

AFF

We affirm Resolved: The United States should end its arm sales to Saudi Arabia.

Our sole contention is the War in Yemen.

The conflict in Yemen is widely considered to be the single worst humanitarian crisis facing the international community today. The large majority of US arms sales to Saudi Arabia are being put towards this conflict, propping up a war that has put millions of lives at risk. William **Hartung** at the Center for International Policy writes in September of last year that the Saudi government is reliant on US support to sustain their war efforts. Furthermore, **Hartung** explains that a series of Saudi war crimes, including civilian air strikes, a port blockade, and destruction of infrastructure such as hospitals, has led to massive famine and the largest cholera outbreak in decades. Pete **Salisbury** at the International Crisis Group quantifies last December that 22 million Yemenis need humanitarian assistance. He continues that failure to end the war would cause the conflict to develop into “the worst humanitarian disaster in our lifetime.”

Ending US Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia will help resolve this conflict in two ways.

First, putting pressure on Saudi Arabia for peace talks. Annie **Slemrod**, Middle East editor at IRIN News finds late last year that both the Houthis and Saudi coalition are facing enormous pressure because of fighting at Hodeida and international backlash to the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Thus, the dynamic now is prime for peace talks. Doug **Bandow** at the Cato Institute furthers in December that recent pressure from Europe after the Khashoggi killing has already led to some Saudi concessions and more productive peace talks. However, he continues that US pressure is key because as long as the US continues support, Saudi Arabia has no incentive to pursue a true end to the conflict. Professor **Bazzi** at NYU confirms in 2018 that as long as the Saudi coalition believes it can crush the Houthis with American weapons, there’s little incentive for them to negotiate.

Second is by taking away their ability to fight. Regardless of whether Saudi Arabia comes to the table, ending US arms sales prevents them from continuing the conflict. Terrence **Guay** at Penn State University writes in October that because Saudi Arabia does not have an arms industry, it has to import nearly all of its military supplies – mostly from the US. Specifically, Bruce **Riedel**, senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, explains in October that the Royal Saudi Air Force, which has conducted thousands of airstrikes, is entirely dependent on foreign support to operate. If the US were to end support, the planes would be grounded. He continues that the Army and National Guard are similarly dependent on foreign aid. Saudi Arabia would not be able to find someone to fill the gap, as **Guay** explains that Saudi Arabia is “locked into” American weapons, so the cost to switch would be massive and take years because of retraining, interoperability, and spare part requirements. Thus, without US arms, Saudi Arabia cannot continue engagement in Yemen.

The impact of the ending war in Yemen is threefold.

First is stopping civilian attacks.

The **Human Rights Watch** finds that in just 9 months between March 2015 and January 2016, over 3200 Yemeni civilians were killed and 5700 wounded, and that Saudi coalition airstrikes were responsible for 60% of these killings. Saudi-led forces routinely bomb civilian gatherings and facilities using US weapons, especially precision guided missiles. Peter **Beaumont** of the Guardian corroborates last year that since 2015, the Saudi coalition has conducted an air strike every 99 minutes, one third of which have hit civilian targets. Cutting off the means for the Saudi coalition to do these strikes would prevent these needless deaths.

Second is ending the humanitarian crisis.

As **Hartung** from above explains, the biggest cause of the humanitarian crisis is the Saudi-led coalition. The **World Food Program** quantified last September that 18 million people are food insecure, and 12 million are at serious risk of starvation. **Bandow** quantifies that 100,000 have already died from malnutrition. Now is particularly key, as **Hartung** writes that the Saudi coalition is soon planning to seize the port city of Hodeida, which is the only source of supplies for 10 million people and accounts for 70% of all basic goods imported into Yemen. Allowing this attack to take place would be catastrophic, cutting off supplies for weeks and killing hundreds of thousands.

Third is preventing Houthi asymmetric warfare.

As Kevin **Truitte** of the Georgetown Security Studies Review explained in December, the Houthis have responded to an overwhelming military advantage of the coalition with asymmetric tactics: attacks on maritime shipping in the Red Sea, which Saudi Arabia depends on. Simon **Henderson** at the Washington Institute confirmed in 2017 that the Houthis have laid mines in the waterway, forcing vessels, including oil tankers, to travel around Africa instead of through the Suez, skyrocketing global energy prices. Ultimately, Pat **Westhoff** at the University of Missouri finds in 2012 that increases in oil prices increase global food prices by causing production and shipping costs to skyrocket. This is problematic, as **Pinstrup-Andersen**, director of the International Food Policy Research Institute, finds that even temporary blips in food prices risk pushing 1.1 billion people into poverty worldwide.

Thus, in order to end the crisis in Yemen, we affirm.

EV

The war in Yemen is a humanitarian crisis propped up by US weapons

Hartung 18 (William, director of the Arms and Security Project at the Center for International Policy, 9-19-18, “Congress can help end the Suffering in Yemen”)

<https://lobelog.com/congress-can-help-end-the-suffering-in-yemen/> // BC 1-29-19

The Saudi intervention in Yemen—carried out with U.S support—ranks alongside the war in Syria as the world’s worst humanitarian catastrophe. Without concerted action by Congress, things will get worse before they get better.

The people of Yemen have already been subjected to unimaginable suffering by a war that pits a coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates against forces composed of anti-government Houthi rebels and their allies.

The Saudi coalition—aided by U.S.-supplied weapons and refueling assistance—has bombed and killed thousands of civilians in Yemen. One recent strike destroyed a school bus, killing 40 children. Fragments of a Lockheed Martin laser-guided bomb were found near the scene of the attack. And **a recent CNN report**—based on its own reporting and on-the-ground research by the Yemen-based Mwatana Organization for Human Rights—**documents the presence of fragments of U.S.-made bombs at the sites of a series of strikes on civilian targets, including homes, a factory, a civilian vehicle, and a wedding.**

The bombings mentioned above are not isolated incidents. Saudi air strikes have also targeted hospitals, water treatment plants, and even a funeral. Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) has argued that “Either the Pentagon should be 100 percent certain that U.S. weapons and funding aren’t being used to commit war crimes in Yemen, or we should cut off U.S. support right now.” Unfortunately, earlier this month the Trump administration ignored this plea when it—falsely—certified that the Saudis were taking due care to avoid killing civilians. The certification was a blatant evasion of a congressional requirement that the United States end its support for the Saudi/UAE-backed war in Yemen if it was determined that the coalition was engaging in the indiscriminate killing of civilians.

Members of Congress from both parties were quick to denounce the Trump administration’s decision. Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA) said that “Pompeo’s ‘certification’ is a farce. The Saudis deliberately bombed a bus full of children. There is only one moral answer, and that is to end our support for their intervention in Yemen.” Rep. Justin Amash (R-MI) stated simply that “This war in Yemen is unconscionable, and the United States should not be a party to it.”

The U.S.-supported Saudi bombings are part of a larger pattern of neglect of human life **that includes a blockade that has slowed the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance.** The blockade **has put millions of Yemenis at risk of starvation, and attacks on civilian infrastructure have sparked the largest cholera outbreak in living memory.** Meanwhile, a Saudi/UAE effort to wrest control of the port of Hodeidah from the Houthis threatens to dramatically worsen an already horrific toll of civilian suffering, according to private aid groups and UN officials. **Both sides of the war have committed heinous human right abuses**—all the more reason to press for peace.

The challenges now are first, to end the indiscriminate attacks on civilians, and second, to end the war. The Trump administration and key members of Congress have both expressed support for the efforts of UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths to bring the warring parties together for peace talks, but discussions set for earlier this month fell apart as both sides maneuvered for position rather than negotiating in good faith.

Congress has shown growing concern for the humanitarian and security consequences of the Yemen war. In March, 44 Senators backed a move by Senators Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Mike Lee (R-UT) to end U.S. involvement in the Saudi/UAE war on the grounds that it has never been authorized by Congress.

Representatives Ro Khanna (D-CA), Adam Smith (D-WA), Jim McGovern (D-MA), and Mark Pocan (D-WI) are poised to put forward similar legislation in the House. Ending U.S. support for the Saudi/UAE intervention will dramatically reduce civilian harm.

The best way to bring the suffering in Yemen to an end is for Congress to reassert its war powers and end U.S. refueling of Saudi aircraft and other support for this brutal war, and to block a proposed sale of guided bombs to Saudi Arabia and the UAE scheduled to be formally notified to Congress later this year. Senior Democrats like Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ), the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA), the ranking Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, have stepped forward to take firm action to end U.S. involvement in the Yemen war. Menendez is putting a hold on the proposed bomb sale, and Smith is co-sponsoring the upcoming move to end illegal U.S. support for the Saudi/UAE coalition.

Other leaders in both parties should follow suit. **Rarely does Congress have an opportunity make a difference in the lives of millions of people. This is one such chance, and the time to act is now.**

14 million Yemenis will starve if conflict isn't resolved

Salisbury 18 (Pete, senior analyst at the International Crisis Group, 12-5-18, Washington Post, "Yemen's looming famine has been a long time coming")

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/12/05/yemens-looming-famine-has-been-a-long-time-coming/?utm_term=.cf6192377e24 // BC 1-29-19

Analysts have long argued that, if left unchecked, **Yemen's political, economic and fiscal crises were all but certain to cause a massive, debilitating famine.** As Yemen barrels toward this worst-case scenario, what is most disturbing is that **there is no indication the trend will be stopped,** even when people start dying in unprecedented numbers.

Almost four years into the country's civil war, **22 million people in Yemen now require some sort of assistance. About 10,000 people contract cholera every week; there have been more than 1.2 million cases of the disease and more than 2,500 deaths, according to the World Health Organization. Save the Children estimates that 85,000 children may have already died** of hunger and preventable diseases since the civil war evolved from an internal power struggle into an internationalized conflict in early 2015.

Unless a planned assault on the Red Sea port of Hodeida is prevented and the war ended, says Mark Lowcock, the United Nations humanitarian chief, **a "great big famine" will follow soon, and Yemen will endure** what Lowcock believes will be **the worst humanitarian disaster in our lifetime.** Some **14 million people**, more than the entire population of Pennsylvania, **are living in pre-famine conditions,** one economic shock away from starvation. A fight for Hodeida would tip the worst humanitarian crisis in the world into the worst famine in a lifetime.

Now, Yemeni forces backed by the United Arab Emirates — the Saudis' main partner in Yemen — are massing around **Hodeida**, a trade inlet that **accounts for some 70 percent of all basics like fuel, food and medicine imported into Yemen. It's the only source of supplies for about 10 million people.** A battle for the port and city would probably be long, brutal and destructive. It would cut off trade for weeks or months, causing shortages and price spikes that would push food and clean water even further out of reach for millions of Yemenis.

Pressure on both sides for peace talks now

Slemrod 18 (Annie, Middle East Editor at IRIN News, 11-19-2018, "Briefing: Yemen peace talks," IRIN, <https://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2018/11/19/briefing-yemen-peace-talks> // PR

“Everything that has been tried before is being repeated [by the UN], but there is a twist... the Houthis are under pressure because of Hodeidah, so they may be more amenable [to talk],” he said. “Likewise, the Saudis are under a lot of international pressure and the spotlight is on them to look like they want peace. **The dynamic is different now.** It could put more pressure on [everyone].”

US involvement in Yemen has no benefits, ending aid will pressure SA into peace talks, US has all the leverage

Bandow 18 (Doug, Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute, 12-18-18, "It's Time to End U.S. Support for the Saudi War on Yemen")
<https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/its-time-end-us-support-saudi-war-yemen> // BC 1-30-19

Long-term impacts of U.S. involvement are entirely ill. Washington has turned many Yemenis into enemies and potential terrorists while rewarding Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s worst impulses. The Pentagon’s claim that aiding Riyadh’s war reduces civilian casualties is risible: **Some sixty thousand civilians have been killed, most in coalition airstrikes. Nearly half the population needs aid; a million people have contracted cholera; famine stalks much of the land; civilian infrastructure, primitive to start, has been wrecked. The number of dead from malnutrition approaches one hundred thousand.** Emirati and Saudi interests are diverging, with Abu Dhabi promoting separatism in the south, making a peaceful, stable settlement even more difficult.

[...]

The ongoing peace talks offer some hope. They have advanced further than previous attempts, and have reached some positive agreements, such as prisoner exchange, though implementation remains. **The fact that Western nations have turned against the war encouraged the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to start making concessions,** necessary to reach a more enduring peace. So long **as Riyadh can count on a blank check from Washington**—it turns out the United States wasn’t even charging enough for refueling Saudi aircraft—**the kingdom has no reason to temper its policy.** Which means the administration should take the next step and end all support for the war; MbS and his companions should bear the full burden of what amounts to imperial warmongering.

However, the administration continues to treat the KSA as the superpower, needed far more by America than Riyadh needs Washington. Indeed, the president, who asserts his divine negotiating skills, tossed away his leverage when he announced that the United States was lost without Saudi Arabia’s aid. So obsequious has he been in dealing with the Saudis that some critics presume he is protecting private business interests.

Yet **the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has no choice but to sell its oil;** otherwise, the crown prince and his thousands of relations won’t be able to afford their palaces, yachts and vacations. **Worse, without funds**

to spread at least a little largesse among the population, the royals would end up hanging from lamp posts. Riyadh could shift to other weapon suppliers, but its investment in American arms makes that difficult: requirements for training, spare parts and interoperability would continue to push the KSA toward the West.

China and especially Russia cannot fulfill ambitious economic development plans; Saudi Arabia requires American and European participation. Most importantly, who else would promise to protect the licentious princes and princesses as they mulct their people while treating Islam as a libertine license? With just one and two rudimentary aircraft carriers, respectively, Moscow and Beijing will not be sending their armadas, to use Trump-speak, to the Persian Gulf.

Ending arms sales will ground the RSAF

Riedel 18 (Bruce, senior fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institute, and professor at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, 10-10-18, “After Khashoggi, US arms sales to the Saudis are essential leverage”)

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/10/10/after-khashoggi-us-arms-sales-to-the-saudis-are-essential-leverage/#cancel> // BC 1-29-19

The Saudis have continued to buy spare parts, munitions, and technical support for the enormous amount of American equipment they have bought from previous administrations. **The Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) is entirely dependent on American and British support for its air fleet of F15 fighter jets, Apache helicopters, and Tornado aircraft. If either Washington or London halts the flow of logistics, the RSAF will be grounded. The Saudi army and the Saudi Arabian National Guard are similarly dependent on foreigners** (the Saudi Arabian National Guard is heavily dependent on Canada). **The same is also true for the Saudis allies like Bahrain.**

[...]

The three and a half year-old Saudi war in Yemen is hugely expensive. There are no public figures from the Saudi government about the war’s costs, **but a conservative estimate would be at least \$50 billion per year. Maintenance costs for aircraft and warships go up dramatically when they are constantly in combat operations.** The Royal Saudi Navy has been blockading Yemen for over 40 months. **The RSAF has conducted thousands of air strikes.** The war is draining the kingdom’s coffers. **And responsibility for the war is on Mohammed bin Salman,** who as defense minister has driven Riyadh into this quagmire. **Shaking the arms relationship is by far the most important way to clip his wings.**

The Aff forces the Saudis to end the war – they are reliant on Western arms and have no alternative

Guay 18 (Terrence, Professor of International Business at Penn State University, 10-19-18, “Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia give Trump all the leverage he needs in Khashoggi affair”)

<https://theconversation.com/arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia-give-trump-all-the-leverage-he-needs-in-khashoggi-affair-104998> // BC 1-29-19

Saudi Arabia spent US\$69.4 billion on military expenditures in 2017, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the world's leading research organization on conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament. **Only the U.S. and China spent more.**

But since it doesn't have an arms industry – like the U.S. and China – **Saudi Arabia must import most of that** from other countries. That's why, **over the past decade, Saudi Arabia has imported more armaments than every country but India.**

And U.S. companies such as Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon have benefited most from all that spending, **making up the 55 percent of its weapons imports from 2008 to 2017.**

That has made Saudi Arabia the top buyer of American arms, with 11.8 percent of all sales over that period. In fact, U.S. defense contractors have made almost \$90 billion selling arms to Saudi Arabia since 1950.

In recent years, **fighter planes like the F-15 and their spare parts have become particularly important to the weapons trade with Saudi Arabia because it needs them to conduct its bombing campaigns in Yemen.**

[...]

In defending this course of action, Trump claimed that “if they don't buy [weapons] from us, they're going to buy it from Russia or they're going to buy it from China or they're going to buy it from other countries.”

While it's true that Russia and China are indeed major exporters of armaments, **the claim that U.S. weapons can easily be replaced by other suppliers is not [true]** – at least not in the short term.

First, **once a country is “locked in” to a specific kind of weapons system, such as planes, tanks or naval vessels, the cost to switch to a different supplier can be huge. Military personnel must be retrained on new equipment, spare parts need to be replaced, and operational changes may be necessary.**

After being so reliant on U.S. weapons systems for decades, the transition costs to buy from another country could be prohibitive even for oil-rich Saudi Arabia.

The second problem with Trump's argument is that **armaments from Russia, China or elsewhere are simply not as sophisticated as U.S. weapons**, which is why they are usually cheaper – though the quality gap is quickly decreasing. **To maintain its military superiority in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia has opted to purchase virtually all of its weapons from American and European companies.**

That is why the U.S. has significant leverage in this aspect of the relationship. Any Saudi threat to retaliate against a ban on U.S. arms sales by buying weapons from countries that have not raised concerns about the Khashoggi disappearance **would not be credible.** And is probably why, despite worries in the White House, such a threat has not yet been made.

Saudi Coalition kills thousands of civilians in illegal air strikes

Human Rights Watch 16 (3-21-16, “Yemen: Embargo arms to Saudi Arabia”)

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/03/21/yemen-embargo-arms-saudi-arabia> // BC 1-30-19

For the past year, governments that arm Saudi Arabia have rejected or downplayed compelling evidence that **the coalition's airstrikes have killed hundreds of civilians in Yemen,**" said Philippe Boloignon, deputy global advocacy director. **"By continuing to sell weapons** to a known violator that has done little to curtail its abuses, **the US,** UK, and France risk being **complicit in unlawful civilian deaths.**" Nongovernmental organizations and the United Nations have investigated and reported on numerous unlawful coalition airstrikes. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and other international and Yemeni groups have issued a joint statement calling for the cessation of sales and transfers of all weapons and military-related equipment to parties to the conflict in Yemen where "there is a substantial risk of these arms being used... to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law or international human rights law." **Human Rights Watch has documented 36 unlawful airstrikes** – some of which may amount to **war crimes – that have killed at least 550 civilians, as well as 15 attacks involving internationally banned cluster munitions.** The **UN Panel of Experts on Yemen,** established under UN Security Council Resolution 2140 (2013), in a report made public on January 26, 2016, **"documented 119 coalition sorties relating to violations" of the laws of war.** Saudi Arabia has not responded to Human Rights Watch letters detailing apparent violations by the coalition and seeking clarification on the intended target of attack. Saudi Arabia has successfully lobbied the UN Human Rights Council to prevent it from creating an independent, international investigative mechanism. In September 2014, the Houthis, a Zaidi Shia group from northern Yemen also known as Ansar Allah, took control of Yemen's capital, Sanaa. In January 2015, they effectively ousted President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi and his cabinet. The Houthis, along with forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, then swept south, threatening to take the port city of Aden. On March 26, the **Saudi-led coalition,** consisting of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Sudan, **began an aerial bombing campaign** against Houthi and allied forces. **At least 3,200 civilians have been killed and 5,700 wounded since coalition military operations began, 60 percent of them in coalition airstrikes,** according to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The naval blockade the coalition imposed on Yemen has contributed to an immense humanitarian crisis that has left **80 percent of the population of the impoverished country in need of humanitarian protection and assistance.** The UN Panel of Experts found that, "the coalition's targeting of civilians through air strikes, either by bombing residential neighborhoods or by treating the entire cities of Sa'dah and Maran in northern Yemen as military targets, is a grave violation of the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. In certain cases, the Panel found such violations to have been conducted in a widespread and systematic manner." Deliberate, indiscriminate, and disproportionate attacks against civilians are serious violations of the laws of war, to which all warring parties are bound. The UN panel said that **the attacks it documented included attacks on "camps for internally displaced persons and refugees; civilian gatherings, including weddings; civilian vehicles, including buses; civilian residential areas; medical facilities; schools; mosques; markets, factories and food storage warehouses; and other essential civilian infrastructure, such as the airport in Sana'a, the port in Hudaydah and domestic transit routes."**

Air Strike every 99 minutes

Beaumont 18 (Peter Beaumont, 9-26-2018 "Huge spike in Yemen violence as civilian deaths rise by 164% in four months", Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/sep/26/huge-spike-in-yemen-violence-as-civilian-deaths-rise-by-164-in-four-months-hodeidah>) //PSR 2-5-2019

Civilian deaths in Yemen have surged dramatically since June after the Saudi-led coalition began an offensive to take the key port city of Hodeidah from Houthi rebels. According to the figures, collected by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (Acled), **civilian deaths in the Yemeni conflict have increased by 164% in the four months since the Hodeidah offensive**

started, claiming the lives of about 166 people a month. The group's analysis suggests Hodeidah has become the most violent frontline in the four-year conflict. In recent months, about one-third of the total conflict-related fatalities have been recorded in the governorate, reflecting the bitterness of the struggle for the key port and its surrounding environs. Attempts to negotiate a ceasefire led to a temporary pause in the summer offensive, but the failure of peace talks in Geneva convened by Martin Griffiths, the UN special envoy for Yemen, led to a resumption of hostilities on 7 September. The coalition-led efforts have focused on several key points around the city, including a battle for control of the Kilo 16 road junction linking Hodeidah to Sana'a, a key supply line for the Houthis controlling the port. The sharp rise in casualties noted by Aclad was cited by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in renewed calls to the UN general assembly, which met in New York this week, to bring an end to Yemen's war. "August was the most violent month of 2018 in Yemen with nearly 500 people killed in just nine days," said Frank McManus, the IRC's Yemen director, who added that, **"since 2015, the coalition has undertaken 18,000 airstrikes – one every 99 minutes – one-third of which have hit non-military targets"**.

18 million are food insecure

World Food Program 18 (9-28-18, "Yemen is undeniably the world's worst humanitarian crisis")
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/09/yemen-undeniably-world-worst-humanitarian-crisis-wfp-180928051150315.html> // BC 1-29-19

The WFP has warned that **Yemen is on the brink of a full-blown famine, with 18 million of its 29 million population food insecure, 8.4 million severely so.**

The country's civil war further worsened in the wake of Saudi-led military intervention in 2015, which has ravaged the country's economy and caused **the Yemeni riyal to collapse, depreciating 180 percent.**

The cost of food has increased by 35 percent in the last 12 months and if trends continue the riyal will reach an exchange rate of 1,000 to the US dollar, putting **12 million at risk of starvation**, UN officials have warned.

The squo forces asymmetric warfare -- they strike in the Red Sea

Truite 18 (Kevin Truite, 12-21-2018 "The Red Sea Insurgency: The Asymmetrical Houthi Threat to the Strategic Waterway", Georgetown Security Studies Review, <http://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2018/12/21/the-red-sea-insurgency-the-asymmetrical-houthi-threat-to-the-strategic-waterway/>) //PSR 2-12-2019

In March 2015, the Houthi movement and allied forces under the former President Ali Abdullah Saleh swept south from the Houthi stronghold in northern Yemen, seizing control over the capital Sanaa and much of the Red Sea coast. The Houthis and their allies drove forces loyal to Yemeni President Hadi all the way to the southern port city of Aden, where only timely intervention by a coalition of Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and supported by Egypt, Bahrain, Qatar and others managed to defend the city and reverse Houthi gains.[ii] In the past three and a half

years, Coalition forces have slowly clawed back territory from the Houthis and their allies, using special forces and superior weapon systems to press their advantage. **Faced with superior forces, the Houthis have been forced to rely increasingly on asymmetrical insurgency tactics to pressure the coalition.** The Houthi's asymmetric strategy increasingly relies on attacks against maritime targets in the Red Sea from areas of the Yemeni coast they control. The first major weapon the Houthis used effectively against warships in the Red Sea is the Anti-Ship Cruise Missile (ASCM) and other anti-ship missiles and rockets. In 2016, the Houthis first used this type of missile to destroy a civilian vessel used by the Emirati military.[iii] Since then, the Houthis have targeted not only UAE and Saudi warships with missiles, but also American warships.[iv] In October 2016, Houthi missiles targeted the U.S. Navy destroyer USS Mason and the amphibious transport dock ship USS Ponce three times over the course of two weeks, prompting another U.S. Navy warship, the USS Nitze, to retaliate with cruise missiles to destroy Houthi-controlled surface surveillance radar stations on the Yemeni coast.[v] Houthi missiles have also targeted civilian shipping, as indicated by a May 2018 attack that targeted a Turkish cargo ship carrying grain to a Yemeni port.[vi]

They're laying mines, skyrockets global energy prices.

Vaughan and Henderson 3/1 (Jeremy, US Navy Commander, and Simon, Director at the Washington Institute's Gulf and Energy Policy Program, 3-1-2017, "Bab al-Mandab Shipping Chokepoint Under Threat", The Washington Institute, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/bab-al-mandab-shipping-chokepoint-under-threat>) //BS 11-19-2017

On February 9, the U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence issued **an alert warning commercial vessels about the risk of mines in the Bab al-Mandab Strait.** "The U.S. Government has reason to believe in late January, **mines were laid by Houthi rebels** in Yemeni territorial waters in the Red Sea close to the mouth of Mocha harbor." The alert follows a number of **other troubling incidents in the strategic waterway** over the past few months. **Saudi and Emirati naval vessels have been attacked** while trying to enforce a blockade on the Iranian-supported Houthi rebels who control large parts of Yemen. And last October, **patrolling U.S. Navy ships were targeted as well.** Diplomatic efforts to end Yemen's civil war appear to be getting nowhere, and the fighting on land is largely deadlocked, though forces loyal to the internationally recognized government of President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi recently captured Mocha port near the Bab al-Mandab. Iran's motives for helping the Houthis are unclear but have the effect of challenging Saudi Arabia, which views the fighting as a proxy war. More incidents at sea, especially involving civilian shipping, could further internationalize the conflict and spur other actors to intervene. In terms of capability and tradition, the leadership role in any such effort to safeguard freedom of passage would necessarily be taken by the U.S. Navy. A KEY CHOKEPOINT In a 2014 web post describing heavily transited oil chokepoints in the Middle East and elsewhere, the U.S. Energy Information Administration noted that **blocking such waterways, even temporarily, "can lead to substantial increases in total energy costs and world energy prices."** The Bab al-Mandab, which **controls access to the Red Sea and the southern end of the Suez Canal,** is particularly crucial at present because of Egypt's reliance on imported liquefied natural gas to maintain its electricity supplies. **One LNG tanker destined for Egypt transits the strait each week. If passage were impeded, those shipments -- and all other vessels heading to Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea -- would have no alternative but to make the long voyage around the southern tip of Africa.** The Bab al-Mandab is around ten miles wide at its narrowest point, where the Yemeni island of Perim protrudes into the waterway toward Eritrea and Djibouti. Under an international traffic separation scheme, northbound international shipping uses a two-mile-wide lane on the Arabian side just west of Perim, while southbound traffic uses a similar lane on the African side. Separated by just over a mile of water, the two lanes work well for international traffic but are ignored by smaller local ships and fishing vessels. More than sixty commercial ships transit the strait every day, and several passenger cruise liners use the route as well. **THE THREATS: Houthi rebels have attacked warships in or near the strait on at least four occasions since last fall.** On October 1, antishipping cruise missiles fired from the Houthi-controlled coastline severely damaged the Swift, an Emirati-operated troop landing and logistics ship. In the following weeks, the destroyer USS Mason successfully defended itself against three similar attacks. The U.S. Navy launched a Tomahawk missile strike to knock out coastal radar sites that may have provided targeting information for the attacks. No further antishipping missile attacks have been reported since then, but radar sites can be rebuilt, and the Houthis' stores of such missiles have not been destroyed, so the threat remains. **Additional threats have emerged in the past few weeks and may already be affecting international shipping patterns.** The recent U.S. government warning about mines in the Bab al-Mandab advised ships to transit the strait only during daylight. Moored mines have a notorious tendency to break free of their leathers and could ramp up the risk to all ships in the area. Another new threat surfaced when a Saudi frigate was attacked off the Houthi-controlled port of Hodeida on January 30. Initially thought to be a suicide speedboat, the attacker is now assumed to have been a remote-controlled drone craft similar to the type Iranian smugglers employ to pick up contraband from Oman's Musandam Peninsula in the Strait of Hormuz, a Persian Gulf chokepoint. The UAE also has such craft (which it uses for target practice), so it is conceivable that the attack was conducted by a lost Emirati boat recovered by Iran. U.S. warships transiting the Strait of Hormuz are routinely harassed by small boats from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN), but weaponized speedboat drones, known in the military as unmanned surface vehicles (USVs), change the danger profile into a credible threat. An attacking USV must be disabled at distance from a warship's hull, a task that could prove exceptionally difficult during a swarming attack by multiple boats. Furthermore, Iran's familiarity with explosively formed penetrators (EFPs) means that such technology may soon be seen at sea. Fortunately, the difficulty in remotely placing such a narrowly focused explosive against a target's hull mitigates some of the risk; this could explain why the January 30 attack seemed to result in such minor damage, assuming an EFP was on board. Even so, an EFP-laden USV that gets through a ship's defenses could sink it.