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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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12.05.2025

## ***US ceasefire in Yemen: Retreat masquerading as restraint***

The US ends its Red Sea campaign not by victory, but by necessity – under relentless pressure from an underestimated Yemeni resistance.



Photo Credit: The Cradle

In a major recalibration of its year-long Red Sea military campaign, the US has agreed to a ceasefire with Yemen's Ansarallah-aligned armed forces, [brokered by Oman](#). After months of escalating attacks under the guise of “protecting international shipping,” Washington now finds itself calling time on a conflict it launched – but failed to control.

While Yemen's leaders stress that operations in support of Gaza will persist, the US pivot signals more than de-escalation: It is a tacit admission that its campaign has collapsed under pressure, unable to achieve even its most basic strategic goals.

With over a thousand airstrikes launched since March 2024, Washington's [failure](#) to contain the Yemeni threat in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandab Strait, and the Gulf of Aden stands as a

stark indictment of its military planning. The war devolved into a costly, high-stakes exercise in attrition – one Yemen emerged from stronger, not weaker.

### **A flawed campaign from the start**

From its inception, the [US-led campaign](#) ‘Prosperity Guardian’ lacked clarity. The mission to “protect shipping lanes” quickly became an open-ended confrontation with no political roadmap. American officials misread both the battlefield and Yemen’s resilience.

Despite the might of its airpower, Washington failed to dent Sanaa’s capacity or will to fight. Instead, the bombardment accelerated Yemen’s [military innovation](#), forcing Washington into a deterrence game it could not win.

Yemen’s unconventional warfare style, grounded in its topography and culture, posed immense challenges. Leaders operated from mountainous terrain fortified by tunnel systems, well beyond the reach of satellite surveillance.

The US had little intelligence penetration into Yemen’s military hierarchy and no functioning target bank. Sanaa’s leadership, experienced from years of prior war against the Saudi and UAE-led coalition and its proxies, held the advantage.

Speaking to *The Cradle*, Colonel Rashad al-Wutayri lists five key reasons for the campaign’s failure. First, Yemen’s use of low-cost, high-impact weapons – ballistic missiles and drones – pierced even US carrier strike groups.

Second, the campaign failed to protect Israeli or allied shipping. Third, Ansarallah exposed Israeli-American [spy networks](#) and clung to its demands: Namely, an end to the war on Gaza. Fourth, apart from Bahrain, Washington’s Arab allies [declined](#) to join the US-led coalition. Fifth, the financial cost spiraled, with the US spending millions on interceptors to counter drones built for mere thousands.

### **No coalition, no ground game**

Washington’s diplomatic push to build a regional anti-Yemen coalition fell flat. [Persian Gulf states](#), still stung from their own failures in Yemen, wisely kept their distance. Saudi Arabia refused to be drawn back into a war it has been trying to exit since 2022. The UAE, meanwhile, limited its support to logistics. Egypt stayed silent, unwilling to be sucked into another regional escalation.

This reticence was not without reason. Ansarallah leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi issued [direct warnings](#) to neighboring countries: Any cooperation with the US – via bases or troops – would bring immediate retaliation.

The threat worked. When Washington explored the idea of a ground assault using US special forces and Persian Gulf-backed militias, the plan quickly collapsed. Yemen’s terrain, its

entrenched resistance, and the bitter legacy of previous Saudi-Emirati attempts made such a venture untenable.

Political analyst Abdulaziz Abu Talib tells *The Cradle* that Riyadh and Abu Dhabi have internalized the cost of further escalation. While both continue to bankroll proxy militias, they are steering clear of overt military entanglement. Yemen's ability to withstand this trilateral aggression – and to land blows on US and Israeli interests – further eroded faith in Washington's protective umbrella.

### **Bombs, billions, and blunders**

Between March 2024 and April 2025, the US launched over 1,000 airstrikes on Yemen. Yet, rather than break its adversary, the campaign emboldened it. In retaliation, Yemen escalated steadily – from targeting Israeli vessels in November 2023, to US and UK ships by January, the [Indian Ocean](#) by March, and the [Mediterranean](#) by May.

By July, Ansarallah struck Tel Aviv with [hypersonic missiles](#). A [direct hit](#) on Ben Gurion Airport followed, redrawing the region's military balance.

The costs piled up. In the first three weeks alone, the US burned through \$1 billion. Weapons like Tomahawk and JASSM missiles – costing millions apiece – were deployed against drones worth a few thousand dollars. Yemen's [own achievements mounted](#): 17 MQ-9 Reaper drones shot down, two \$60 million F-18 fighters lost in just over a week, and a declared aerial blockade of Israel.

Wutayri highlights that Yemen developed its arsenal domestically, without foreign technical assistance. That included the hypersonic missiles that bypassed Israeli and US air defenses, and drones capable of striking both military and commercial ships. Even as Washington intensified its bombardment, Yemen's operational tempo and range only grew.

### **Erosion from within**

Back in Washington, the cracks were showing. The Pentagon quietly expanded military commanders' autonomy to strike targets without White House clearance – an effort to shield the administration from political fallout. But the costs, both financial and reputational, were impossible to ignore.

US media outlets began questioning the purpose and direction of the campaign. Public patience waned. There were calls for countries benefiting from Red Sea trade – namely Persian Gulf monarchies – to shoulder the burden of maritime security.

Wutayri says the US suffered further humiliation: a destroyer and three supply ships were sunk, and both the [USS Abraham Lincoln and Harry S. Truman](#) aircraft carriers were targeted. Despite spending another \$500 million on interceptors, the results were negligible.

The image of US warplanes crashing into the sea, and of exhausted troops – some 7,000 deployed – unable to break Yemen’s resolve, dented American prestige.

More than just a response to Red Sea attacks, the campaign was part of Washington’s broader effort to [counter China’s regional influence](#), particularly Yemen’s emerging Belt and Road links. But the military track backfired, hardening local resistance and undermining US credibility.

Abu Talib notes that even stealth aircraft and strategic bombers failed to achieve deterrence. The Trump administration faced two options: retreat under the weight of defeat, or engage in talks under Ansarallah’s terms – chief among them an end to the Gaza war.

### **A war without an aim**

From the outset, Washington struggled to manufacture a narrative of victory. The Pentagon released videos of jets launching from carriers – empty spectacle, absent substance. There were no “shock and awe” moments, no milestones to sell as success.

Yemen, meanwhile, delivered iconic images; among them, a father shielding his child during a bombing raid – a powerful symbol of national defiance. As civilian casualties mounted, so did public fury. Scenes of women and children pulled from rubble circulated widely, drawing uncomfortable parallels with past US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

According to Abu Talib, Yemen’s social cohesion and rugged geography undermined every attempt to break its lines. Far from fracturing under pressure, the public rallied behind Ansarallah. The more the US escalated, the more entrenched Yemeni resistance became – both militarily and socially.

Now, the Trump administration is [shifting gears](#), seeking peace without admitting defeat. But Sanaa is not standing still. It promises continued operations, and with them, new strategic equations that could further upend the regional balance of power.

**MAY 8, 2025**