

Summary

Renewed fighting along the frontlines in Yemen is likely, as progress in a peace agreement to end the war has stalled. Within the Republic of Yemen Government (ROYG)-controlled regions, divergent political goals between actors threaten to exacerbate tensions. In addition, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) continues its insurgent activities in Abyan and Shabwa Governorates. Aside from IED's and raids, AQAP increasingly relies on drones for its attacks. A deterioration of the security landscape in these areas is likely.

Recent events and developments

Although the rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran that began last March had added to the prospect of peace, optimism has receded in recent months. The UN-facilitated talks between the ROYG and the Houthis, backed by Riyadh and Tehran respectively, are ongoing. However, progress has stalled, and hostilities continue. On June 19, 2023, a senior Houthi leader claimed that another 10,000 fighters will deploy close to the frontlines. This comes after Houthi attacks were allegedly thwarted in recent weeks. Meanwhile, in ROYG-controlled areas, tensions between factions are rising. On June 20, the Saudi-backed Hadhrami National Council was formed by Hadramawt Governorate representatives with the aim of local governance over the region. This challenges the stated goal of the UAE-backed STC, which seeks independence and control of southern Yemen, including Hadramawt. Lastly, AQAP continues its attacks on security forces. While IED's and raids are frequent, in recent weeks AQAP has also increasingly employed drones for such activities. In 2023, at least 55 security personnel have been killed due to AQAP attacks.

Impact assessment

Without progress on a peace agreement, renewed clashes along the frontlines are highly likely. The deployment of Houthi reinforcements, as well as recent activity in Taizz, Al-Dale, and Shabwah Governorates points to a potential escalation of fighting. In the past, warfighting has also included artillery and drone strikes, sometimes targeting civilian settlements. Drone strikes such as the one on June 20 in Ain District, Shabwa Governorate, which killed one civilian, should be expected. Furthermore, the lack of a unified political vision between factions in ROYG-controlled Yemen makes infighting likely. Localized clashes between different security actors fueled by rivalries, as well as between actors with divergent political goals are possible. Moreover, AQAP will likely continue to drive insecurity in Abyan and Shabwa Governorates. This is especially the case if STC forces that now operate in the area redeploy to fight other actors. In addition, the integration of drones in AQAP's attacks has the potential to further deteriorate the security situation, as it increases the capabilities of the group and the targets it can hit.

Advice from Forth Global

- Make sure all employees travelling to Yemen undertake a three-day HEAT training prior to deployment.
- Advise staff to avoid all non-essential travel to Taizz, al-Dale, Shabwa, and Abyan Governorates. If travel is necessary, advise staff to plan their journey ahead, check the state of the roads, and consider travelling with security detail in convoy.
- Advise staff to maintain increased vigilance for armed clashes in all ROYG-controlled areas, including Aden.
- Continuously monitor local news and liaise with local partners to stay up to date with developments in the region of operations.

Customized advice

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