hadi garners backing from Saudi Arabia and the United States, he lacks any broad support amongst the population within Yemen. Hadi has been forced out of the country less than three years after winning a one-man election, staged as the culmination of a supposedly democratic transition process orchestrated by American imperialism and the Saudi monarchy. Hadi fled Sanaa for his stronghold of Aden earlier in February and finally last week he fled Yemen for Saudi Arabia after his compound came under attack by planes commanded by forces loyal to Saleh, who has backed the Houthis.

Despite extensive financial and military support for the Yemeni security apparatus and more than a decade of secret US drone strikes inside the country against Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and other anti-government militias, the Iranian-supported Houthi militants have been able to rapidly overrun much of the country's western provinces.

In response to the collapse of their puppet government they patched together in 2012, the US and the savage monarchies and dictatorships which serve as its regional gendarmes are now preparing an escalation

of the slaughter in Yemen. The response of US imperialism and its proxies to growing disorder is to launch yet another major sub-regional war that has the potential to set off a military conflagration engulfing societies across North Africa and Central Asia.



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