



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on September 16, 2019

Pompeo Blames Iran for Attack on Saudi Refineries; Trump Awaits Saudi Assessment

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The Trump administration has issued strong statements following the September 14 coordinated strikes on the world's largest oil processing facility and a nearby oil field in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Interior Ministry was quoted by state-run media as saying that the Abqaiq oil processing facility in Buqyaq and the nearby Khurais oil field operated by Saudi Aramco were "targeted by drones." The Iranian-backed Houthi militia claimed responsibility for the strikes.



Soon after the strike, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (shown on left) charged that Iran was behind what he called "an unprecedented attack on the world's energy supply" and asserted that there was "no evidence the attacks came from Yemen."

"Tehran is behind nearly 100 attacks on Saudi Arabia while [President Hassan] Rouhani and [Foreign Minister Mohammad] Zarif pretend to engage in diplomacy...." Pompeo tweeted. "There is no evidence the attacks came from Yemen."

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An NPR report on September 15 quoted a statement from Iran denying accusations made by Pompeo that it was behind the drone attacks on the Saudi oil refineries and that Tehran was responsible for "an unprecedented attack on the world's energy supply."

Javad Zarif, Iran's foreign minister, said in a tweet on September 15 that Pompeo was turning from "max pressure" to "max deceit."

The *New York Times* reported on September 15 that administration officials said a combination of drones and cruise missiles — "both and a lot of them," the report quoted one senior U.S. official — might have been used.

Trump did not name Iran, however, saying in a tweet on September 15 that he needed to consult with Saudi Arabia first.

Following the attacks, the Saudis shut down half of their oil output facilities, which amounts to a loss of about five million barrels a day — roughly five percent of the world's daily production of crude oil. As a result, U.S. oil futures spiked by over 10 percent, as investors anticipated that the Saudi supply would be at least temporarily reduced by the attack.

Fox News reported on September 14 that Houthi rebels — who are backed by Iran in a years-long



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Saudi-led war against them in Yemen — have reportedly claimed responsibility for the attacks and said that further attacks could be expected in the future.

Houthi spokesman Yahia Sarie said in a short address aired by Houthi's Al-Masirah satellite news channel that the group launched 10 drones in a coordinated attack on the sites. "The only option for the Saudi government is to stop attacking us," he added.

A September 15 Bloomberg report cited two unnamed senior U.S. administration officials who said that there is no doubt Iran was behind the attacks on Saudi oil, claiming that there is evidence that the location and weapons used were beyond the capability of the Houthi rebels in Yemen who claimed responsibility.

The officials, who asked not to be identified discussing internal deliberations, said evidence suggests that cruise missiles were used in Saturday's attacks, and that one of the locations hit — the world's largest crude-processing facility in Abqaiq — was beyond the range of the rebels' known weaponry.

Photo of Mike Pompeo: [U.S. Department of State](#)

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Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at wmass@thenewamerican.com



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