

Thousands of Saudi-led coalition troops invade Yemen

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10 September 2015

Thousands of troops from a Saudi-led coalition are being deployed in Yemen, a development which portends a major escalation of the bloody US-backed assault on the impoverished Arab country. Now in its sixth month, the war has resulted in the deaths of more than 2,100 civilians.

In addition to Saudi Arabia, the coalition waging war in Yemen is composed of the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Senegal and Sudan.

The assault being carried out by this collection of US-backed military dictatorships and Sunni Persian Gulf monarchies is aimed at defeating the Shiite Houthi militias and forces loyal to former dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh, which are backing them.

The Houthis, with Saleh's support, seized control of most of the country's western provinces in March forcing President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi to flee to Saudi Arabia where he established a government in exile.

Al Jazeera reported on Tuesday that the number of coalition troops in Yemen has grown to 10,000 since the Saudi military units made their first reported incursion into the country on August 27. A further 10,000 Yemeni soldiers, loyal to Hadi and trained in Saudi Arabia, are also said to have been deployed to fight the Houthis and their allies.

The number of coalition troops occupying the country grows by the day. Qatar and Egypt both deployed troops to Yemen for the first time this week following a Houthi missile attack on a coalition military camp in Marib province that killed at least 60 coalition soldiers, including 45 from the United Arab Emirates, 10 from Saudi Arabia and five from Bahrain.

Qatar is reportedly contributing 1,000 troops to the invasion and 800 Egyptian soldiers were reported to have arrived in Yemen on Tuesday. The Saudi-backed *Al Arabiya* reported on Monday that the Sudanese

government was preparing to contribute 6,000 troops to the fighting.

Saudi and UAE military forces spearhead the offensive which retook the strategic southern port city of Aden and have been building up forces in Marib province in advance of a major offensive against entrenched Houthi forces in the capital of Sanaa, which they took control of last year, and their northern stronghold, Saada.

Marib, the capital of Marib province, is strategically located east of both Houthi controlled cities and is a key center for oil and energy production. If the Saudi coalition forces seize control of the city it will open the way for assaults on Sanaa and Saada.

The developing ground offensive comes in the wake of a White House meeting last weekend between Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz and US President Barack Obama.

A one billion dollar deal to replenish Saudi Arabia's missile stockpile, announced ahead of the meeting between the two heads of state, will facilitate the continuation of punishing airstrikes throughout Yemen. Coalition jet fighters have repeatedly bombarded residential neighborhoods, schools, hospitals, markets, factories and ports.

At least 20 Indian citizens were reported killed on Tuesday in airstrikes launched by the Saudi-led coalition on boats that were allegedly smuggling badly needed fuel into Yemen.

The coalition has already received significant amounts of support from the United States. Military intelligence and logistical support from the Pentagon have facilitated the nearly continuous aerial assault.

Many of the coalition airstrikes have been carried out by US supplied jet fighters and US supplied bombs, guided by US intelligence. Several dozen American military advisers are working in central military command centers in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has provided lists of airstrike targets which are vetted by American military

and intelligence officials.

American naval vessels have assisted in enforcing a blockade which has contributed to severe shortages of food and medical supplies throughout the country.

The UN and other humanitarian aid organizations have released repeated dire warnings about the deteriorating situation for the vast majority of Yemen's population, which was already the poorest in the Middle East prior to the Saudi-led military operations.

Eighty percent of the country's population, more than 21 million people, lacks access to clean water and is in need of some form of humanitarian assistance. By the end of the year it is expect that half a million children will suffer from acute malnutrition due to food shortages.

Hospitals throughout the country have run out of critical medical supplies and fuel shortages have forced medical facilities to shut their doors. More than 15 million civilians now lack access to basic health care.

In addition to its impact on Yemen's population, the air assault has caused severe damage to historic cultural sites throughout the country. The imperialist apologists who demand military intervention to halt the destruction of cultural heritage sites in Syria by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria have been decidedly silent on the crimes being carried out by the US-backed coalition in Yemen.

The Old City of Sanaa, which is on the UNESCO World Heritage list, has been subjected to aerial bombardments. The Dhamar Regional Museum was destroyed by a Saudi air strike in May, obliterating 12,500 artifacts, decades of work by archeologists and thousands of years of human culture.

Other historic sites that have been targeted for destruction by coalition jet fighters include the 1,200 year old Imam al-Hadi mosque in Saada; the al-Qahira Castle overlooking the city of Taiz which dates from the 10th century BC; and the Great Dam of Marib, constructed some 2,800 years ago, has been the target of repeated air strikes.



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