Iran claims Saudis “deliberately” struck embassy in Yemen

Thomas Gaist
8 January 2016

Saudi forces targeted an Iranian embassy in Yemen during strikes against the capital of Sanaa on Thursday, according to Iranian officials.

The Saudi government has denied targeting the embassy. Saudi planes have carried out heavy bombardments of the capital city on Wednesday and Thursday, according to Saudi officials.

According to some reports, the airstrike hit not the embassy, but rather a residential property across the street owned by former Yemeni dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh.

According to witnesses cited by Reuters, the Iranian embassy did not appear damaged as of Thursday evening. An Associated Press reporter has also stated that there is no visible damage to the Iranian facility.

In retaliation for the alleged embassy strike, the Iranian government announced that it would freeze all commercial exchanges with Saudi Arabia. The trade ban was passed after deliberations by an executive council led by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. The Iranian cabinet simultaneously renewed an existing ban on travel to the Kingdom by Iranians seeking to complete the Islamic pilgrimage or Hajj.

The Iranian accusations come amid a standoff between the two governments that has reached new intensity in the wake of the execution of Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr by the Saudi regime last week, in a move that had all the earmarks of a carefully planned provocation.

Within days of the Saudi execution and subsequent announcement that the Kingdom would break off ties with Tehran, a handful of states had followed the Saudis in formally cutting off diplomatic relations with Iran. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia have all broken off diplomatic ties with Iran this week. The United Arab Emirates downgraded its relations with Tehran, while Kuwait and Qatar recalled their envoys.

Iranian leaders have insisted that the Saudi strikes against Yemen impacted the embassy, and warned that Saudi provocations will only deepen the internal crisis of the monarchy.

“Saudi Arabia is responsible for the damage to the embassy building and the injury to some of its staff,” Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hossein Jaber Ansari told Iranian media.

“The policies of the Saudi regime will have a domino effect and they will be buried under the avalanche they have created,” Iranian General Hossein Salami said Thursday. The Iranian general went on to suggest that the Saudi leadership would meet the same fate as Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, who was executed in 2006 after being forced from power by the 2003 US invasion.

If confirmed, the Saudi strikes would represent an explosive provocation against Iran, ordered under conditions in which the two regional power centers are the closest they have come to direct war in decades. The growing desperation of the Saudi royal family, which faces a domestic crisis and has proven incapable of achieving its war aims in either Syria or Yemen, is fueling increasingly risky maneuvers.

The Saudi regime has already made clear its outrage at the moves by the Obama administration and other Western governments toward a compromise with Iran based on a nuclear deal which US Secretary of State John Kerry said on Thursday could be just “days away” from implementation.

The Saudi elite is determined to maintain its grip over the oil wealth of the Arabian Peninsula through permanent war throughout the region and police repression at home. In league with Washington, the Saudi regime has launched predatory interventions in

© World Socialist Web Site

Syria and Yemen, relying on an assortment of militias and mercenary groups to do most of the ground fighting.

These Saudi operations are aimed at countering the rising influence of Tehran in the region. It has sought in Syria to wage a proxy war for regime change against the government of President Bashar al-Assad, using Islamist militias as its proxy forces.

In Yemen, it has responded to the insurgency of the Houthis, a political movement that has its base among a Shia population, by launching a full-scale war of its own. The Saudi intervention, aimed at preventing the consolidation of a Yemeni regime that would have friendly ties with Tehran, has already left thousands of civilians dead, produced widespread famine, and accelerated the descent of the entire region towards all-out war.

The Saudi-Iranian tensions have reverberated across Africa, where there was a massacre of more than one thousand members of the Shia minority by Nigerian government troops in December. Somalia announced its decision to cut ties with Tehran Thursday in an official statement, denouncing "Iran's continuous interference in Somalia's internal affairs." Iranian diplomatic staff were given three days to leave Somalia. Sudan, once closely aligned with Iran, also expelled Iranian diplomats from its territory this week.

German Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel called for Berlin to review its arms sales to the Saudi military, valued at nearly 200 million euros, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Gabriel criticized the Saudi execution of Nimr, saying that the move proved that previous refusals to sell certain weapons systems to the Kingdom were necessary.

"It turns out we were right not to deliver battle tanks or G36 rifles to Saudi Arabia," the leading German official said.

With European companies eager to take advantage of the lifting of sanctions to pursue commercial deals with Iran, the deepening of the Saudi-Iranian conflict will increasingly place sections of the European bourgeoisie on opposite sides of the regional power struggle from the "hardline" factions of the US elite, which tend to oppose any compromise with Iran and are closely tied to the Saudi elite.

Despite the tactical compromise with Tehran favored by the Obama administration, some elements within the American state remain determined to seize any opportunity to move the US toward war against Iran. Reports at the end of December that Iranian forces had tested missiles in close proximity to American naval vessels were met with an outpouring of demands for an escalation against Iran from the US political and media establishments. Those in Riyadh who are seeking to throw a wrench into Iran's aspirations for cozier relations with the West clearly have the support of significant forces in Washington.

With close support from ruling cliques in Washington, the Saudi royals are stoking conflicts that have the potential to rapidly engulf the entire Middle East and draw in all of the major powers.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site