



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on February 25, 2010

U.S. Steps Up Military Aid to Yemen

The Pentagon has approved more than \$150 million in military assistance to the government of Yemen, more than doubling last year's budget of \$67 million, [international news](#) sources reported Tuesday.

The new funding, which does not include other covert assistance or development aid, is supposed to go toward training and equipping Yemeni security forces. The government there has been battling militants for years, ranging from separatists in the South to aggrieved Islamic fighters in the North.

Analysts say the massive budget increase shows that the U.S. government is increasingly concerned about the situation there and believes the Yemeni government is of significant strategic value. Reportedly approved by Defense Secretary Robert Gates last week, the new aid package represents over 40 percent of the \$350 million in acknowledged military aid doled out to governments around the world by the Pentagon.

Officials cited by [Reuters](#) explained that U.S. military and intelligence officials have been sharing satellite images, intercepted communications and other data with the Yemeni government. [ABC News](#) reported late last year, also citing U.S. officials, that the U.S. military was even bombing villages with cruise missiles in an attempt to kill militants — on direct orders from the White House.

But as civil war continues to ravish the northern area of Yemen, foreign governments are increasingly becoming involved and the humanitarian situation is steadily deteriorating. The 5-year-old domestic conflict was reignited in August of last year when the Yemeni government began another offensive against the Houthi rebellion dubbed "Operation Scorched Earth." The rebels claim they have been unjustly oppressed since the overthrow of the imamate system there in the early 1960s.

It is estimated that over 200,000 refugees had already fled the fighting by January, though information has been sporadic and difficult to obtain due to a government crack down on journalists in the region. Al-Jazeera did broadcast some film from the region showing numerous bodies wrapped in sheets.

"The American air force committed massacres ... and used all types of military weapons to destroy villages and houses and schools and public facilities and to kill civilians," the rebels said in a statement quoted by AFP in mid-December. "Direct American intervention began early last week, and bombing of various areas of north Yemen continues until now."

[Iranian news](#) reports also cited a statement from the rebels, who claimed that "the US air force perpetrated an appalling massacre against citizens in the north of Yemen as it launched air raids on various populated areas, markets, refugee camps and villages along with Saudi warplanes." The Houthi militants also said the "savage crime" revealed the truth face of the U.S., and that the bombing "cancels out much touted American claims of human rights protection, promotion of freedoms of citizens as well as democracy."

Foreign governments have mostly intervened on behalf of the Yemeni regime, with Saudi Arabia launching months of aerial bombings and ground attacks starting late last year. The kingdom claims rebels attacked a border check point.

The Houthi rebels have also accused Saudi forces of various war crimes, including the use of banned phosphorus bombs which tend to disproportionately and indiscriminately kill and maim civilians. And according to [Human Rights Watch](#) and other watchdog groups, the Saudi government has been persecuting its own Shia minority for many years.



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A corporate intelligence report obtained by *The New American* claims the Saudi Arabian government has requested the assistance of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in its new battle across the border. The Saudi king is also reported to be seeking as many allies as possible.

Allegations of Iranian support for the rebels have been leveled by various governments, including Yemen which reported seizing an Iranian cargo ship filled with arms bound for the Northern regions. But according to the [International Relations and Security Network](#) in Zurich, “there is little clear evidence of direct Iranian military support for the rebellion.”

Iranian government officials have denounced Saudi involvement in the conflict, but the extent of actual Iranian involvement is unclear thus far. However, some [analysts](#) have suggested that a “proxy war” could be brewing between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which would inevitably drag other players into the conflict as well.

The increasing foreign involvement — especially Saudi Arabian — in what was formerly a civil war could indeed have broad consequences. “This may act, over time, to transform [the Houthi] militancy from a damaging but largely contained rebellion to one with broader implications for regional power plays, if not stability,” reported the International Relations and Security Network.

Of course, in addition to the rebellion in the North, there is also a [separatist movement](#) blazing in the South of the country. It opposes the central regime as well. Until 1990, the South was actually a separate, Marxist country. And the secession movement is only growing stronger. The government has responded to the protests sweeping that region with bullets and an iron fist — actions which have been condemned by a variety of human rights groups. But the internal conflicts continue and are in fact becoming more serious.

The government of Yemen is notoriously corrupt and has a long track record of human rights abuses. Unemployment is above 30 percent, according to the [CIA World Factbook](#). “President” Ali Abdullah Saleh is reported to be a brutal ruler, with even members of his own party recently [accusing](#) him and his administration of corruption. But the regime still clings to power, thanks in part to American assistance.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman acknowledged that “meaningful attention” was needed to address “legitimate internal grievances; better governance through decentralization, reduced corruption and civil service reform [and] human rights protections.”

But despite the overwhelming evidence condemning the regime, the U.S. government continues to funnel massive amounts of taxpayer money to it. The new military aid is simply part of the most recent round of hand outs.

Even the U.S. Senate has taken an interest in perpetuating the Yemeni government. In December, it [unanimously approved](#) a non-binding resolution which urged the administration and its allies to “use all appropriate measures” to support the government of Yemen and avoid allowing the nation to become a “failed state.”

But not everybody in Congress agrees. “Increasing U.S. involvement in Yemen may be sold as a fight against terrorism, but in fact it is more about expanding U.S. government control and influence over this strategically-placed nation at the gateway to Asia,” explained U.S. Representative Ron Paul (R-Texas), a constitutionalist who opposes undeclared foreign adventurism. He also explained that the Yemeni government stands to gain by claiming its internal problems are also U.S. problems, but that American involvement will hurt taxpayers, the military and the economy.



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“There are some here in the U.S. who repeat false claims of Iranian involvement in the hope of expanding the U.S. military presence in the area. Others in the United States irresponsibly call for a U.S. pre-emptive war in Yemen,” Paul [explained](#) in early February during a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing. “Luring the United States into a conflict in Yemen by falsely advertising it [as] part of a war on terror will certainly radicalize the Yemeni population against the United States. It will weaken our over-extended military and it will further destroy our economy.”

Indeed, borrowing money from China to unconstitutionally supply even more weaponry and training to yet another corrupt regime is a terrible plan. Increasing this aid despite the sorry state of the American economy defies belief. And attempting to “create employment” in Yemen while America hemorrhages jobs is also a bad idea, not to mention unconstitutional.

The U.S. government should allow the Yemeni people to deal with their problems without involving American taxpayers or the armed forces. If the corrupt government collapses, so be it. Foreign aid, whether military or economic, is counterproductive and unconstitutional. It should stop immediately.



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