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Yemen War Continues From Aden to Sanaa

By Abayomi Azikiwe

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United Nations peace plan stalled amid escalation in ground offensive by U.S.-backed forces

Reports are streaming out of Yemen saying that the anti-Ansurallah (Houthis) forces have initiated an offensive in the strategic southern port city of Aden.

Fighters allied with the exiled President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi have intensified their attacks on the Ansurallah-controlled areas inside and outside the city including the airport. These ground assaults are reinforced through the continuing airstrikes by the Saudi Arabian and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Militias and army units loyal to the Hadi government which is now based in Riyadh have reportedly taken control of Tawahi, the remaining district in central Aden that was still held by the Iran-allied Ansurallah forces and its allies within other sections of the Yemeni military following the leadership of another former leader Ali Abdullah Saleh.

These accounts of the conditions inside Aden are being relayed by pro-Hadi spokespersons. The United States is supporting the Hadi regime through refueling technology and intelligence provided to the Saudi-GCC alliance aircraft carrying out daily bombing raids in Aden as well as across this Middle Eastern nation.

This impoverished and underdeveloped state has been bombed for nearly four months by the Saudi-GCC Coalition. On March 26, after the collapse of the U.S. presence in Yemen, the forces in the region working in conjunction with Washington's foreign policy have waged a brutal war against the people of the country.

In the most recent phase of the war in Aden, Operation Golden Arrow was initiated on July 15 in coordination with the Southern Popular Resistance, which opposes the Ansurallah, along with reinforced pro-Saudi forces. In the southern region of Yemen secessionist sentiment is still very strong since this region of the country was independent prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union and a civil war during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Although the Saudi-GCC alliance backed regime of ousted President Hadi claimed that they have retaken Aden, other eyewitness accounts say that even though the Houthi movement has lost control of key areas of the city, many who are fighting on the ground are not necessarily supportive of the SaudGCC position in the conflict, but want the Ansurallah out of their areas.

In the aftermath of the claims made of the collapse of the Ansurallah forces in and around Aden, on July 20 there was a counter-offensive by the Shite-based movement which has spread its influence from the North.

Reports from inside the country say that Yemenis from the Ansurallah movement shelled a town near Aden resulting in nearly 100 deaths. One international aid group, Doctors Without Borders, characterized the level of fighting as "the worst day" for the city and its surroundings in over three months of war. The Houthis and their allies began shelling the town of Dar Saad on July 19.

Illustrating the role of the Saudi-GCC fighter-bombers in Yemen, on July 19 the U.S.-backed coalition struck Houthi bases north of Aden and in Dar Saad, killing 55 people.

Fighting continued as well in Taiz on July 20. Taiz is Yemen's third-largest city and it has been a contested area for weeks. The clashes on July 20 killed eight residents, while ground fighting raged on in Marib, with six anti-Houthi militiamen and 10 Ansurallah fighters killed in clashes.

In addition to the shifting political and military situation in the south of the Yemen, there are claims that Saudi and United Arab Emirates Special Forces are now operating in the area.

According to the Financial Times, "Southern anti-Houthi forces seized control of much of the port of Aden with the help of United Arab Emirates Special Forces and Yemenis trained in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, said fighters in the city and overseas analysts."

This same report goes on to note that "Analysts and sources on the ground in Aden tell the Financial Times that the Aden offensive had been planned for weeks, if not months. Members of the UAE Special Forces have been embedded with southern resistance fighters since April while local fighters were being trained in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. For several weeks, shipments of arms, Yemeni fighters and armored personnel carriers have been arriving in the last resistance stronghold in Aden, the western Bureiqah district, in preparation for a major offensive." (July 15)

The Wall Street Journal observed also that the U.S.-backed forces fighting the Ansurallah in Aden were working in coalition with Al-Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). These alliances have been taking place in an effort to thwart the influence of Iran which politically supports the Houthis as they have taken large areas of the country including the capital of Sanaa.

A writer on the situation now prevailing in Yemen says "Local militias backed by Saudi Arabia, special forces from the United Arab Emirates and al Qaeda militants all fought on the same side this week to wrest back control over most of Yemen's second city, Aden, from pro-Iranian Houthi rebels, according to local residents and Houthi forces. As Yemen's conflict degenerates into a precarious tangle of alliances, it poses a new quandary for the U.S. Yemen was a cornerstone of the American global counterterrorism strategy until earlier this year when the Houthis drove out a government that was working with Washington. The U.S. then backed a Saudi-led coalition that launched airstrikes against the Houthis in March." (WSJ, July 15)

Bombing of Sanaa Continues

In the capital of Sanaa which was taken by the Ansurallah forces last September, the situation remains tense. This city has been subjected to intense aerial bombardments from the Saudi-GCC alliance for nearly four months.

The Saudi-GCC coalition attacked the residence of Mehdi Meqlawa, a well-known colleague of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, in a Sanaa suburb. In the Yemeni capital, it also bombed the Ansurallah headquarters near the Souq Aziz market, killing at least one person.

An Associated Press report on July 20 said "a car bomb went off near the house of a Houthi rebel leader in the capital Sanaa, killing seven and damaging the gates of the house, according to witnesses and officials. Medical officials said six people were also wounded in the attack. One

security official said five were killed. It was not possible to reconcile the difference in casualty figures, common in the immediate aftermath of such attacks. A local affiliate of the Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the car bomb in the western Garef neighborhood, saying it targeted a 'den' of the Houthis, according to a statement shared on Twitter accounts of supporters of the IS group.”

This article acknowledged that “It was not immediately clear if the Houthi leader, Ihab al-Kuhlani, was at home at the time of the attack and whether he was affected by the bombing.”

The bombing of mosques, political offices and residential areas are designed to not only kill large numbers of people but to also foster sectarian animosity between Sunni and Shite Islamic adherents. Parallels between developments in Yemen and what is taking place in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen are designed to perpetuate a divisive political atmosphere providing a rationale for ongoing intervention by Washington and its allies in the region.

Efforts to achieve a ceasefire for humanitarian purposes have failed due to the political intransigence of the U.S.-backed military and para-military forces operating in the theater of Yemen's war. Unless there is a halt in the fighting soon, the humanitarian situation in Yemen will worsen as well as the further regionalization of the war.