



We Spent a Billion Dollars Fighting the Houthis ... and Lost

Why does it seem the Pentagon is far better at spending money than actually putting together a successful operation? The failed “Operation Prosperity Guardian” and the disastrous floating Gaza pier are but two recent examples of enormously expensive initiatives that, though they no doubt enriched military contractors, were incapable of meeting their stated goals.



Ron Paul

To great fanfare, last December the Pentagon announced the launch of Operation Prosperity Guardian, a joint US/UK military operation to halt the Yemeni Houthi disruption of Israel-linked commercial shipping through the Red Sea. The Houthis announced their policy in response to civilian deaths in Israel’s war on Gaza, but when the US and UK military became involved they announced they would target US and UK shipping as well.

The operation was supposed to be quick and easy. After all, the rag-tag Houthi militia was no match for the mighty US and UK navies. But it didn’t work out that way at all. Over the weekend the Wall Street Journal published a devastating article revealing that after spending more than one billion dollars on munitions alone, the operation had failed to deter the Houthis and failed to re-open commercial shipping in the Red Sea.

The Journal reported that Avril Haines, the director of national intelligence, recently told Congress that “the U.S.-led effort has been insufficient to deter the militant group’s targeting of ships and that the threat will ‘remain active for some time.’”

Meanwhile, the article informed us that a continued US effort to fight the Houthis over Red Sea shipping was “not sustainable.” Perhaps the most revealing part of the article comes from a Washington military expert, Emily Harding of CSIS: “Their supply of weapons from Iran is cheap and highly sustainable, but ours is expensive, our supply chains are crunched, and our logistics tails are long.”

It is reminiscent of a recollection by Col. Harry G. Summers of a discussion he had with North Vietnamese Col. Tu: “You know, you never defeated us on the battlefield,” said Summers. Tu paused for a moment, then replied, “That may be so. But it is also irrelevant.”

Similarly, the US military spent a quarter of a billion dollars building a temporary floating pier to deliver aid to the starving Palestinians even though a land route already existed and would have been far cheaper to use. The project was doomed from the beginning, as days after opening stormy weather broke up the pier and washed part of it up on Israel’s shore. The US military managed to gather the



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pieces together again, but in total only a few aid trucks managed to use it before, over the weekend, the pier was again disassembled for fear of another weather-related break-up.

The only thing the pier was good for, it seems, was assisting the Israeli military in a Gaza raid on June 8th that killed 270 Palestinian civilians.

As neocons inside the Beltway continue to plot war with China over Taiwan, it seems someone should notice the trouble we have had dealing with Houthis and floating piers. For now, the growth in military spending seems unlimited, but increasing spending bringing diminishing results raises the question of just how much bang are we getting for our bucks?

We have the most expensive military on earth, they say. That may be true, but it is also irrelevant.

Ron Paul is a former U.S. congressman from Texas. This [article](#) originally appeared at the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity and is reprinted here with permission.



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