



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 21, 2015

## U.S. Fleet to Intercept Iranian Ships Bound for Yemen

The carrier USS *Theodore Roosevelt* (shown on left) and the guided-missile cruiser USS *Normandy* left the Persian Gulf on April 19 en route for the Arabian Sea, joining 10 other U.S. naval vessels off the coast of Yemen. According to a Pentagon statement, the mission of the ships is to protect the region's vital shipping lanes. But unnamed White House officials cited by the *Christian Science Monitor* said that the ships are prepared to intercept any Iranian vessels carrying weapons to the Houthi rebels.



The Houthi are fighting against forces loyal to Yemen's nominal president, Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, who fled the country in March and is currently in Saudi Arabia.

The naval deployment follows a UN Security Council resolution passed April 13 on a 14-0 vote to approve an arms embargo against the Houthi rebels. Russia abstained from that vote. A report on the UN website said that the resolution also "demanded that all parties refrain from unilateral actions that could undermine the country's UN-facilitated political transition."

This remark is significant since it is an admission that the UN has taken it upon itself to meddle into the internal affairs of a supposedly sovereign nation to "facilitate" change from one government to another.

A Navy official confirmed to Fox News that the two warships were being sent to the area off Yemen to help enforce the UN blockade. Fox also reported that a convoy of about eight Iranian ships is heading toward Yemen and possibly carrying arms intended for the Houthis.

If the United States abides by international law, the presence of the fleet in the Arabian Sea will likely be mostly a psychological deterrent. CNN reported that U.S. ships do not have authority to forcibly board Iranian-flagged ships. However, noted CNN, vessels from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other "partner nations" are prepared to board Iranian vessels if they enter into Yemeni territorial waters.

Two major Muslim rivals in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia and Iran, have accused each other of interfering in Yemen. Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei made a public statement on April 9 denouncing Saudi airstrikes in Yemen as "a crime" and "a genocide." The bombing campaign condemned by Khamenei started on March 25 and is being waged by a regional coalition led by Saudi Arabia against the Houthi rebels. War planes from Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain have also taken part in the operation, called "Operation Decisive Storm."

Speaking at the Arab League summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, in March, Saudi King Salman Bin Abdulaziz said: "Operation Decisive Storm will continue until it achieves its goals to ensure security and stability for the people of Yemen."

President Obama has formed a Joint Planning Cell to interact with Saudi Arabia and coordinate "logistical and intelligence support" for the operation.



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The *Monitor* noted that the naval deployment is also meant to reassure Saudi Arabia that the United States is still siding with it, though U.S. officials have claimed that there would be no direct American involvement in the fighting.

"This is really about sending a message," a U.S. official who declined to be identified told the *New York Times*. "It is a message to our partners that we are in this and willing to support. It is a message to the Iranians that we're watching."

As tensions rose over the increased U.S. naval presence off Yemen, Iran's deputy foreign minister, Amir Abdollahian, was quoted by Iranian news agencies as saying: "We are optimistic that in the coming hours, after many efforts, we will see a halt to military attacks in Yemen."

Abdollahian's optimism, reported Reuters, was based on his belief that diplomatic efforts would bring an end to the fighting in Yemen.

Such optimism may be wishful thinking, however. The conflict in Yemen has been years in the making, and U.S. intervention in the beleaguered nation has only aggravated the situation. Much of this counterproductive intervention came under the leadership of exiled President Hadi when he was still in power. An [article posted by The New American in 2012](#) noted that since 2002, 358 people had died in Yemen in U.S. drone strikes. In a statement made to the *Washington Post* in an interview published September 29, 2012, President Hadi said he "personally approves every U.S. drone strike in his country." The *Post* noted that it was likely this support of President Obama's drone war that had influenced U.S. officials to consider Hadi "one of the United States' staunchest counterterrorism allies."

This may explain why Saudi Arabia has given Hadi refuge and is bombing Hadi's opponents in Yemen — with U.S. support.

An [article in The New American on March 31](#) noted:

For the second time in recent years, a self-styled Yemeni "president" backed by the U.S. government, Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, has been forced to flee the country. As the civil war escalates and Shia Houthi rebels gain more territory, an Obama-backed coalition of Sunni Arab rulers led by the Saudi Arabian regime is fighting to keep "President" Hadi in power and crush the Houthi uprising. In typical fashion, intervention by the U.S. government in the country has poured fuel and weapons on the conflict. But despite Obama's efforts to prop up the Yemeni regime in exile, some analysts say Yemen may be heading toward a break up into smaller states — and that the chaos in that nation could ignite a regional war across the broader Middle East.

The article also observed that days after U.S. forces were forced to evacuate Yemen and the day Hadi fled the nation, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest, speaking to reporters on March 25, defended Obama's backing of Hadi: "The White House does continue to believe that a successful counter-terrorism strategy is one that will build up the capacity of the central government to have local fighters on the ground to take the fight to extremists in their own country."

Earnest continued: "That is a template that has succeeded in mitigating the threat that we face from extremists in places like Yemen."

However, Earnest did not explain why, if the U.S. role in backing Hadi was designed to counter terrorism, the United States is now supporting the bombing of forces who are fighting against a terrorist organization — al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

The Houthi rebels are allied with forces loyal to President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was president of



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Yemen from 1990 to 2012. Saleh's loyalists are al-Qaeda's most powerful opponents, but the Saudi-led bombing threatens to weaken them. Therefore, the Saudi bombing, which is supported by the United States, will have the effect of helping al-Qaeda!

Interventionism in Yemen has not been any more productive than was our nation's long history of intervention in Iran — the country that we are now posturing to keep away from Yemen. Former U.S. Representative Ron Paul often spoke of the "blowback" that resulted from our meddling in Iran, from the time our government undermined the democratic government of Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953 to install the Shah. It was lingering resentment over those actions that fueled the anti-U.S. sentiment that came to a head after the 1979 Iranian Revolution that installed the theocratic rulers who have governed Iran ever since. The 444-day hostage crisis, during which the Iranians held 52 American diplomats hostage, was the beginning of an adversarial relationship between Iran and the United States.

Now, the result of years of U.S. interventionism in the Middle East is producing more bad fruit, as the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels and the U.S.-backed forces loyal to Hadi square off against each other.

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