

Yemen: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

On January 31, 2020, the U.S. announced that it launched a drone strike against Qasim al-Raymi—the leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), al-Qaeda’s affiliate in Yemen. The exact date of the drone strike has not yet been released, but local media reported that a U.S. drone strike occurred on January 25, 2020, in Yemen’s Marib Province. Officials have expressed confidence that the AQAP leader was killed, but they are still waiting on confirmation of his death before making a public announcement. Raymi’s death would be a significant blow to the al-Qaeda network, and particularly the Yemen branch, which continues to threaten attacks against the United States and Europe. The drone strike against Raymi was not carried out by the U.S. military, and instead was orchestrated by the C.I.A., following months of tracking Raymi through aerial surveillance and other intelligence. The U.S. State Department previously offered a \$10 million reward for information leading to Raymi’s capture. Chief among his acts of violence, Raymi is suspected to have played a role in the 2008 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa, as well as the 2009 plot by the Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab to take down a Detroit-bound flight with explosives. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [1], [Wall Street Journal](#) [2])

On January 18, 2020, ballistic missiles struck a mosque at the al-Estiqbal military camp in Marib, killing at least 116 people in what was reportedly one of the deadliest attacks in the civil war. There were no immediate claims of responsibility but Yemen’s internationally recognized government blamed Houthi rebels. The United States blamed Iran, which denied involvement. On January 20, government forces fought Houthi rebels east of Marib, killing senior Houthi commander Jaber Al Muwaed. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [3], [Associated Press](#) [4])

By the end of the October 2019, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project reported that the death toll in Yemen’s war had reached 100,000 since its start in 2015. ACLED reported that 12,000 of those deaths were civilians in directly targeted attacks. At least 20,000 people were killed in 2019 alone, according to ACLED. In September 2019, Houthi rebels offered to end cross-border attacks on Saudi Arabia if the Saudi-led coalition ended airstrikes in Yemen. Saudi Arabia began informal talks that month with Houthi rebels on ending the war in Yemen. Saudi Arabia renewed its air campaign against the Houthis in January 2020 after the Marib attack. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [5], [Guardian](#) [6], [Associated Press](#) [7], [Associated Press](#) [4])

Overview

Yemen remains locked in a sectarian civil war between Iran-backed Houthi rebels and the Yemeni government. The Houthis began taking control of parts of the country in mid-2014. In 2015, the threat to the Yemeni government prompted the intervention of a Saudi-led coalition of Arab states, including five Gulf Arab states, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, and Sudan. The ongoing conflict has reportedly resulted in the deaths of more than 10,000 Yemeni civilians and over 90,000 casualties overall. More than 3 million others have been displaced since 2014, according to the United Nations. As of March 8, 2017, the internationally recognized government of Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi controls 85 percent of the country, while the Houthi rebels control 15 percent, according to Yemeni officials. However, the continued violence and dire prospects of the end of the war have ignited former tensions between Yemenis in the north and south. After the UAE-backed separatists seized the city of Aden on August 10, 2019, the Southern Transitional Council (STC) has issued demands seeking to redirect autonomy back into the hands of southern Yemen. The two regions were formerly separate countries but united under a single state in 1990 under former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. (Sources: [Associated Press](#) [8], [Associated Press](#) [9], [Al Arabiya](#) [10], [Middle East Monitor](#) [11], [Wall Street Journal](#) [12], [Reuters](#) [13])

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and multiple ISIS affiliates are based in Yemen. AQAP has been tied to global plots such as the 2015 attack on French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and the 2009 underwear bomb plot carried out by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab to destroy a Detroit-bound airliner. In addition, online videos of deceased AQAP propagandist Anwar al-Awlaki continue to inspire and radicalize people around the world to fight alongside al-Qaeda, ISIS, and other jihadist groups. U.S. President Donald J. Trump cited Yemen’s ties to global terrorism as reason for the country’s inclusion in a temporary travel ban in early 2017. (Sources: [CNN](#) [14], [CNN](#) [15])

Since September 11, 2001, the United States has conducted intermittent counterterrorism operations in Yemen, including surveillance, drone strikes, and special operations. Former U.S. President Barack Obama significantly increased the number of drone strikes against AQAP, and current President Trump has continued counterterror operations against the group. As of March 6, 2017, the United States had conducted more than 40 strikes against AQAP. The United States has reportedly carried out a total of 197 drone and air strikes in Yemen since 2002, killing up to 1,284 militants. (Sources:

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[Telegraph](#) [16], [New York Times](#) [17], [BBC News](#) [18], [BBC News](#) [19], [TIME](#) [20], [Los Angeles Times](#) [21], [New York Times](#) [22], [Washington Post](#) [23], [New York Times](#) [24], [New America Foundation](#) [25])

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Polling by the Yemen Polling Center (YPC) in 2013 revealed that nearly 40 percent of 2,000 people surveyed across Yemen's 21 governorates believe the country's security situation is getting worse. Of the armed groups in Yemen, the 2013 YPC poll ranked the Houthis as the most disruptive to the country's security, followed by AQAP. (Source: [Yemen Polling Center](#) [26])

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

Yemen's Government Collapse and Rising Radicalization

Iran-backed Houthi rebels have violently targeted Yemen's government since 2004, and the country has been locked in political turmoil since protests against corruption and lack of political inclusion erupted across Yemen in 2011. In November of that year President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had ruled Yemen since the country's 1990 unification, transferred power to his deputy, Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi who was to oversee a new coalition government and implement reforms in advance of elections in February 2014. (Sources: [NBC News](#) [27], [Chatham House](#) [28])

Extremist entities quickly capitalized on the instability resulting from this transfer of power to expand their influence. The Houthis, who had been leading an intermittent revolt against the central government since 2004, began seizing provinces across northwestern Yemen. By July 2014, the Houthis controlled four provinces, eventually seizing the capital city of Sanaa in September and forcing Hadi's government to flee to Aden in early 2015. When Houthi forces began to close on Aden, an international coalition of Arab states intervened and halted their advance just north of the temporary capital. The Saudi-led coalition has continued its military engagement against the Houthis, who have in turn targeted Saudi Arabia. As of December 2017, 8,670 people had been killed and 49,960 wounded in Yemen since the Arab coalition began its engagement in March 2015. (Sources: [Daily Star](#) [29], [BBC News](#) [30], [BBC News](#) [31])

In early November 2017, Saudi Arabia imposed a blockade of Yemen. Forces loyal to former president Saleh fought alongside the Iran-backed Houthis since 2015. Clashes erupted between Saleh's forces and the Houthis in late November. On December 2, 2017, Saleh offered to "turn a new page" with the Saudi-led coalition if the Saudis ended their blockade. The Houthis called Saleh's offer a "coup" against their alliance. More than 125 people are killed and at least 238 are wounded in the fighting between the Houthis and Saleh's forces. The Houthis reportedly take control of the majority of Sanaa. On December 4, Houthi fighters reportedly killed Saleh and several of his aides as he was trying to escape Sanaa. Later in the day, the Houthi-controlled Interior Ministry announced Saleh's death, which Saleh's General People's Congress party confirmed his death by snipers. Media observers speculated that Saleh's death had been revenge for his abandonment of his alliance with the Houthis. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [32], [Al Jazeera](#) [33], [CNN](#) [34], [BBC News](#) [31], [Al Jazeera](#) [35], [Al Jazeera](#) [36])

With the government battling the Houthi threat, Sunni Islamist groups have been able to expand their recruitment and radicalization efforts. Because of the highly sectarian nature of the current conflict, Sunni civilians and tribes have increasingly supported extremist organizations such as al-Qaeda against the Shiite Houthis. In February 2018, several Houthi prisoners held by the Yemeni army alleged that they had been trained by Hezbollah. According to the prisoners, Houthi fighters receive two months' of Hezbollah training before being sent to fight. The following month, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States, Prince Khalid bin Salman, accused Iran of seeking to create a Yemeni Hezbollah to support the Houthis. (Sources: [Daily Star](#) [29], [BBC News](#) [30], [Al Arabiya English](#) [37], [Arab News](#) [38])

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Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

[Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula](#) [39] (AQAP) is an Islamist militant extremist group operating primarily in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. AQAP is the result of the January 2009 merger of al-Qaeda in Yemen and al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia. In the group's inaugural video in 2009, AQAP's former leader [Nasir al-Wuhayshi](#) [40] formally declared the group's intention to avenge its enemies "with blood and destruction," in order to establish an Islamic caliphate and implement *sharia* (Islamic law). As a formal affiliate of al-Qaeda, AQAP's ideology and practices fall in line with al-Qaeda's broader goals of working toward global Islamist domination through violent jihad. According to the U.S. Department of State, AQAP is the al-Qaeda affiliate most ideologically similar to al-Qaeda core. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [41], [Stratfor](#) [42])

AQAP has launched multiple attacks against Western interests both in and outside Yemen, including the failed 2009 Detroit Christmas Day airline bombing, the 2010 attempt to blow up U.S.-bound cargo aircraft with explosives concealed in printer cartridges, the attempted May 2012 bombing of a U.S.-bound airliner, and the January 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* attack. Within Yemen, AQAP has launched dozens of deadly attacks including a December 2013 attack on the Yemeni Ministry of Defense that killed at least 52 people, a February 2014 attack on Sanaa's central prison that freed dozens of prisoners, and a bombing of a military parade rehearsal that killed 120 people. Additionally, AQAP has taken multiple foreigners hostage. Despite ISIS's rise in the country, U.S. counterterrorism officials asserted in January 2016 that AQAP was the dominant Salafist group in Yemen. As of 2017, AQAP remained the dominant group, though ISIS has tried to surpass it. (Sources: [National Counterterrorism Center](#) [43], [CNN](#) [44], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [45], [Financial Times](#) [46])

[Oasim al-Raymi](#) [47] is a U.S.-designated terrorist and the emir of AQAP. He filled this position on June 16, 2015, one day after former AQAP leader Nasir al-Wuhayshi died in a U.S. drone strike. Beginning in 2006, Raymi directed the movement of al-Qaeda fighters and played a key role in the group's seizure of territory in Yemen's southern provinces. Raymi helped Wuhayshi rebuild al-Qaeda in Yemen's fractured network, and the pair oversaw the merging of the Yemeni and Saudi al-Qaeda branches to form AQAP in 2009. Raymi played a large role in "reviving the regional node of al-Qaeda" and "recruiting the current generation of militants making up the Yemen-based AQAP," according to the U.S. Department of State. Before officially taking over as AQAP's emir, Raymi served as the group's military commander and successfully captured territory throughout Yemen's southwestern regions. Raymi's death has been erroneously reported numerous times. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [48], [CBS News](#) [49], [USA Today](#) [50], [Combating Terrorism Center](#) [51], [Long War Journal](#) [52], [Jamestown Foundation](#) [53])

During the ongoing Yemeni civil war, AQAP has been able to expand its influence, control, and abilities. The group has found support among Sunni tribes in south and central Yemen that are resistant to the rise of Shiite Houthi rebels. In early 2016, AQAP controlled most of the coast from al-Mukalla to Zinjibar (370 miles) and even neighborhoods in Aden itself. In April 2016, AQAP seized al-Mukalla, Yemen's fifth-largest city, stole 24 billion rials (\$111 million) from the central bank there, and freed 300 prisoners. Calling themselves the "Sons of Hadramout," AQAP militants then handed over power to a body of 60 civilians and withdrew to a security role. Later that month, Yemeni and Emirati security forces retook al-Mukalla from AQAP. . (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [54], [Foreign Affairs](#) [55], [Daily Star](#) [29], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [45], [Business Standard](#) [56], [Al-Monitor](#) [57], [Reuters](#) [58])

AQAP is funded primarily through "theft, robberies, and kidnap for ransom operations," according to the State Department. In the territory it controls, it taxes and extorts both legal and illicit enterprises. The group has utilized its funding to support development projects, winning support from the local population. Additionally, AQAP has offered money and gold in reward to whomever can kill a U.S. service member or ambassador. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [59], [U.S. Department of State](#) [60], [U.S. Department of State](#) [61])

AQAP produces propaganda and publications that have inspired terror attacks across the globe. Since July 2010, AQAP has produced the online English-language propaganda magazine *Inspire*. *Inspire* outlines AQAP strategy, posits religious arguments and justifications, and provide guidance and encouragement to prospective terrorists. . [Tamerlan](#) [62] and [Dzhorkhar Tsarnaev](#) [63] learned how to construct the pressure cooker bombs they used to attack the April 2013 Boston Marathon from *Inspire*. In addition, recordings of deceased AQAP propagandist Anwar al-Awlaki continue to inspire jihadists. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [64], [Anti-Defamation League](#) [65], [Reuters](#) [66])

AQAP has also violently clashed with Houthi rebels, whom AQAP brands as heretical because of their support from Shiite Iran. AQAP has targeted Houthi military leaders and infrastructure. A March 2017 AQAP statement accused the United

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States of supporting the Houthis and called for international help against the rebels. While the Houthis are opposed to AQAP's encroachment in their stronghold, analysts have noticed that the two groups have at times appeared to enter in an alliance against the Yemeni government. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [67], [CNN](#) [68], [New York Times](#) [69], [Al Jazeera](#) [70], [Long War Journal](#) [71])

Anwar al-Awlaki

[Anwar al-Awlaki](#) [72] was a U.S.-Yemeni dual citizen and longtime cleric, propagandist, and operative for AQAP. Awlaki inspired a number of terrorist attacks through his lectures, recordings, and other propaganda. In January 2011, Awlaki was sentenced in absentia to 10 years in a Yemeni prison for his connection to the killing of a French engineer. Awlaki was killed in a U.S. drone strike on September 30, 2011, while traveling between Marib and Jawf provinces in Yemen. CEP has [documented more than 80 cases](#) [73] of foreign fighters and other extremists who continue to be inspired by Awlaki's propaganda, in particular his online lectures. (Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [74], [New York Times](#) [75], [Counter Extremism Project](#) [73])

In early 2009, Awlaki was in contact via e-mail with [Nidal Hasan](#) [76], the U.S. Army major who in November 2009 killed 13 soldiers at the Fort Hood military post near Killeen, Texas. Roughly a year after the attack, Awlaki referred to Hasan as a "hero." Awlaki was also involved in an October 2010 plot to blow up a U.S. cargo plane flying from Yemen to the United States. The bomb, disguised as an ink cartridge, was built by AQAP's chief bomb maker Ibrahim al-Asiri and was timed to detonate as the plane flew over the eastern seaboard of the United States. The bomb was removed by British police after a tip from Saudi intelligence. In 2011, Awlaki instructed British citizen [Minh Quang Pham](#) [77] to carry out a suicide bombing at London's Heathrow International Airport. Pham, who trained alongside AQAP in Yemen during the first half of 2011, was arrested by British authorities in June 2012 and extradited to the United States in 2015. A U.S. court sentenced him to 40 years in prison. (Sources: [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#) [78], [INTELWIRE](#) [79], [BBC News](#) [80], [White House](#) [81], [Telegraph](#) [82], [New York Times](#) [83], [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [84], [BBC News](#) [85])

Ibrahim al-Asiri

Saudi-born [Ibrahim al-Asiri](#) [86] is the chief bomb-maker for AQAP. Before joining AQAP, Asiri plotted a series of bombings on domestic oil facilities as part of an al-Qaeda-affiliated cell in Saudi Arabia. Asiri traveled to Yemen in 2007 to join AQAP and became notorious for designing a score of bomb attacks aimed at targets in the United States. These include the underwear bomb plot of 2009—carried out by [Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab](#) [87]—and the cargo plane bomb plot in 2010. Asiri was also implicated in his brother Abdullah al-Asiri's 2009 assassination attempt of Saudi Prince Muhammad bin Nayif in Jeddah. Asiri is believed to operate out of Yemen. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [88], [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [89], [Guardian](#) [90], [Combating Terrorism Center](#) [51], [Business Insider](#) [91])

In March 2011, the U.S. Department of State designated Asiri as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. In 2014, the U.S. Department of State Rewards for Justice Program offered \$5 million for information leading to the location of Asiri and other AQAP leaders, including the group's leader Qasim al-Raymi. Asiri was featured in an audio recording released by AQAP on January 11, 2016, in which he vowed to continue fighting the United States, stating, "By God, we [AQAP] will not continue to let you go as long as there is a pulsing vein in our body." (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [92], [Long War Journal](#) [93], [Fox News](#) [94])

Ansar al-Sharia Yemen

Ansar al-Sharia (AAS) Yemen was founded by AQAP militants in April 2011 in what counterterrorism researcher Aaron Zelin called a "rebranding effort by AQAP." AQAP's head religious figure, Sheikh Abu Zubayr, reportedly said that "the name Ansar al-Sharia is what we use to introduce ourselves in areas where we work to tell people about our work and goals." AAS has become a major force in providing social services, providing electricity, water, education, judiciary courts, and security where the Yemeni central government is unable. The group's fighters have carried out numerous attacks, including the 2012 Yemen National Day bombing, a May 2012 ambush that wounded a U.S. military instructor, and numerous ground offensives. In October 2012, the State Department designated AAS as merely an alias of AQAP. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [95], [Foreign Policy](#) [96], [Long War Journal](#) [97], [Reuters](#) [98], [Al Jazeera](#) [99], [Critical Threats](#) [100])

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Houthis

The [Houthis](#) [101], also known as Ansar Allah (Partisans of God), are an Iran-backed rebel group based in the Saada region of northern Yemen. The Houthis, along with one-third of Yemen's population, adhere to a branch of Shiite Islam called Zaidism. The group has waged a series of bloody insurgencies against the Yemeni government since 2004, leading to a government overthrow in early 2015. The Houthis have since seized power, announcing the formation of a new government, which has not received international recognition. As of April 2018, 10,000 people have died in the three-year war, according to the United Nations. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [102], [New York Times](#) [103], [New York Times](#) [104], [Atlantic](#) [105], [Reuters](#) [106], [BBC News](#) [107])

The Houthis are named after their late leader, Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi, who led the first Houthi uprising against the Yemeni government in 2004. He fought for greater autonomy for Saada province and increased protection and independence for Zaidi Muslims in the face of perceived Sunni Muslim encroachment. Hussein Houthi was killed by Yemeni security forces in September of that year. Their motto is "God is great, death to America, death to Israel, God curse the Jews, victory to Islam." (Sources: [Atlantic](#) [105], [BBC News](#) [107], [New York Times](#) [104], [New York Times](#) [103])

Fighting between the government and the Houthi rebels resumed after the death of Hussein Houthi, bookmarked by failed ceasefires in 2006 and 2007. A May 2008 bombing of a Yemeni mosque marked the first time Houthis deliberately targeted civilians. In October 2009, Saudi Arabian security forces engaged Houthi rebels along the Saudi-Yemeni border. Fighting continued until a 2010 ceasefire agreement, which collapsed after Houthi rebels took part in the revolt against then-Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2011. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [107], [BBC News](#) [108], [New York Times](#) [109], [New York Times](#) [110], [Foreign Affairs](#) [111])

Saleh's November 2011 resignation left a power vacuum, which allowed the rebels to seize Saada, al-Jawf, and Hajjah provinces by May 2012. In July 2014, the rebels seized the province of Omran, placing them within striking distance of the capital. That September, Houthi forces overran Saana and placed President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi under house arrest. Following the capture of the city, the Houthis announced the dissolution of the parliament and the formation of a new government in Sanaa. In February 2015, Hadi fled to the southern port city of Aden and reasserted his authority as Yemen's president. The Houthis continued their push south, closing in on Aden in late March 2015. The threat to the Yemeni government prompted the intervention of a Saudi Arabia-led coalition of Arab states, including five Gulf Arab states, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, and Sudan. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [112], [Reuters](#) [113], [Reuters](#) [114], [Reuters](#) [115], [Yemen Times](#) [116], [BBC News](#) [30])

In March 2015, the Saudi-led coalition began a short-lived air campaign against Yemen's Houthi rebels called Operation Decisive Storm. Saudi Arabia declared an end to the campaign the following month, but continued what it called counterterrorism operations in the country under the mission Restoring Hope with the ultimate goal of restoring Hadi's government. The Houthis have fired ballistic missiles into Saudi territory in response to airstrikes. As of October 2018, the Saudi military sources reported that the Houthis had fired approximately 200 missiles at Saudi Arabia since 2015. The missiles are mostly shot down or fail to reach their targets, but have resulted in casualties nonetheless. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [117], [Associated Press](#) [8], [Reuters](#) [118], [Agence France-Presse](#) [119], [Reuters](#) [120], [Al Arabiya](#) [121], [Associated Press](#) [122])

Iran has supported Houthi rebels with funding, training, and weapons. In February 2017, [Qasem Soleimani](#) [123], commander of the Quds Force of the [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps \(IRGC\)](#) [124], reportedly met with senior IRGC commanders to discuss increasing Iranian support to the Houthis. Though Iran denies providing military or financial aid to the Houthis, a senior Iranian official told Reuters in March 2017 that the IRGC "agreed to increase the amount of help, through training, arms and financial support" to the Houthis after meeting with Soleimani. The British-based Conflict Arms Research (CAR) group reported in March 2017 that Houthis were using drones likely built in Iran to attack Saudi forces. On January 30, 2017, Houthis targeted a Saudi frigate in the Red Sea with an explosives-filled drone boat reportedly provided by Iran. A September 2018 CAR report documented the use of Iranian electrical components in Houthi IEDs and landmines. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [125], [Washington Post](#) [126], [Defense News](#) [127], [Conflict Arms Research](#) [128])

Some Yemeni officials believe Iran has supported the Houthis since their first uprising in 2004. Officials also assert that Houthi militants have traveled to Iran and Lebanon for training and also received training in Yemen by a "few hundred" members of the IRGC's Quds Force. In 2013, Yemeni security forces intercepted the Iranian vessel *Jihan 1* off Yemen's

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coast. The ship was reportedly bound for Houthi territory carrying several tons of Iranian arms, munitions, equipment, and explosives. Yemeni authorities impounded the ship and arrested its crew, which included eight Yemeni nationals and two members of Hezbollah. Iran denied any connection to the shipment. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [129], [Anadolu Agency](#) [130], [Reuters](#) [131], [BBC News](#) [30])

The UAE and Saudi Arabia have designated the Houthis as a terrorist group. Human Rights Watch has accused the Houthis of hostage-taking, torture, and other human-rights abuses. As of March 8, 2017, Hadi's internationally recognized government controlled 85 percent of the country, while the Houthi rebels controlled 15 percent, according to Yemeni officials. (Sources: [NDTV](#) [132], [Yemen Times](#) [133], [National](#) [134], [BBC News](#) [30], [Al Arabiya](#) [10], [Middle East Monitor](#) [11], [Human Rights Watch](#) [135])

In April 2018, Houthi leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi announced that the rebel group would continue to develop its military capabilities "as the aggression continues." On April 11, the Houthis fired a ballistic missile at Saudi Arabia's defense ministry in Riyadh. Saudi forces intercepted the missile, resulting in no damage. On April 19, a Saudi airstrike killed Saleh al-Samad, president of the Houthi-backed government that controls most of northern Yemen. Samad was the highest ranked civilian official in the Houthi movement and second on the coalition's most-wanted list of Houthi leaders. The Houthis appointed Mahdi al-Mashat to replace Samad. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [106], [Reuters](#) [136], [Reuters](#) [137])

ISIS

[ISIS](#) [138] in Yemen has targeted both the Yemeni government and Houthi rebels. In September 2014, defectors from AQAP and other Islamist groups declared their allegiance to ISIS caliph [Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi](#) [139], who accepted their pledge that November. On March 20, 2015, ISIS's affiliate in Sanaa claimed the group's first major attack in the country after suicide bombers killed 142 people at two Shiite mosques in Sanaa. In late 2015, a former member of AQAP told the *New York Times* that "large numbers of both leaders and individuals" are defecting to ISIS because of frustration with AQAP's perceived passivity in Yemen's civil war. ISIS has since declared wilayats—provinces—in eight different provinces of Yemen, but it is unclear whether all of the branches are active. (Sources: [CNN](#) [140], [New York Times](#) [141], [Guardian](#) [142], [Critical Threats](#) [143], [Critical Threats](#) [144])

AQAP and ISIS have increasingly come into conflict in the country. In November 2014, AQAP chief cleric Harith al-Nadhari criticized ISIS of "extending the caliphate to a number of countries in which [it has] no power." Al-Nadhari's criticism came one week after a November 13 declaration by ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi that the "caliphate" had spread to Yemen, Libya, Algeria, Egypt, and Qatar. In December 2014, AQAP suicide bombings targeted Houthi rebels in central Yemen, killing 80 people, including children. Militants affiliated with ISIS and AQAP openly clashed in eastern Yemen in December 2015, according to U.S. officials. Yemeni officials claim the two groups are also competing for new members in the country. (Sources: [NBC News](#) [145], [New York Times](#) [141], [CNN](#) [44], [Al Jazeera](#) [146], [CNN](#) [68])

Despite the alleged competition for membership, ISIS has not gained as much traction among Yemenis as al-Qaeda, according to Yemeni officials. Many of the leaders of ISIS in Yemen are Saudi nationals. Compounded with ISIS's centralized authority based in Syria, many in Yemen's tribal areas reportedly view the terror group as foreign and disconnected from Yemeni interests. Furthermore, AQAP has forged alliances and worked with local tribal authorities in power-sharing agreements while ISIS leadership has failed to make inroads in Yemeni tribal structure. Nevertheless, ISIS has successfully carried out a series of deadly attacks in the country. In March 2015, ISIS executed 29 Yemeni soldiers. In December of that year, ISIS assassinated the governor of Yemen's Aden province, along with five of his bodyguards. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [142], [Critical Threats](#) [147], [Al Jazeera](#) [148], [Wall Street Journal](#) [54])

Notable Terrorists Who Have Trained in Yemen

Several notable terrorists have trained in Yemen before attempting or executing attacks around the world. On December 25, 2009, Nigerian national [Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab](#) [87] attempted to detonate a bomb on a U.S. airliner bound for Detroit, Michigan. He is currently serving a life sentence in a maximum security prison in Florence, Colorado. A native Nigerian, Abdulmutallab sought out AQAP propagandist Anwar al-Awlaki for training and guidance in Yemen. (Sources: [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [149], [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [150], [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [89])

While in Sanaa in 2009, Abdulmutallab met [Said Kouachi](#) [151]. Said and his brother [Chérif Kouachi](#) [152] killed 12 people

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at the Paris offices of *Charlie Hebdo* on January 7, 2015. Said Kouachi likely trained with AQAP in a safe haven outside of Sanaa while periodically living in Yemen between 2009 and 2011. According to an unidentified Yemeni security official the Kouachi brothers traveled to Yemen in the summer of 2011 to receive training from AQAP and meet with Awlaki. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [153], [International Business Times](#) [154], [CNN](#) [155], [BBC News](#) [156], [BBC News](#) [157], [CNN](#) [158], [France24](#) [159], [Al Jazeera](#) [160], [Reuters](#) [161], [New York Times](#) [162], [Wall Street Journal](#) [163])

Foreign Fighters

A U.N. Security Council report from May 2015 reported that 110 Yemeni nationals were fighting in Syria and Iraq, many with ISIS or the [Nusra Front](#) [164]. Yemeni fighters also fought against U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Of the 780 detainees held in Guantanamo Detention Center since the facility opened in January 2002, 115 of them were Yemeni nationals. As of January 2008, Yemeni detainees outnumbered those from any other country in Guantanamo. (Sources: [Times of Israel](#) [165], [NBC News](#) [166], [New York Times](#) [167], [Fox News](#) [168])

Yemen has also been a destination for foreign fighters. In 2014, President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi claimed that 70 percent of al-Qaeda's fighters in the country were foreigners from Brazil, Australia, and France, among other countries. Al-Qaeda denied the charge. In late 2015, the United Arab Emirates reportedly imported hundreds of Colombian mercenaries to fight against Houthi rebels in Yemen. Iranian media alleged in September 2015 that Saudi forces were employing Sudanese and Somali foreign fighters. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [169], [Reuters](#) [170], [Fars News Agency](#) [171])

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

Prior to 2015, nearly all terror attacks within Yemen were carried out by al-Qaeda affiliates. Beginning in 2015, ISIS launched a series of attacks in Yemen, largely against civilian Shiite targets. While AQAP has disavowed attacking markets and mosques in Yemen, ISIS has embraced the tactic, targeting Shiite mosques and other public areas in a deadly series of bombings. Nonetheless, AQAP remains the most active terror group, targeting both the Yemeni military and Houthi positions. AQAP has also struck abroad, inspiring or attempting attacks on the United States and a high-profile attack on the offices of the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Yemen-based Sunni extremist groups have profited heavily from the kidnapping of Westerners. While many of the kidnappings are carried out by tribes looking to pressure the Yemeni government, al-Qaeda plots alone have kidnapped dozens. From 1995 to 2010, more than 200 foreign nationals were kidnapped in Yemen. (Sources: [CNN](#) [44], [Guardian](#) [172])

USS Cole Bombing

On October 12, 2000, two al-Qaeda operatives piloted a 35-foot boat alongside the U.S. Navy destroyer *USS Cole* while it was refueling in Aden harbor. The militants detonated their explosives on the port side of the destroyer and blew a 32-foot-by-36-foot hole in the hull. The bomb exploded just outside the ship's galley where sailors were lined up for lunch, killing 17 sailors and wounded 39 others.

The bombing was allegedly masterminded by Saudi Arabian national Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, who had attempted to bomb the *USS The Sullivans* in January 2000. Largely due to the success of the *USS Cole* bombing, Nashiri was appointed head of al-Qaeda operations for the Persian Gulf. In November 2002, Nashiri was captured in the United Arab Emirates and eventually transferred to the U.S. facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. As of March 2017, Nashiri is awaiting trial in the United States on charges of orchestrating the bombings of the *USS Cole* and French oil tanker *HMV Limburg* in October 2002. (Sources: [9/11 Memorial](#) [173], [Global Security](#) [174], [9/11 Commission](#) [175], [Reuters](#) [176], [Miami Herald](#) [177], [Reuters](#) [178])

Christmas Day Bombing

On December 25, 2009, Nigerian national [Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab](#) [87] attempted to detonate a bomb on a U.S. airliner bound for Detroit, Michigan. Twenty minutes before landing in Detroit, Abdulmutallab attempted to explode the suicide bomb strapped to his underwear. Rather than explode, the bomb lit on fire, causing severe burns. Abdulmutallab was subdued by a nearby passenger and arrested upon his arrival in Detroit. In October 2011, Abdulmutallab pled guilty to

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all charges leveled against him, saying that he “attempted to use an explosive device which in the U.S. law is a weapon of mass destruction,” but which he considered a “blessed weapon.” Abdulmutallab was sentenced to life in prison without parole on February 16, 2012. He is currently serving his sentence in a maximum security prison in Florence, Colorado. Abdulmutallab had trained under AQAP cleric [Anwar al-Awlaki](#) [72] in Yemen. (Sources: [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [149], [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [150], [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [89], [New York Times](#) [179], [Wall Street Journal](#) [163], [Sunday Times](#) [180])

- **January 18, 2020 - January 20, 2020:** On January 18, ballistic missiles strike a mosque at the al-Estiqbal military camp in Marib, killing at least 116 people. It is reportedly one of the deadliest attacks in the civil war. There are no immediate claims of responsibility but the government blames Houthi rebels. The United States blames Iran, which denies involvement. On January 20, government forces fight Houthi rebels east of Marib. Senior Houthi commander Jaber Al Muwaed is reportedly killed in the fighting. Saudi Arabia renews its air campaign against Houthi rebels in response to the Marib attack. Sources: [Guardian](#) [3], [Associated Press](#) [4]
- **January 7, 2020:** Suspected Houthi rebels launch a missile attack on a military base in Al Dhalea province. The attack kills 11 soldiers and wounds 18 others. The military base served as a training camp for new recruits affiliated with the Southern Joint Forces—a coalition of pro-government military groups undertaking the fight against the Houthis. Source: [The National](#) [181]
- **December 29, 2019:** A ballistic missile strikes a military parade for the Resistance Forces, a separatist militia part of the Saudi-allied STC, in Dhale Province, Southern Yemen. At least 10 people are killed and 21 others are wounded. It is suspected that the Houthis are responsible for the attack. Source: [New York Times](#) [182]
- **December 22, 2019:** RPGs strike the offices of three international aid organizations in Dhale province, wounding one. There are no immediate claims of responsibility but government officials blame Islamist terror groups. Twelve aid organizations in southern Yemen suspend their activities in the region after the attack. Sources: [Oxfam](#) [183], [United Nations](#) [184], [Associated Press](#) [185]
- **November 17, 2019 - November 20, 2019:** Houthi rebels seize a Saudi Arabian tugboat in the Red Sea on November 17. The vessel was towing a South Korean drilling rig. Sixteen crew members are captured. Houthi rebels release the seized vessel the next day. Sources: [CNN](#) [186], [Associated Press](#) [187]
- **November 13, 2019:** A missile strikes government forces in Marib. The attack kills three senior military officers and three soldiers from Yemen’s internationally recognized government while also wounding 12 others. No group claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [ABC News](#) [188]
- **November 6, 2019:** Houthi rebels launch at least four missiles targeting warehouses used by the allied forces known as the Giants Bridges in the port town of al-Makha. At least eight people are killed and 12 others are wounded in the attack. At least three other missiles are intercepted. Government forces say the attack also targeted a refugee camp and a hospital run by Doctors Without Borders. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [189], [Associated Press](#) [190]
- **October 2, 2019:** Iranian Chief of Staff, Major General Mohammed Bagheri, admitted in an interview to Phoenix Chinese TV Channel that Iran has been providing “advisory and intellectual support” to the Houthis. According to Bagheri, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps provided advisory support, weapons and equipment to Iraq and Syria at the request of their governments. Source: [Middle East Monitor](#) [191]
- **September 30, 2019:** Houthi rebels announce the unconditional release of 350 prisoners, including three Saudi Arabians, days after the Yemeni group claimed to have captured thousands of Saudi troops following an incursion into Saudi Arabia. A statement by the Houthi National Committee for Prisoners’ Affairs (NCPA) carried by Al Masirah TV said the individuals were on the list of persons drawn up as part of the prisoner exchange deal agreed in Stockholm, Sweden, in December of last year. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [192]
- **September 28, 2019:** Houthi rebels claim to have killed 500 Saudi soldiers, captured a further 2,000, and seized a convoy of Saudi military vehicles in the southern Najran region of Saudi Arabia. The claims could not be corroborated and have been denied by Saudi forces. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [193]
- **September 14, 2019:** Drone attacks are launched from Yemen on two key oil installations in Abqaiq, Saudi Arabia. The Houthis claim responsibility for the attack. Although there are no casualties, the damaged oil facilities process the majority of Saudi Arabia’s crude output which raises the risk of a disruption in world oil supplies. Source: [New York Times](#) [194]
- **September 3, 2019:** Houthi rebels launch multiple drone attacks on King Khalid Air Base in the southwest of Saudi Arabia. Earlier in the day, Houthis fire several ballistic missiles towards Najran airport in the southwest of the kingdom. No casualties or injuries are reported in both instances. Source: [Xinhua](#) [195]
- **September 1, 2019:** The Saudi-led military coalition launches airstrikes in Dhamar province, southwest Yemen. The six or seven airstrikes hit a prison complex resulting in the deadliest strike in Yemen this year. Over 100 people are

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killed in the attack. The coalition claims to have destroyed a site storing drones and missiles while the head of the Houthis' national committee for prisoner affairs, Abdul Qader al-Mortada, claims that many of the prisoners were due to be released in a local deal to exchange prisoners of war. Source: [Reuters](#) [196]

- **August 30, 2019:**A suicide bomber on a motorcycle kills six southern separatist fighters on the outskirts of Aden. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [Reuters](#) [197]
- **August 29, 2019:**UAE warplanes bomb Yemeni government forces in Aden, killing at least 45 soldiers. President Hadi's forces withdraw from Aden after the airstrikes. Source: [Reuters](#) [198]
- **August 28, 2019:**Houthi rebels launch a cruise missile towards Saudi Arabia's Abha airport. Yahya Saria, the group's military spokesman, confirms Houthi responsibility for the attack. The missile targeted plane hangars and led to air traffic being halted in the airport. No casualties or injuries are reported. Also that day, the Houthis launch armed drones on "military targets" in the Saudi regions of Jizan and Najran. Source: [Reuters](#) [199]
- **August 27, 2019:**The Trump administration is preparing to initiate direct talks with Iran-backed Houthi forces in Yemen in an effort to end the four-year war.
The U.S. is looking to prod Saudi Arabia into taking part in secret talks in Oman with Houthi leaders in an effort to broker a cease-fire in Yemen. The move could open the first significant channel between the Trump administration and the Houthis. Source: [Wall Street Journal](#) [200]
- **August 27, 2019:**Saudi-led coalition forces intercept and down a Houthi drone launched toward the kingdom from Yemen.
Houthi's Al Masirah TV does not announce the attack. Also on the 27th, Houthi rebels conduct a large-scale attack in Saada. As many as 25 soldiers of the Saudi-backed government forces are killed and an unreported number are injured. Sources: [Reuters](#) [201], [Xinhua](#) [202]
- **August 26, 2019:**Houthi rebels launch armed drones at a "military target" in Riyadh. It is unreported if there are any casualties or injuries. Source: [Reuters](#) [203]
- **August 22, 2019 - August 23, 2019:**Following heavy clashes with UAE-backed separatist fighters, forces loyal to Yemen's internationally recognized government retake full control of Ataq, a key southern city in the oil-rich Shabwa province.
Clashes began on the 22nd and lasted until the 23rd leading to an unreported number of casualties and injuries. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [204]
- **August 22, 2019:**Houthi forces launch two drones towards the city of Khamis Mushait, Saudi Arabia. Saudi forces intercept and down the two drones. Source: [Gulf Business](#) [205]
- **August 21, 2019:**Martin Griffiths, the U.N. Special Envoy to Yemen, meets with Houthi rebels over stalled peace talks. Peace talks between Houthis and the internationally recognized government have been stalled since they reached an U.N.-sponsored cease-fire agreement in Stockholm in December last year over the country's Red Sea port city of Hodeidah. Both Yemeni warring parties have failed to implement the deal or withdraw their forces from Hodeidah. The Houthis are still holding the port city while the government forces backed by a Saudi-led coalition are stationed on the southern outskirts of Hodeidah. Source: [Xinhua](#) [206]
- **August 21, 2019:**Houthi rebels shoot down a U.S. drone with an air missile.
The U.S. suspects the missile to be provided by Iran although the Houthis claim the weapon was developed locally. Source: [CNN](#) [207]
- **August 19, 2019:**Southern separatists seize most Yemeni government security and military bases near the port of Aden on after bouts of infighting among allies.
Their seizure effectively puts control of the Abyan capital in the hands of the UAE-backed separatists and further weakens the government of Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. Source: [Reuters](#) [208]
- **August 17, 2019:**Houthi rebels deploy 10 drones to strike Saudi Arabia's Shaybah oil field, one of the kingdom's largest.
There are no injuries and no disruption to the field's production. Source: [Wall Street Journal](#) [209]
- **August 16, 2019:**The Houthis launch drone attacks on Saudi Arabia's Abha international airport, halting air traffic. The Saudi-led coalition reports that the drone was intercepted and shot down. Source: [Reuters](#) [210]
- **August 14, 2019:**Southern separatists vow to keep control over Aden until the Islamist Islah party and northerners are removed from positions of power in the south.
The Southern Transitional Council alleges that Islah was complicit in a Houthi missile strike earlier in the month. Source: [New York Times](#) [211]
- **August 13, 2019:**Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei pledges Tehran's continued support for Yemen's Houthi movement.
That same day, Houthi forces claim to launch drone attacks on the airport of Abha in southwest Saudi Arabia. Coalition forces deny that Abha was under attack and that instead a drone launched by the Houthis "fell" over a residential area in Amran. Both sides report no casualties. Sources: [Reuters](#) [212], [Reuters](#) [213], [New York Times](#) [214]
- **August 10, 2019:**Yemeni separatists backed by the UAE take control of most of the port city of Aden and the grounds of the presidential palace.
The seizure follows four days of fighting between separatist and coalition forces. It is reported that at least 70 people are killed throughout the four days. That same day, the separatists capture a military camp in the central Khormaksar neighborhood. Sources: [Washington Post](#) [215], [New York Times](#) [216]

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- **August 9, 2019:**A federal grand jury charges a Yemeni national living in Arkansas for providing support to a terrorist organization. Bilal al-Rayanni was charged with supporting al-Qaeda between October and December of 2014 while he was in Yemen. He was initially charged on July 11 with making a false statement on a passport application in May. If found guilty, al-Rayanni will face 20 years in prison and up to 15 years for lying on a passport application. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [217], [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [218]
- **August 9, 2019:**Southern separatists and government forces renew fighting in Aden, killing at least eight. In a separate event, the brother of Abdel-Malek al-Houthi, the leader of the Iran-aligned Houthi movement, is reportedly killed in Sanaa. The Houthis claim government forces carried out the operation, but the coalition states it was an “insider operation” due to infighting among factions in the Houthi camp. Sources: [New York Times](#) [219], [New York Times](#) [220]
- **August 8, 2019:**UAE-backed separatists and presidential guards fight in Aden, killing at least one bystander. Source: [New York Times](#) [221]
- **August 7, 2019:**Yemeni separatists backed by the UAE open fire on government forces near the presidential palace in Aden. At least three people are killed and nine are injured. Despite having the Houthis as a common enemy, relations between Yemen and the UAE have been tense amid allegations that the Emiratis have offered patronage to southern Yemeni politicians campaigning for secession. Sources: [New York Times](#) [221], [Washington Post](#) [222]
- **August 2, 2019:**Members of al-Qaeda storm a military camp belonging to Yemeni forces trained by the UAE in Abyan province. The attack kills at least 20. Source: [Washington Post](#) [223]
- **August 1, 2019:**ISIS detonates a car bomb in a military camp for the Security Belt forces—the elite military wing of the Southern Transitional Council—in Aden. The attack kills 13 policemen. Source: [Reuters](#) [224]
- **August 1, 2019:**Houthi rebels initiate twin attacks in the city of Aden. Suicide bombers blast a police station in one neighborhood while the rebels fire a missile at a military parade of UAE-trained militia. At least 51 people are killed in the attacks. Source: [Washington Post](#) [225]
- **July 29, 2019:**The Saudi-coalition launches an airstrike on a market in northern Yemen, killing 14 people and wounding more than 26 others. The attack is a response to a Houthi drone attack on a Saudi airbase. Sources: [Voice of America](#) [226], [United Nations](#) [227]
- **July 28, 2019:**Houthi forces launch indiscriminate attacks in the Al-Rawdhah neighborhood of Taiz. The attack kills one child and injures three others. Source: [United Nations](#) [227]
- **July 20, 2019:**Saudi-coalition fighter jets take out at least five Houthi air defense sites around Sanaa. Source: [Voice of America](#) [228]
- **July 16, 2019:**The Houthis launch a drone attack on Jizan airport in southwestern Saudi Arabia. Source: [Reuters](#) [229]
- **July 15, 2019:**The Saudi-led coalition intercepts and downs three Houthi drones that were launched towards the southwestern Saudi cities of Jizan and Abha. Source: [Reuters](#) [229]
- **July 12, 2019:**The United Nations human rights office reports that a court run by Yemen’s Houthi rebels has sentenced 30 men to death. The sentenced were accused of spying for the Saudi-UAE-led coalition shortly after rebels seized the capital in 2014. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [230]
- **July 11, 2019:**The UAE begins to phase out and withdraw their forces from the Yemeni war. It is estimated that they have over 5,000 troops in the area. Source: [New York Times](#) [231]
- **July 6, 2019:**Houthi forces carry out drone attacks on military sites at the Abha airport in southern Saudi Arabia. Earlier that day, Houthis also claim targeting warplane hangars and other military sites in Saudi Jizan airport. Source: [Reuters](#) [232]
- **July 2, 2019:**The Houthis launch an armed drone and strike Abha airport in Saudi Arabia. At least nine people are injured. Source: [Washington Post](#) [233]
- **June 15, 2019:**A Saudi-led coalition launches an air strike on Houthi rebels in Sanaa. The raids hit air-defense systems and other military positions in the Houthi-controlled city. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [234]
- **June 12, 2019:**Yemen’s Houthi rebels strike a missile on a civilian airport in Southern Saudi Arabia. The attack injures 26. Mohamed Abdul Salam, a Houthi official, says the strike is in retaliation for the Saudi-led coalition’s continued aggression and blockade on Yemen. Source: [New York Times](#) [235]
- **June 8, 2019:**The Houthis bombard the city of Taiz during Eid festivities. The attackers target children, killing or wounding at least 16. Source: [Middle East Monitor](#) [236]
- **May 26, 2019:**Saudi Arabia’s defense forces intercept a drone armed with explosives. The drone was launched by Yemen’s Houthis and aimed at an airport in the south of the kingdom. Source: [Reuters](#) [237]
- **May 23, 2019:**Houthi forces launch a drone attack on a Patriot missile battery in the Saudi city of Najran.

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The Saudi-led coalition intercepts and destroys the drone. This is the third attempt in a week targeting the facility. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [238]

- **May 14, 2019:**Houthi rebels carry out multiple drone attacks on Saudi oil facilities, a day after Saudi Arabia says two of its oil tankers have been damaged in an act of sabotage. According to Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdul Salam, the attack was a response to Saudi “aggression” and “genocide” in Yemen. Source: [New York Times](#) [239]
- **May 10, 2019:**Houthi members agree to redeploy forces out of three key ports between May 11 and May 14 to pave the way for United Nations management of the ports under a U.N.-brokered peace deal. Source: [Reuters](#) [240]
- **May 3, 2019:**Al-Qaeda members detonate a roadside bomb in the Hadramaut region. At least six people are killed and six others are wounded. Source: [Reuters](#) [241]
- **April 20, 2019:**The Saudi-led coalition launches an air raid on a cave used by Houthi rebels to stockpile drones. The caves are destroyed in the attack. Source: [France 24](#) [242]
- **March 23, 2019:**The Saudi-led military coalition mounts raids on sites of the Houthi movement in Sanaa. The raids target two caves used by Houthi forces to store drones. Earlier that day, there were additional raids in Houthi camps as well as the Al-Dailami air base. Sources: [Reuters](#) [243], [Middle East Eye](#) [244]
- **March 11, 2019:**The Saudi-led coalition launches air strikes in Kushar district, northern Yemen. At least 22 people are killed and another 30 are injured. The Saudi-owned Al Arabiya TV says the Houthis were the intended targets in the attack. Source: [Reuters](#) [245]
- **February 25, 2019:**Danny Lavone Burch, an American citizen who was abducted in Sanaa over a year and a half prior, is freed. It is uncertain who captured Burch, although American officials say the UAE was pivotal in securing his release. Source: [New York Times](#) [246]
- **January 28, 2019:**An unidentified group attacks a camp for displaced people in Hajjah, northern Yemen. The shelling kills eight and wounds 30. Source: [Voice of America](#) [247]
- **January 20, 2019:**Saudi-led forces launch overnight air strikes on Sanaa. The warplanes attack seven Houthi-held military facilities used for drone operations. At least two civilians are killed. Source: [Reuters](#) [248]
- **January 15, 2019:**The United Nations Security Council approves the deployment of 75 observers to Yemen’s port city of Hodeidah for six months to monitor a ceasefire and redeployment of forces by the warring parties. Source: [Reuters](#) [249]
- **January 11, 2019:**The Saudi-led military coalition destroys a communication and control center used to direct drones deployed by the Houthis. The attack is in response to the attack on a military parade on January 9 which killed six people. Source: [Reuters](#) [250]
- **January 9, 2019:**Shiite rebels launch a bomb-laden drone over a military parade at Al-Anad Air Base. At least six people are killed and 11 are wounded. The attack raises more questions about Iran’s role in arming the rebels with drone and ballistic missile technology. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [251], [France 24](#) [242]
- **December 16, 2018:**Yemeni Foreign Minister Khaled al-Yamani confirms that a U.N.-brokered ceasefire between pro-government forces and Houthi rebels will go into effect on December 18, 2018. Both parties are to withdraw from Hodeidah within 21 days and international monitors will be deployed. A prisoner swap involving 16,000 inmates is also expected. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [252]
- **November 2, 2018:**The Saudi-led coalition launches air strikes on the international airport in Sanaa and a nearby air base operated by Houthi rebels. Earlier that day, the coalition launches a new offensive against the Houthi-controlled port of Hodeida. Source: [Washington Post](#) [253]
- **October 25, 2018:**The Saudi-led coalition launches an airstrike in the town of Bayt el-Faqih seeking to target Houthi forces. The attack kills 19 civilians. Source: [Independent](#) [254]
- **October 16, 2018:**Houthi forces release Alain Goma, a French citizen held hostage for over four months. The release followed “intensive” talks between France’s envoy to Yemen and Houthi leaders in Sanaa. Source: [Associated Press](#) [255]
- **October 6, 2018:**Houthi rebels deploy tanks and fighters around the University of Sanaa to prevent protests. The militants kidnap 55 students. Source: [Al Arabiya](#) [121]
- **October 5, 2018:**Houthi militants fire mortars at a displacement camp in Khokhah, killing one and wounding 12 others. Source: [The National](#) [256]
- **September 15, 2018:**Houthi rebels fire a ballistic missile toward the Saudi city of Jizan. Saudi defenses shoot down the missile, resulting in no casualties or damage. Source: [Reuters](#) [257]
- **September 14, 2018:**Houthi rebels fire a ballistic missile toward a Saudi Aramco facility in Jizan, but Saudi defenses shoot down the missile. There are no casualties or damage. Source: [Reuters](#) [258]
- **September 5, 2018:**Saudi defenses shoot down a Houthi missile fired toward the Saudi city of Nazran. Shrapnel

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wounds 26.

Source: [Reuters](#) [259]

- **August 8, 2018:**Houthi rebels fire a ballistic missile toward the Saudi city of Jizan. Saudi defenses shoot down the missile and shrapnel kills a Yemeni man and wounds 11 others. The attack marks the 165th missile the Houthis have launched at Saudi Arabia since 2015. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#) [260]
- **July 25, 2018:**Houthi fighters attack two Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea, causing minor damage and no casualties. Saudi Arabia suspends oil shipments through the Red Sea's Bab al-Mandeb strait in response. Sources: [Reuters](#) [261], [Al Jazeera](#) [262]
- **July 18, 2018:**The convoy of Yemeni Vice President Ali Mohsen strikes a roadside bomb in Marib, killing one. The vice president is not injured. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Separately, Houthi rebels claim to attack an Aramco refinery in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, using a drone, causing a minor fire. Aramco refutes the claim and says a technical issue led to a small fire at the facility. Sources: [Anadolu Agency](#) [263], [Reuters](#) [264]
- **July 16, 2018:**Houthi rebels fire a katyusha rocket at a wedding in Al Jawf, killing three women and two children. Sources: The National, [Al Arabiya](#) [265]
- **June 8, 2018 - June 13, 2018:**On June 8, Saudi-led coalition forces begin clashing with Houthi rebels in areas surrounding the Houthi-held Yemeni port city of Hodeidah. Saudi officials accuse the Houthis of smuggling Iranian weaponry into Yemen through Hodeidah. U.N. officials estimate that more than 250,000 could be killed if the clashes lead to a full battle within the city. On June 9, a Houthi missile kills three civilians inside Saudi Arabia. On June 12, Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. Prince Khalid bin Salman accuses Houthi rebels of attacking Saudi, U.S., and UAE commercial and military ships from the Houthi-held Hodeidah, Yemen's main port. The Saudi-led coalition begins an assault on the port city the following day. Sources: [Al Arabiya](#) [266], [Reuters](#) [267], [Daily Mail](#) [268]
- **May 22, 2018:**Houthi rebels fire a mortar shell at a marketplace in the city of Marib, killing five and wounding 20. Source: [Anadolu Agency](#) [269]
- **May 17, 2018:**Houthi rebels fire a ballistic missile at a military air base in the government-controlled Lahj province, but the missile instead strikes a nearby village, killing four and wounding five. Source: [Xinhua](#) [270]
- **April 28, 2018:**Houthi militants launch ballistic missiles at "economic and vital targets" in Saudi Arabia's Jizan province, killing one. The Saudi military claims to intercept four of the eight missiles. Source: [Reuters](#) [271]
- **April 11, 2018:**The Houthis fire a ballistic missile at Saudi Arabia's defense ministry in Riyadh. Saudi forces intercept the missile, resulting in no damage. Source: [Reuters](#) [137]
- **March 25, 2018:**Houthi militants fire seven missiles at Saudi cities on the third anniversary of the Saudi intervention in the Yemeni war. The Saudi military shoots down the missiles before they hit, but debris kills one and wounds two others. Houthi-run media claims the missiles had targeted the King Khalid international airport in Riyadh. Saudi Arabia blames Iran for the attack. Source: [Guardian](#) [272]
- **February 24, 2018:**Two suicide car bombers and six gunmen attempt to raid the Yemeni counterterrorism unit's headquarters in Aden, killing at least 14 and wounding 40. Security forces kill all six gunmen. ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq news agency. Source: [Reuters](#) [273]
- **February 10, 2018:**Houthi militants fire missiles toward the city of Taiz. One missile kills a 1-year-old and her grandmother in the Thaabat neighborhood, east of Taiz. The second missile strikes a car in the Al-Majlya neighborhood, also east of Taiz, killing two, including a 3-year-old, and wounding 14 others. Source: [Al Arabiya English](#) [274]
- **January 29, 2018 - January 31, 2018:**Separatists from Southern Yemen, who have fought alongside the internationally recognized government of President Abd Rabbu Mansour al-Hadi, attack the government's base in Aden after Hadi refuses to dismiss his choice of prime minister. The fighting ends after three days, leaving at least 20 of the separatists dead. The separatist forces withdraw and separatist leader Aidaroos al-Zubaidi tells Reuters that his forces remain loyal to Hadi in the fight against Houthi rebels. Source: [Reuters](#) [275]
- **January 30, 2018:**A suicide bomber drives his car through a security checkpoint in the Shabwa province, after which gunmen open fire, killing at least 15. Al-Qaeda is suspected. Sources: [Arab News](#) [276], [Al Jazeera](#) [277]
- **January 22, 2018:**Houthi rebels fire six rockets at Taiz province, killing nine, including a journalist and a child. The attack comes during the opening of a new security facility in Nashma. Source: [Middle East Eye](#) [278]
- **December 25, 2017:**Houthi rebels in Sanaa attempt to launch a ballistic missile, but the missile instead crashes near the city, killing at least 10 people. Source: [Al Arabiya English](#) [279]
- **December 19, 2017:**For the second time in two months, Houthi rebels fire a ballistic missile at Saudi capital Riyadh. The missile is intercepted, causing no casualties, according to Saudi officials. The Saudi government claims it has been targeted by an "Iranian-Houthi missile." Source: [New York Times](#) [280]

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- **December 2, 2017 - December 4, 2017:** On December 2, former President Ali Abdullah Saleh offers to “turn a new page” with the Saudi-led coalition fighting against Houthi forces if the Saudis end their month-long blockade of the country. Saleh’s supporters had until then fought alongside Houthi rebels, but the Houthis view Saleh’s offer as a betrayal and fighting breaks out between the rebels and Saleh’s loyalists. At least 125 people are killed and 238 are wounded in the fighting. On December 4, Houthi forces stop Saleh at a checkpoint as he is trying to leave Sanaa and kill the former president. The Houthi-controlled Interior Ministry announces Saleh’s death later in the day. Saleh’s General People’s Congress party confirms he was killed by a sniper. Houthi forces also announce that they had blown up Saleh’s home in Sanaa. Sources: [CNN](#) [34], [BBC News](#) [31], [Al Jazeera](#) [36], [Al Jazeera](#) [35], [Reuters](#) [281]
- **November 29, 2017:** A car bomb outside the finance ministry building in Aden kills at least five people and wounds 12 others. ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq news agency. Sources: [Reuters](#) [282], [Reuters](#) [283], [Xinhau](#) [284]
- **November 14, 2017:** A suicide car bomb explodes at a base in Aden used by a local security force allied with the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen. At least six people are killed and dozens are wounded. ISIS claims responsibility and identifies the bomber as Abu Hajar al-Adani. Source: [Reuters](#) [285]
- **November 5, 2017:** A suicide car bomb explodes outside the main security headquarters in Aden, killing at least 15 and wounding 20. There are reports of violent clashes erupting after the explosion. ISIS claims responsibility and claims at least 50 people were killed in the explosion and fighting but provides no evidence of its involvement. Sources: [Reuters](#) [285], [Reuters](#) [286]
- **March 27, 2017:** A suicide bomber attempts to drive an explosives-filled mini-bus into a government building in al-Houta, the Lahj provincial capital. Security forces fire on the bus, killing the driver who crashes the vehicle into the building’s gates. Ensuing clashes between security forces and gunmen kill six security personnel and four civilians. Five attackers are also killed. AQAP’s Ansar al-Sharia claims responsibility. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [287], [Middle East Eye](#) [288], [Reuters](#) [289]
- **January 30, 2017:** Houthis attack a Saudi ship off the coast of Yemen, allegedly ramming into the ship and causing an explosion. The attack kills two crew members and injures three others. Separately, the group launches a ballistic missile on a Saudi military base on the Red Sea island of Zuqar. Rockets also hit and damage U.N. offices in southern Saudi Arabia in an attack Saudi Arabia attributed to Houthis. Sources: [Reuters](#) [290], [Associated Press](#) [291], [Reuters](#) [292]
- **January 29, 2017:** The U.S. Navy’s Seal Team 6 raids a house in Yemen’s Badya province suspected of being an al-Qaeda base. The raid results in a firefight between U.S. forces and al-Qaeda militants. One U.S. commando and 14 AQAP fighters are killed. At least eight Yemeni women and seven children, including the 8-year-old daughter of deceased AQAP propagandist Anwar al-Awlaki, are also killed, according to Yemeni officials. It is the first death of a U.S. soldier in the fight with AQAP. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [293], [NBC News](#) [294], [NBC News](#) [295], [New York Times](#) [296]
- **December 18, 2016:** A suicide bomber dressed as a soldier enters the Al Solban military base in Aden as soldiers lined up to receive their salaries. The bomber kills at least 52 soldiers and wounds 34. ISIS claims responsibility. Source: [CNN](#) [297]
- **December 10, 2016:** A suicide bomber kills at least 48 at the Al Solban military base in Aden as soldiers lined up to receive their salaries. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Washington Post](#) [298], [CNN](#) [297]
- **August 29, 2016:** A suicide car bombing at a military training camp in Aden kills at least 71 people and wounds 33. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Washington Post](#) [298], [Telegraph](#) [299], [CNN](#) [300]
- **May 2016 - July 2016:** Beginning with the May 1 seizure of a Saudi military base, Houthi forces attack Saudi and Yemeni targets along the Yemen border and across the Yemen-Saudi border, collectively killing at least 40 individuals. Later that month, 28 rebels and 20 coalition soldiers die in clashes in southern Yemen. On June 3, Houthis launch rockets at the western city of Taiz, killing at least 17 civilians in a busy marketplace. On July 25, Houthi forces launch a ballistic missile into a Saudi military camp along the Yemen border, destroying several armored vehicles and killing several soldiers. Sources: [Reuters](#) [301], [Reuters](#) [302], [Middle East Eye](#) [303], [Saudi Gazette](#) [304], [New Arab](#) [305], [Al-Araby](#) [306], [Al Masdar News](#) [307]
- **May 23, 2016:** A suicide bombing in Aden kills at least 45 army recruits waiting to enlist. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Washington Post](#) [298], [New York Times](#) [308]
- **April 9, 2016:** Gunmen attack a convoy of Yemeni army troops transiting through an AQAP-controlled city in Abyan province. The gunmen wound 17 soldiers and capture another 20, who are later executed. The Yemeni military blames AQAP, which denies responsibility. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [309]
- **March 25, 2016:** ISIS suicide bombings and gun attacks against three government checkpoints in Aden kill at least 22. Source: [BBC News](#) [310]
- **March 4, 2016:** ISIS militants storm a nursing home in Aden, kill four foreign nurses and 11 Yemeni nationals, and kidnap an Indian priest.

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- On March 25, ISIS militants crucify the priest. Source: [Metro](#) [311]
- **December 7, 2015:**An ISIS car bomb kills the governor of Yemen's Aden province, along with five of his bodyguards. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [148]
 - **October 6, 2015:**Four ISIS suicide bombings across Yemen kill at least 25 people, including several Emirati soldiers. Source: [New York Times](#) [312]
 - **September 24, 2015:**Dual ISIS suicide bombings at a Shiite mosque in Sanaa kill 25. Source: [BBC News](#) [313]
 - **April 16, 2015:**AQAP attacks government facilities in al-Mukalla in Hadramout province, capturing an airport and other surrounding territory. The fighters also break into a prison in Hadramout, freeing an estimated 300 prisoners in one of the attacks, including Khaled Batarfi, a mid-level AQAP commander. Sources: [NBC News](#) [314], [Critical Threats](#) [315]
 - **March 20, 2015:**ISIS suicide bombings at two Shiite mosques in Sanaa kill at least 142 and injure another 345. Additionally, ISIS militants seize the city of al-Houta, loot banks and businesses, and execute 29 Yemeni soldiers before they are repelled by two army brigades. Sources: [Guardian](#) [142], [CNN](#) [140], [Critical Threat](#) [147]
 - **January 22, 2015:**Houthi forces seize the presidential palace and place President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi under house arrest. Hadi escapes and flees to Aden on February 21. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [316]
 - **January 7, 2015:**A suspected AQAP bombing outside a police academy in Sanaa kills at least 37 and wounds another 66. Many of those killed are police recruits and cadets at the academy. Source: [BBC News](#) [317]
 - **December 31, 2014:**A suspected AQAP suicide bombing kills at least 49 Houthi fighters and wounds another 70 in the central city of Ibb during a celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [146]
 - **December 16, 2014:**AQAP dual suicide bombings targeting Houthi rebels in the central city of Radaa kill 31, including 20 children. Source: [CNN](#) [68]
 - **December 6, 2014:**Two hostages held by AQAP, American Luke Somers and South African Pierre Korkie, are killed when U.S. security forces attempt to free Somers. U.S. intelligence officials allege prior to the raid that AQAP, which had held Somers for more than 15 months, was preparing to execute him. Korkie, who had been held for 18 months, was due to be released that day following the release of his wife in January. Sources: [Reuters](#) [318], [New York Times](#) [319]
 - **October 27, 2014:**A suspected AQAP suicide bombing kills 20 Houthi fighters in al-Manasseh, central Yemen. Source: [Reuters](#) [320]
 - **October 9, 2014:**A suspected AQAP suicide bombing kills at least 47 and wounds another 75 at a Houthi rally in Sanaa. Additionally, an AQAP attack in Hadramout kills 20 soldiers and wounds 13. Sources: [Reuters](#) [321], [Guardian](#) [322]
 - **September 28, 2014:**An AQAP suicide bombing kills at least 15 at a hospital used as a Houthi base east of Sanaa. Separately, an AQAP ambush kills five Houthi fighters in southern Yemen. Source: [Reuters](#) [323]
 - **September 25, 2014:**AQAP announces the execution of a Yemeni intelligence director, Mohammad Taher al Shami, and four other intelligence officers in the central Yemeni province of al-Dale. Source: [Long War Journal](#) [324]
 - **June 2009 - September 2014:**In June 2009, unidentified militants kidnap a German family of five, two German women, a South Korean woman, and a British engineer in the province of Saada. The two German women and the South Korean are executed outright. Saudi security forces free the two daughters of the German family in May 2010. In September 2014, German government officials confirm the deaths of the parents and their infant son. Officials suspect the kidnappers are Islamists who targeted the group due to their Christian proselytizing. Source: [Deutsche Welle](#) [325]
 - **July 8, 2014:**Houthi militants take control of Omran city, capital of Omran province and a stronghold of then-ruling al-Islah party. At least 100 are killed. Sources: [Reuters](#) [114], [Critical Threats](#) [326]
 - **June 26, 2014:**AQAP militants seize the airport in Seyoun, Hadramout, killing three Yemeni soldiers. A simultaneous car bombing nearby kills five soldiers. Source: [Long War Journal](#) [327]
 - **June 5, 2014:**AQAP militants attack a checkpoint in Yemen's southern Shabwa province, killing at least eight Yemeni soldiers and six government-allied tribesmen. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [328]
 - **May 24, 2014:**AQAP gunmen attack Seyoun, Hadramout, killing at least 12 government soldiers and wounding another 11. Source: [Reuters](#) [329]
 - **May 14, 2014:**AQAP attacks in Shabwa province kill 10 Yemeni soldiers. Source: [Long War Journal](#) [330]
 - **May 9, 2014:**AQAP militants attack the presidential palace in Sanaa, killing four soldiers. Source: [BBC News](#) [331]

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- **April 8, 2014:**AQAP militants attack a checkpoint in Hadramout, killing eight Yemeni soldiers. Source: [Long War Journal](#) [332]
- **February 13, 2014:**AQAP militants attack Sanaa's central prison, killing seven guards. The attackers free 19 AQAP members and 10 other prisoners. Source: [Long War Journal](#) [333]
- **September 20, 2013:**Two car bombs explode at a military base in al-Nashama, east of Aden, killing 21. Gunmen then kill 10 in Mayfaa in southern Yemen. AQAP claims responsibility for the simultaneous attacks. Source: [Reuters](#) [334]
- **September 1, 2013:**AQAP militants kill 13 soldiers and wound another 40 in an attack in Shabwa province, southern Yemen. Source: [Yemen Times](#) [335]
- **January 28, 2013:**A car bomb in Rida, 100 miles southeast of Sanaa, kills 11 and injures 17. A suicide bomber in the central al-Badya province kills at least eight Yemeni soldiers. AQAP claims both attacks. Source: [Al-Arabiya](#) [336]
- **December 10, 2012:**AQAP militants kill 17 Yemeni soldiers in an ambush in central Yemen. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [61]
- **November 28, 2012:**Unknown attackers kill a Saudi diplomat and his bodyguard in Sanaa. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [61]
- **September 13, 2012:**Hundreds of Yemeni protesters storm the U.S. embassy compound in Sanaa in demonstrations over a controversial film made in the United States. The attack causes \$20 million in damage on the embassy. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [61]
- **September 11, 2012:**A car bomb targets a convoy carrying Yemen's defense minister. The defense minister survives but 12 others are killed. AQAP is suspected. Source: [Reuters](#) [337]
- **August 18, 2012:**Suspected AQAP militants attack a Political Security Organization compound in Aden, killing at least 14. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [61]
- **August 5, 2012:**An AQAP suicide bombing in the city of Jaar kills 45. Source: [New York Post](#) [338]
- **June 2012:**AQAP landmines kill 73 civilians in southern Yemen. The terror group planted the mines during their retreat from strongholds in the region following an offensive by Yemeni security forces. Source: [Associated Press](#) [339]
- **May 21, 2012:**An ASY bomber, disguised as a soldier, detonates his suicide vest in a group of Yemeni army soldiers practicing for Yemen National Day, killing 120 soldiers. Source: [Yemen Post](#) [340]
- **May 21, 2012:**An ASY bomber, disguised as a soldier, detonates his suicide vest in a group of Yemeni army soldiers practicing for Yemen National Day, killing 120 soldiers. Source: [Yemen Post](#) [340]
- **March 4, 2012:**An AQAP assault on the southern city of Zinjibar kills 185 Yemeni soldiers. Additionally, AQAP militants capture 70 soldiers. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [61]
- **April 1, 2012:**Houthi forces seize control of Hajjah and al-Jawf provinces. Source: [Yemen Politics](#) [341]
- **February 25, 2012:**A suicide bombing at the presidential palace in al-Mukalla, Hadramout, kills 26 soldiers. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [61]
- **May 25, 2011:**AQAP kidnaps three French aid workers, who are later released in November. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [342]
- **July 20, 2011:**AQAP militants kill a British security contractor in Aden by rigging his car with explosives. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [342]
- **June 7, 2011:**A suspected AQAP fighter kills a colonel and sergeant of the Saudi border guards while attempting to illegally cross into Saudi Arabia. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [342]
- **March 22, 2011:**Houthi forces take control of Saada province. Sources: [New York Times](#) [343], [Trend News Agency](#) [344]
- **January 7, 2011:**AQAP militants kill 15 to 20 soldiers in an ambush in Abyan province. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [342]
- **June 20, 2010:**Suspected al-Qaeda militants attack a government intelligence building in Aden, killing 11 and freeing several detainees. Source: [Guardian](#) [345]
- **December 25, 2009:**Nigerian national Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab attempt to detonate a bomb on a U.S. airliner bound for Detroit by using a syringe to ignite explosives concealed in his underwear. The detonator fails, Abdulmutallab's pants and the wall of the aircraft catch fire, and passengers overpower him. Sources: [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [149], [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [150], [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [89], [New York Times](#) [179]

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- **October 2009:**Clashes erupt between the Houthis and Saudi security forces along Yemen’s northern border. The Houthis accuse Saudi Arabia of supporting the Yemeni government in attacks against them, which the Saudi government denies. Source: [BBC News](#) [107]
- **March 15, 2009:**An AQAP bombing kills four South Korean tourists in Hadramout. Source: [CNN](#) [346]
- **September 17, 2008:**Dual suicide bombings at the U.S. embassy in Sanaa kill 18, including one American. The al-Qaeda-linked Islamic Jihad in Yemen claims the attack. Source: [Al-Arabiya](#) [347]
- **March 18, 2008:**A mortar attack, targeting the U.S. embassy in Sanaa, misses and explodes in a high school for girls, killing one and injuring 18. Source: [NBC News](#) [348]
- **January 19, 2008:**Suspected AQAP gunmen open fire on a group of tourists in Hadramout, killing two Belgian tourists and two Yemeni drivers. Source: [New York Times](#) [349]
- **July 2, 2007:**An al-Qaeda suicide bombing in Marib kills seven Spanish tourists and two Yemeni nationals. Source: [Asharq al-Awsat](#) [350]
- **March 2005 - April 2005:**Fighting between Houthi supporters and government forces leave more than 200 dead. Source: [BBC News](#) [107]
- **June 1, 2004:**Militants under Hussein Bader Addian al-Houthi begin taking territory in Saada province and agitating for greater autonomy and protection for Zaidi Shiites. Houthi dies in clashes with government forces in September 2004. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [104], [BBC News](#) [107], [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#) [351]
- **December 30, 2002:**An Islamist gunman kills three U.S. aid workers and wounds another at a missionary-run hospital in Jibla, Yemen. Source: [CNN](#) [352]
- **October 6, 2002:**An explosive-laden vessel is rammed into the side of the oil tanker the Limburg off the coast of Aden, killing one Bulgarian crewmember and injuring another 12. Al-Qaeda claims responsibility. Sources: [BBC News](#) [353], [BBC News](#) [354]
- **October 12, 2000:**Suicide bombers driving an inflatable raft packed with explosives ram into the U.S.S. Cole, killing 17 U.S. service members and injuring at least 40. Both bombers are Yemenis, and six men are arrested in connection with the plot, including Saudi national Abdel Rahim al-Nashiri, who is reportedly al-Qaeda’s chief of naval operations in the Persian Gulf. Sources: [BBC News](#) [355], [Global Security](#) [174]
- **December 29, 1998:**The al-Qaeda-linked Islamic Army of Aden-Abyan kidnaps 16 Western tourists, including 12 Britons, two Americans, and two Australians. Four are killed in a subsequent rescue attempt. Source: [Guardian](#) [356]
- **December 29, 1992:**Al-Qaeda militants bomb the Gold Mohur hotel in Aden, targeting U.S. Marines transiting to Somalia. Simultaneously, another group of fighters is discovered at the airport targeting U.S. aircraft with rockets. The attacks fail to kill any Americans, but two Austrian tourists are killed in the hotel bombing. Sources: [National Geographic](#) [357], [Frontline](#) [358], [NBC News](#) [359]

Domestic Counter-Extremism

Yemen’s political leadership has stressed the importance of developing initiatives to counter violent extremism within its borders, according to the U.S. State Department. The government has been unable to implement such programs due to the ongoing civil war. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [360])

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been pivotal in the Yemeni civil war as they provided weapons, money, and thousands of ground troops to drive out the Houthi rebels. However, on July 11, 2019, the UAE government decided to partially withdraw their forces citing the war’s high costs. Although both the UAE-backed separatists and the Saudi-backed internationally recognized Yemeni government are coalition members fighting against the Houthis, there has recently been increased tension between the two sides given the lack of progress in taking down the Houthis. The UAE claims to be shifting its focus from fighting Houthi rebels to combating extremist Islamist groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda on home soil. Since the announcement, the Houthis have increased the frequency of attacks on strategic towns near Hodeida which has significantly affected supply lines to Saudi-led forces throughout the city. (Sources: [CNN](#) [361], [New York Times](#) [231])

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Legislation

The Yemeni government does not have comprehensive counterterrorism legislation. A 2008 draft counterterrorism bill remains stalled due to the inability of the Yemeni parliament to meet during the country's civil war. The law would permit the detention of terrorist suspects and trigger mandatory sentencing for a variety of terrorism-related offenses. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [360])

Border Security

Yemen's maritime borders are porous and unsecure and the Yemeni military and coast guard, have been degraded a result of war. AQAP's control of pockets of territory along the southern coast has enabled the militant group to smuggle weapons and goods to aid terrorist activities. In 2014, Yemen participated in the Yemen Quadrilateral Border Talks (YQBT), a joint forum comprised of officials from Yemen, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United States to discuss methods of securing the Yemeni border. The YQBT is led by the United States and briefs its participants in training techniques and effective border security methods. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [362], [U.S. Department of State](#) [360], [WikiLeaks](#) [363])

Law Enforcement

Since the 1980s, the Yemeni criminal justice system has deteriorated due to lack of financial support and corruption. According to the U.S. Department of State, Yemen's police entities are ineffective in preventing crime and terrorism and face considerable distrust from the country's population. The country's prison system is burdened with rundown facilities, limited trained staff, and faces frequent attacks by violent extremist groups attempting to rescue its imprisoned members. In January 2014, Yemen's rival political factions concluded the 10-month-long National Dialogue Conference, conducted at the behest of the United Nations and Gulf Cooperation Council. In addition to agreeing on an outline of a new constitution, participants concluded that the inadequate criminal justice system remains one of the Yemeni population's primary concerns. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [364], [U.S. Department of State](#) [360])

U.S. Military Operations

Since 9/11, the United States has conducted intermittent counterterrorism operations in Yemen, including surveillance, drone strikes, and special operations. In November 2001, the United States signed a \$400 million aid deal with Yemeni officials which permitted the United States to create a CIA base in Yemen to conduct counterterrorism procedures. U.S. operatives used the base to train Yemeni anti-terrorism units and collect intelligence on the country's militant groups. By April 2002, the U.S. government had designated Yemen as a combat zone in support of the war on terror, also known as Operation Enduring Freedom. The designation resulted in the U.S. military stationing nearly 800 soldiers at a U.S. base in Djibouti to serve as a quick reaction force against al-Qaeda in Yemen. (Sources: [The Nation](#) [365], [U.S. Internal Revenue Service](#) [366], [Congressional Research Service](#) [367], [Telegraph](#) [16], [New York Times](#) [17], [BBC News](#) [18])

On November 3, 2002, the United States' first-ever targeted assassination using a drone was conducted in Yemen's Marib province against six senior al-Qaeda militants, including al-Qaeda leader Qa'id Salim Sinan al Harithi. Harithi, also known as Abu Mi, was one of the alleged masterminds behind the *USS Cole* bombing in which al-Qaeda militants killed 17 U.S. sailors and wounded nearly 40 more. The United Nations condemned the strike because it did not consider Yemen a war zone at the time. Following international pressure, the U.S. military halted overt military action in Yemen for the next seven years. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [19], [Time](#) [20], [Los Angeles Times](#) [21], [New York Times](#) [368], [UNHCHR](#) [369])

When former U.S. President Barack Obama took office in 2009, he revived the drone program in Yemen. A December 2009 drone strike, the first since 2002, resulted in the deaths of 55 individuals, including at least 40 civilians. Nonetheless, Obama continued to employ drone strikes against the al-Qaeda networks throughout Yemen, Somalia, and Pakistan, authorizing more than 500 strikes in those countries, killing approximately 3,000 militants. One of the United States' most prolific drone strikes in Yemen occurred on September 30, 2011, when the CIA killed American-born AQAP propagandists [Anwar al-Awlaki](#) [72] and [Samir Khan](#) [370]. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [22], [Bureau of Investigative Journalism](#) [371], [New York Times](#) [75])

U.S. President Donald Trump, who assumed office in January 2017, has increased counterterrorism operations against

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AQAP in Yemen. On January 28, 2017, a team of Navy SEALs raided an AQAP headquarters in Yemen's Bayda governorate, resulting in the deaths of a SEAL and up to 13 civilians, in addition to 14 militants. U.S. authorities deemed the mission a success and claimed the SEALs recovered "important intelligence" from the headquarters. Following the raid, Yemen retracted its permission for the United States to conduct ground missions in the country. But as of March 6, 2017, the United States has conducted more than 40 strikes in just over the two months since Trump took office, compared to the 41 strikes in all of 2012, then the most in a single year against AQAP by the United States. As of March 6, 2017, the United States has carried out a total of 197 drone and air strikes in Yemen since 2002, killing up to 1,284 militants, according to the New America Foundation. (Source: [Washington Post](#) [23], [New York Times](#) [24], [New York Times](#) [372], [New York Times](#) [373], [New America Foundation](#) [25], [CNN](#) [374])

In 2017, the United States carried out 131 airstrikes against AQAP and ISIS in Yemen, an increase from 21 strikes over 2016. According to a senior U.S. intelligence official interviewed by NBC News, the strikes have "killed fighters, eviscerated AQAP's propaganda network, cut off external support and enabled UAE partners to regain territory." According to U.S. defense officials, airstrikes in 2017 killed key al-Qaeda leaders in Yemen, including external operations facilitator Miqdad al Sana'ani and AQAP deputy arms facilitator Habib al-Sana'ani. (Sources: [CENTCOM](#) [375], [NBC News](#) [376])

Operation Restoring Hope

In March 2015, a Saudi-led military coalition intervened in Yemen's civil war to suppress the Iranian-backed Houthi rebellion in northern Yemen and restore the legitimate government. The nine-country Arab coalition, initially dubbed Operation Decisive Storm, includes Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. Saudi Arabia has committed 150,000 soldiers and 100 fighter jets to the coalition and is backed by air and naval support from Egypt. The remaining partners have all contributed air support and participate in intelligence sharing. The United States also assists the coalition by providing intelligence and logistical support, including aerial refueling and search-and-rescue missions. The operation began on March 26, 2015, with airstrikes against the Houthi rebels in northern Yemen to "remove the threat to Saudi Arabia and its neighboring countries," according to Saudi officials. (Sources: [CNN](#) [377], [ABC News](#) [378])

After nearly a month-long bombing campaign, Saudi Arabia announced the conclusion of Operation Decisive Storm in order to transition to Operation Restoring Hope on April 21, 2015. The rebranded operation promised a mission "continuing to protect civilians, continuing to fight terrorism and continuing to facilitate the evacuation of foreign nationals and to intensify relief and medical assistance to the Yemeni people," according to Saudi officials. The Saudi-led coalition came under international pressure to halt its air campaign, which displaced thousands. Despite Operation Restoring Hope's focus on providing aid to the Yemeni population, the new mission continued intermittent airstrikes and ground intervention. (Sources: [International Business Times](#) [379], [Bloomberg](#) [380])

Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi returned to Aden, Yemen, in September 2015, after six months in exile in Saudi Arabia, when the coalition retook the city from Houthi fighters. Despite Hadi's return, the coalition continues to operate against the Houthi strongholds throughout northern Yemen, including in Sanaa. (Source: [Los Angeles Times](#) [381])

Arab coalition spokesman Ahmed Asiri told Al Arabiya News on January 7, 2017, that "the Yemeni army is still achieving progress on all fronts in Yemen. We've worked on targeting Houthi rebels while training the Yemeni army at the same time." The Yemeni army is now proficient enough to control the military operations in its country, according to Ahmed. As of March 8, 2017, Hadi's internationally recognized government controls 85 percent of the country, while the Houthi rebels control 15 percent. (Sources: [Al Arabiya](#) [10], [Middle East Monitor](#) [11])

United Arab Emirates Fight against AQAP

In April 2015, UAE forces partnered with local tribes in southern and eastern Yemen in order to counter the AQAP insurgency in the key port city of Mukalla and the Lahij-Abyan coastal corridor. By April 2016, the UAE, Yemeni government, and local tribes established a 10,000-strong force to recapture the port city from AQAP. The UAE-led operation liberated the city in two days and has since conducted pursuit operations, targeting AQAP-controlled pockets east of Aden and west of al-Mukalla. Following the capture of al-Mukalla, AQAP militants surrendered the coastal cities of

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Zinjibar and Jaar to the coalition's tribal forces. The UAE-led operation has been the primary force against AQAP in the southern regions. The United States has provided the UAE with military support, including intelligence, ships, and special operations. However, the escalating costs of war and the never-ending number of casualties in what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis, has resulted in the UAE planning to withdraw over 5,000 forces from Yemen. This security shakeup will provide more opportunity for the Houthis to initiate attacks and reclaim territory throughout the south without significant forces to battle, because according to Michael Knights, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute, "the only thing stopping the Houthis from taking over Yemen was the U.A.E. armed forces." (Sources: [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#) [382], [Associated Press](#) [383], [Voice of America](#) [384], [CNN](#) [361], [New York Times](#) [231])

International Counter-Extremism

With the overwhelming rise of terrorist and militant groups competing for power throughout Yemen, the Yemeni government is focused on its own fight to regain control and unable to launch any significant or sustained counter-extremism efforts abroad. To the contrary, regional and global powers continue to launch foreign intervention in Yemen.

Regional Criminal Justice Sector Reform Series

In 2014, Yemen became a member of the Regional Criminal Justice Sector Reform Series, a U.S. State Department initiative that brings together officials from African and Middle Eastern countries experiencing political transitions. Its meetings stress information sharing, best practices, and implementation strategies on civilian security and justice sector reform, according to the U.S. Department of State. The member states include Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Tunisia, and Yemen. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [360])

Combating Terrorist Financing

Yemen is a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), a regional organization that aims to combat terrorist financing and money laundering. Due to the country's violent conflicts, Yemen has not participated in MENAFATF meetings since 2014. In June 2014, the MENAFATF assessed that Yemen had taken significant steps to improving its anti-money laundering and countering terrorist financing but noted that there were still strategic deficiencies. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [362], [U.S. Department of State](#) [360])

Public Opinion

Public opinion is difficult to gauge in Yemen given the lack of public polling information available due to the continuing violence in the country. Nonetheless, some basic trends can be discerned about how Yemenis assess the threat from Islamist violence. Yemen is greatly concerned about the dangers posed by Islamic extremism and there is a lack of confidence among the general population in the Yemeni government to provide security. (Sources: [Yemen Polling Center](#) [385], [Yemen Polling Center](#) [26])

In January 2013, the Yemen Polling Center (YPC) conducted a survey which interviewed almost 2,000 people across Yemen's 21 governorates. Of those surveyed, 38.87 percent believe the country's security situation is getting worse. Almost 28.18 percent believe it is better while 22.95 percent do not believe it has changed. Despite these beliefs, 32.02 percent of the subjects believe anti-terrorism efforts in Yemen are improving as opposed to 20.59 percent who do not. In comparison to the previous year, 55.11 percent believe the security situation in Yemen has improved.

The 2013 YPC poll revealed that of the armed groups in Yemen, Houthis disrupt the country's security the most (10.2 percent), followed by the al-Qaeda-linked groups (8.7 percent), AQAP and Ansar al-Sharia. More than 50 percent of those surveyed answered "no one" ruins security in their governorates. Approximately 40 percent rely on providing security themselves, while more than 22 percent rely on local tribal groups. Nearly 22 percent rely on local police for security and just under 3 percent rely on the federal government. (Source: [Yemen Polling Center](#) [26])

A 2011 survey conducted the international polling company Gallup found that 48 percent of its 5,000 Yemeni subjects do

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not have confidence in their national government, a 9 percent increase from its findings the previous year. Nearly 90 percent of those who do not have confidence in their government believe corruption is widespread throughout the Yemeni government. (Source: [Gallup](#) [386])