

Washington threatens military intervention in Yemen following reported missile attacks on US warship

By Barry Grey
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The Pentagon is threatening to directly intervene militarily in Yemen after charging Wednesday that at least one missile was fired from Houthi-held territory on the guided missile destroyer USS Mason. The US warship was patrolling the Red Sea between the southern tip of Yemen and the northeastern coast of Africa. It is part of a three-ship deployment armed with cruise missiles and carrying US Special Forces.

The alleged missile firing on Wednesday was the second such incident reported in the past four days. On Sunday, the US Navy claimed that two missiles were fired on the USS Mason, also from Houthi-held territory. Both incidents took place in the strategic Bab al Mandab Strait. Houthi officials denied responsibility for the Sunday attack.

The US ship fired salvos in yesterday's incident, reportedly bringing down an incoming missile. There was no damage to any US vessel on either Wednesday or Sunday.

The Pentagon on Wednesday issued a statement warning that it would respond "at the appropriate time and in the appropriate manner." On Sunday, a Navy official was more bellicose, declaring that "anyone who fires against US Navy ships operating in international waters does so at their own peril." Top US security officials were reportedly meeting Wednesday in Washington to decide on the American response.

"NBC Nightly News" led its evening program with a report on the missile firing, linking the incident to Iran, which it described as supporting the Houthi insurgency against the US- and Saudi-backed regime of Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi. Hadi was brought to power in a single-candidate election in 2012 that was

boycotted by the Houthis.

Hadi was forced to resign and fled the country after Houthi militia seized the capital, Sanaa. He has since resided in Saudi Arabia.

The Houthi insurgents are allied with military forces loyal to ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was forced out of office by the revolutionary upheavals that shook Yemen in 2011.

The missile incidents follow a savage bombing carried out last Saturday by Saudi war planes on a packed funeral hall in Sanaa that killed at least 140 civilians and wounded more than 500 more. The Saudi attack targeted leading officials in the Houthi-led government in Sanaa, killing them as well as family members and friends.

The Saturday atrocity was the latest war crime in a criminal war waged since March of 2015 by Saudi Arabia and its Sunni Gulf allies and actively assisted by the United States, Britain and France. The onslaught on the most impoverished country in the Middle East is being carried out to oust the Houthis and reinstall Hadi.

Bomb fragments near the funeral home demolished in last Saturday's Saudi attack bore markings identifying them as US-supplied munitions, part of Washington's multi-billion-dollar arms sales to the Saudi monarchy.

The United Nations reports that the number killed since the Saudis launched the war has risen to 10,000. Hospitals, schools, mosques, refugee camps and residential neighborhoods have been routinely targeted. An estimated 3 million people have been displaced by the war, while half of the population of 14 million is suffering from hunger. Cholera is spreading under conditions where hospitals have been deprived of basic supplies by a Saudi blockade.

Since 2009, the Obama administration has bolstered the Saudi regime with \$115 billion in arms and military support. Washington has repeatedly resupplied the Saudi military with bombs and missiles to replace those dropped on Yemen.

The Pentagon is providing the Saudis with targeting information, deploying US personnel to a joint command center that directs the air war. US military planes provide refueling for Saudi warplanes and the US Navy is helping enforce the blockade aimed at starving the Yemeni population into submission.

On Wednesday, Stratfor, a private security web site with close ties to the Pentagon and CIA, called a “US military response” to the reported missile firings “almost inevitable.” The stage is being set for the US to extend its war in the Middle East to Yemen, even as it prepares to escalate its intervention in Iraq and dramatically step up its war for regime-change in Syria, bringing closer a direct military confrontation with Russian forces in the region.

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