

US Threatens Military Intervention as UN Warns of “Disintegration” in Yemen

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Yemen faces “civil war and disintegration” in the wake of the overthrow of the US-backed government by a Houthi insurgency, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon declared Thursday.

“Yemen is collapsing before our eyes. We cannot stand by and watch. The current instability is creating conditions which are conducive to a reemergence of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP),” Moon said.

The comments from Moon come in the aftermath of moves by the Houthis to take over the presidential palace last week, formally dissolving the US-backed regime of Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. The Houthis have simultaneously launched new invasions of provinces to the south of Sanaa, in an effort to bring larger sections of the country under the direct control of their new regime.

This has been accompanied by reports of the seizure of a major government military installation, manned by some 2,000 troops, by Sunni militants affiliated with AQAP.

Comments from US officials late this week suggested that the US ruling elite is preparing to respond to the breakup of the Yemeni state with a new military escalation, ostensibly directed at combatting AQAP, but aimed more broadly at asserting control over the geostrategically key country.

“The bottom line is increased danger to the United States homeland,” House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry, a Republican, said in comments cited by Fox News. The Houthi takeover “makes it easier for them [AQAP] to plot and plan against us,” Thornberry said.

The rapid military successes of Houthi and AQAP militants took the US by surprise, a top counterterrorism official said Friday, comparing recent developments to the rise of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. “The situation deteriorated far more rapidly than we expected,” National Counterterrorism Center Director Nicholas Rasmussen said in testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Saudi Arabia, the Netherlands, Italy and Germany have closed their embassies, joining the US, Britain and France. Houthi leaders have protested against the embassy closures, saying they are unnecessary and making clear their readiness to negotiate with the US and other foreign powers.

The central aim of the US is to ensure that its extensive military and intelligence operations in Yemen and throughout the region are maintained. US ground forces, acknowledged by the Pentagon to be operating from bases in Aden since 2012, will continue to carry out missions against AQAP and other groups, the Obama administration has confirmed.

“There continue to be Department of Defense personnel ... on the ground in Yemen that are coordinating with their counterparts,” White House representative Josh Earnest said.

At the same time, the Central Intelligence Agency has been forced to withdraw dozens of agents and senior officers previously operating out of the US embassy, according to the *Washington Post*.

The deepening civil conflict in Yemen also threatens to draw in regional powers, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia. At least four governors in southern provinces have declared their opposition to the new Houthi government, while Saudi leaders have announced their intention to arm anti-Houthi forces in the resource-rich western province of Marib. Secessionist militants affiliated with the Southern Movement already began seizing checkpoints in southern cities last month.

Egypt has assembled a special expedition force to deploy to Yemen if there are threats to close the Bab al-Mandab straight, which controls the southern entrance to the Red Sea. “Egypt will not accept the closure of the strait in any way, and would intervene militarily if needed. ... This action affects Egyptian national security, and has a direct impact on the Suez Canal,” Egyptian Suez Canal Authority official Mohab Mamish said last week.

Yemen’s fate underscores the ongoing fragmentation of the nation-state structure throughout the Middle East and large sections of Africa, with civil war conditions emerging as tribal and sectarian factions vie to fill the developing power vacuum.

The US government is responding to these conditions—a product of US machinations throughout the Middle East, including the promotion of sectarian tensions—with a massive expansion of its military operations throughout the region. This includes the escalation of its bombing campaigns in Iraq and Syria, drone war in Somalia and special forces operations in West Africa.

The pseudo-legal foundation for a large slate of new wars is to be supplied by the latest Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) sought by the Obama administration—which ostensibly targets ISIS but in reality empowers the president to wage endless war around the globe.

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