



Yemen's National Army in the Hot Fighting Fronts

Special File

Strategy Unit

June 2018



مركز أبعاد للدراسات والبحوث
Abaad Studies & Research Center



مركز أبعاد للدراسات والبحوث
Abaad Studies & Research Center



00967737887778



telegram.me/abaadstudies



@abaadstudies



Abaad Studies & Research Center



AbaadStudiesYemen



abaadyemen@gmail.com

abaadstudies@gmail.com

info@abaadstudies.org

www.abaadstudies.org

Introduction

The National Army and the Popular Resistance have been fighting the Houthis since the formation of the Yemeni government forces after the launch of the Saudi-led Arab Coalition in March 2015 ⁽¹⁾ to confront the Houthi coup against the internationally-recognized legitimate government. The Arab Coalition depends upon these forces in its military operations in most of fighting fronts with the Houthis.

The Houthis took control of the Yemeni state including military and security camps and weapons following their takeover of the capital Sana'a in September 2014 and the announcement of their Popular Committees /Revolutionary Committee as the main apparatus in the security, military and political institutions of the state. The army and security institutions were the most prominent institutions where the national creed was bulldozed into a sectarian creed and tens of thousands of fighters, loyal to the Houthi armed group, were recruited in both institutions.

Research Methodology

This analytical study is based on the collection of field information from the hottest military fronts and strategic fronts affecting the military equation. Those fronts are in contact points between the National Army forces under the authority of President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi and the Houthi armed group. Those contact areas are included within five military regions (seventh, sixth, fifth, fourth and third). The Abaad Center held field meetings with new recruits and military officers in the National Army.

The researchers also met with 15 military leaders to investigate the situation of the armed forces in the new Yemeni Army, the reasons behind the delay in the military decisiveness, information about military forces fighting on the fronts, their loyalty, their decision and their military plans. According to answers from military leaders, officers and soldiers, we filled in a questionnaire about the military brigades, battalions in fighting fronts, their deployment and their status and capabilities.

The questionnaire assesses the capabilities of the military brigades and the presence of soldiers in all fronts, giving the equipment and capacity the numbers (1-10). Number (1) means less and number (10) means the most capable, equipped and devoted. ⁽²⁾

The Formation of the National Army

Throughout 33 years of the rule of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, the Yemeni sovereign institutions used to be loyal to different bodies. So Saleh established parallel institutions that were based on non-national loyalties. The loyalty of both security and military institutions and the intelligence services was mainly to Saleh and his family.

Through marriage, emancipation and other relationships, Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime has formed a vast network of interests, as all individuals represent an interest to each other.⁽³⁾



This network used to look to the Yemeni people as only a contiguity of segments that were forced into a nebulous social structure with an authoritarian nature⁽⁴⁾. This was one of the important reasons behind the current tragedy. And the current war circle all over the Yemeni geography based on the phenomena of interlocking loyalties that reached up even to villages. These interlocking loyalties were reinforced by the sub-identities created by the Houthi group through their suspicious alliance with the local network of «former President Ali Abdullah Saleh,» the alliance that led to his death⁽⁵⁾. The army, which Saleh built on a family basis, was not there to protect him or members of his family who became prisoners of the Houthi group.

The task of building the sovereign institutions of the Yemeni national state according to the consensus National Dialogue Conference, which reflected a clear diversity of a conscious society that is aware of the future of Yemen and the importance of standing as a stumbling block against any attempts to restore the former tyrannical regime, has become more complicated.

The restructuring of the National Army, carried out by President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi during the period (2012-2013) via removing military leaders who were loyal to «Ali Abdullah Saleh,» has not a significant impact on the reality of the military institution. The real problem is not only the military leaders. Ali Abdullah Saleh used to personally direct leaders and individuals in civil and military institutions not to comply with instructions and decisions from President Hadi or his government during the transition of power.



When the Houthis invaded Sana'a and took control of the state, there was no real army to defend the country's capital, especially in the northern governorates, except some dispersed military forces from both "the Giants Forces" and "the First Armored Division.

" Both forces underwent changes, movements and corruption during Saleh,s regime according to his project to dismantle the State's national institutions while building parallel family institutions. Saleh transferred the Giants Forces to the southern governorates, so the rest of battalions of the First Armored Division could not stand up to prevent the Houthi invasion as the Houthis were supported by units affiliated with Saleh,s regime (former Republican Guard). Almost 286 soldiers from the First Armored Division were killed in the first two days of armed confrontations with the Houthi militias at entrances of the capital Sana'a. The headquarters of the First Armored Division fell in hands of the Houthi militias after it was hit with missiles and artillery weapons which were fired from the Republican Guard brigades in Noqum.

The break-up of the army was not only in Sana'a. The real break-up was in Imran where the Houthis, with support from forces of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, took over Brigade 310 and killed its commander, Brigadier Hamid al-Qushaibi in July 2014. Then the Yemeni people lost trust of the ability of the Army to protect the state institutions from the armed Houthi militias that moved on and took over more lands. Some members of the army fled revenge, some others joined the coup militias and others preferred to stay home.

Yemen's National Army in the Hot Fighting Fronts

With the upsurge of the Houthi tyranny against the Yemenis, combat units were formed to resist the Houthi militias who are logistically supported from Iran. However, with the continuing collapse of the military institution, popular resistance units were formed in all governorates. They are the main building blocks of the new National Army. This obligates the legitimacy to work hard to face challenges before reaching a stage of impotence that hamper the restoration of the Yemeni state.

The National Army emerged in the last three months of 2015. The national formation began gradually to add the resistance as a support to organized military operations to confront the Houthis, but as usual in such configurations some differences and concerns come to the surface.

The task of building institutions started with the beginning of the Saudi-led Arab Coalition's operations in Yemen.

The legitimate government has restructured the capabilities of the Yemeni army, including the recruitment of more than 200,000 fighters, according to official statistics ⁽⁶⁾, in addition to the intelligence services, special counter-terrorism forces and local security forces. These forces were members of the Popular Resistance who later joined the National Army.

Before they join the National Army, the Popular Resistance militants used to be multi-loyal militants, depending on the support they receive. This created a conflict of allegiance outside the Yemeni Army. This was the challenge that had a real impact on the National Army in addition to the prolonging of the conflict.

This study is a review of the hot fighting fronts in all military areas and an attempt to assess the performance of the National Army in all fronts in conjunction with the fourth anniversary of the official establishment of the National Army in June 2018.





Distribution of troops and armament:

Yemeni forces are deployed on all fronts of fighting irregularly. Although the deployment is based on the geographical scope of the country and according to military regions (1 to 7), some forces are deployed outside their military regions depending on military needs and battles.

First: Gates of Sana'a

The Government forces are fighting in areas of Serwah (belonging to the governorate of Marib) - the southern entrance to Sana'a - and Nehm of the governorate of Sana'a, eastern entrance. These forces cover the lines connecting the two cities, Serwah and Nehm, about (27) km:

1 - The front of Serwah

Serwah district is important because it is the last stronghold of "Houthis" in the west of Marib, and with the liberation of this district, the government forces can go beyond Marib towards Khawlan, the first district of Sana'a, southeast. For more than a year, Serwah was an important stronghold of the Houthis after they displaced its inhabitants and changed the area into a military front and a storage to supply their fighters in the areas of Hailan and Al-Mashgah (west of Marib). Consequently, who control the area can control the Houthis supply lines.⁽⁷⁾



Details of the Front Status:

- Military brigades are administered directly by the UAE leadership, in addition to training.
- Soldiers on this front receive salaries from the Yemeni government and Saudi Arabia and daily expenses from the United Arab Emirates (the second force in the Arab Coalition). Abu Dhabi has led the stalled front since a year and a half with orders from the UAE military leadership. The front is still in defense position.⁽⁸⁾
- The «Serwah» Front and «Baihan» Front - north of Shabwa, in the east of the country – belong to the third Military Region. It is the first Military Region that was activated after the launch of the «Decisive Storm.» Its members are not from a specific governorate, but from all regions of the country, unlike some military brigades in other military regions.



- This front is subjected to severe pressure by the Houthis and is constantly attacked and the Houthis sometimes have breakthroughs, but it quickly regains control as the surrounding terrains in Serwah remain a key factor of non-decisiveness there. The UAE forces, who oversee the front, turned it into a front of exhaustion and remained in the defense position. Attacks against the Houthi militias were stopped, especially as the cost in this front is high and increasing because of the surrounding land mines and the positioning of the Houthis in the mountains of Serwah.

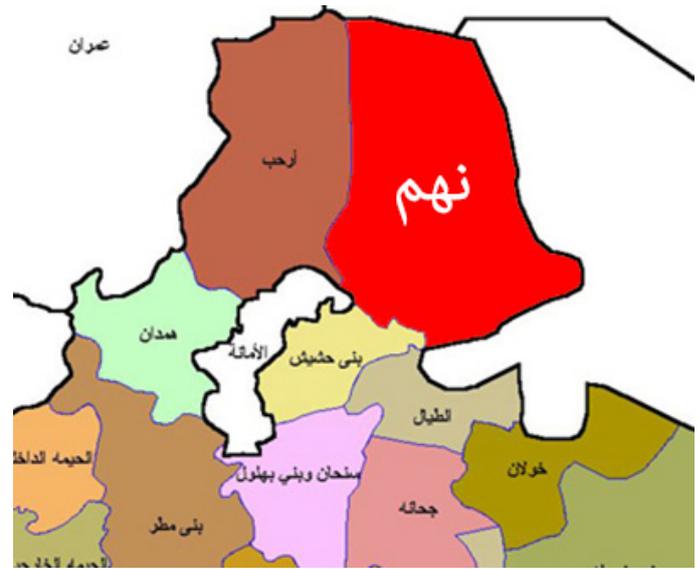
»

**The Serwah front
is important
because it
represents the
last stronghold
of the Houthis in
the west of Marib**

»

2 – Nehm Front

Likethefrontof "Serwah", theNehmfront has stopped since June 2017. There is a weak progress that does not mean a change in the course of the battle or important progress towards the capital Sana'a. This front is one of the most important fronts as it is closer to the capital Sana'a and it opens the way to the district of "Arhab," north of Sana'a. Any progress by the government forces in this front can bombard the Sana'a International Airport. The mountainous terrain and nature of this front is one of the obstacles that stop the movement of the government troops.



The district of Nehm is the first district of Sana'a governorate and its eastern entrance, which exceeds 1841 square kilometers. It is characterized by rough mountainous ranges overlooking the capital Sana'a. It is about 60 km from the center of Sana'a. "Nehm" district is next to Arhab district, the northern gate of Sana'a governorate, (both represent one-third of Sana'a in general). Bani Hushaish district is in the front of Nehm, the closer to Sana'a International Airport. Military observers believe that by liberating Nehm and Bani Hushaish, the National Army will come to the last "Sana'a" battle against the Houthis.⁽⁹⁾

”
**The length of the
frontline is 40
km and width is
80 km, making
it the largest hot
front in Yemen**
”

In this front, known for its bad terrain, we can point out to the following:

- The length of the frontline is 40 km and width is 80 km, making it the largest hot front in Yemen.
- Troops fighting in Nehm are affiliated with the 7th Military Region as follows:

Military Unit	Deployment Location	Approximate Number	Equipment and capacity
Brigade 55	Right Wing- Fardhat Nehm	1000	5
Brigade 121	Left Wing- Fardhat Nehm	700	4
Brigade 133	Left Wing- Nehm	1300	5
Brigade 139	Left Wing- Nehm	1300	6
Brigade 72	Center- Nehm	1500	6
Peace Keeping Brigade	Right Wing- Nehm	2500	5
Brigade 310	Right Wing- Nehm	2500	6
Brigade 314	Right Wing-Center- Nehm	3000	7
Brigade 125	Left Wing-Center- Nehm	1200	5
Brigade 29	Right Wing- Nehm	1300	6
Decisiveness Brigade	Right Wing- Nehm	1200	5
Third Marine Infantry Brigade	Left Wing- Nehm	1000	5
First Mountain Infantry Brigade	Center- Nehm	1200	5

Military Unit	Deployment Location	Approximate Number	Equipment and capacity
Reserve Forces	Left Wing- Center-Nehm	1500	7
Falcons Brigade 4	Fardhat Nehm	250	5
Battalion of Ibb Police	Fardhat Nehm	200	4
Battalion from Brigade 141	Center- Some battalions moved to Al-Jawf	1500	7

Troops capabilities and Leadership problems:

• According to the researchers at the Abaad Center, only 35% of those forces have the ability to fight as they already exist on the ground. The rest of those forces are divided, according to records of the General Staff, as follows: 20% of forces in each brigade are martyrs and wounded, and other 20% of forces in each brigade are not real fighters (new recruits, workers, drivers, etc.). They stay in Marib, but when they receive their salaries they go to Nehm. Commanders of each brigade receive a percentage of their salaries. Other 15% of those forces in each brigade are not able to fight as they are old, disabled or young; while 10% are relatives of the brigades' commanders and they come to the front only when they receive their salaries.

• 30% of soldiers have escaped from the front of Nehm and have been replaced with new recruits. They have escaped from the front because they do not receive salaries. They went to other fronts where their colleagues receive salaries and daily expenses from Saudi Arabia like Midi and Sa'ada or from UAE like Serwah and the West Coast.

• The soldiers in the seventh Military Region, which is responsible for managing battles in Nehm, did not receive their salaries for months in 2017. They received only salaries from January through June 2017. Recently they have received salaries for only five months, January through May 2018, while soldiers in the fourth Military Region- for example- receive their salaries regularly.

- 60% of commanders of brigades in Nehm do not show up in the front lines and most of them stay in the city of Marib.

”
This front has been subjected to media distortion because it remained in a defense position for a year without any new attack, while military experts confirm that military operations require a decision from the coalition and legitimacy to support the front logistically
”

- **Regional Formation:** half of soldiers in some brigades in Nehm belong to the area of the brigade's commander and the other half are from other regions because when commanders were assigned to form the brigades, they used to recruit people from their own areas. This is evident in the brigades 55, 135, the Peacekeepers Brigade, the Reserve Brigade and Brigade 72.
- 70% of soldiers were killed by land mines, mortars and sniping as they suffer the lack of equipment (helmets, lead shields, minesweepers, transport vehicles)

- 65% of officers and leaders belong to the «former army.» Their behaviors and corruption is a legacy from former regime, so many new soldiers and military leaders do not trust them.
- There is a flaw in the hierarchy. Military personnel complain from conflicting commands between the General Staff, the General Inspector and the Ministry of Defense. In addition, some commanders of military regions directly communicate with the office of the Supreme Commander or Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, not with their the General Staff and Ministry of Defense. Sometimes commanders of brigades are dismissed or replaced without taking hierarchy into account!
- The lack of an advanced military operations department that consists of officers from Yemen and the Arab Coalition to manage the fighting, plan for attacks, make war decisions and resolve the outstanding problems in order to support this front to continue progress.
- This front has been hit by the Arab Coalition aircrafts mistakenly because of the fighters, lack of experience in raising coordinates to the coalition and breaking into new areas without reporting the coalition's operations room.

- This front has been subjected to media distortion because it remained in a defense position for a year without any new attack, while military experts confirm that military operations require a decision from the coalition and legitimacy to support the front logistically and providing it with weapons and ammunition - this has not happened since a year.
- Alongside the difficult terrain, the Houthis use mines and heavy explosive devices and have a large stockpile of Kornet missiles which are not owned the National Army has not.

The Nature of Battles

In addition to problems related to the leadership and the discrimination between soldiers in Nehm front and soldiers in other fronts, and other problems mentioned above, there are obstacles related to the nature of battles and fortifications, problems related to war and confrontations, which can be pointed to as follows:

- Providing soldiers with helmets, ammunition and equipment related to the mountainous nature is more effective than the use of helicopter flights. The operational altitude of the Apache helicopter is 7,000 feet, although it can fly more than 15,000 feet, but the pilot needs to use oxygen. The height of mountains in Nehm is 8,000 feet from the sea surface, so if Apache helicopter flies more than the operational rate, 7,000 feet, from the surface of the mountains, they will be close to the Houthis anti-aircraft missiles. Therefore, the Apache helicopter is active in the desert and the coasts because it is 5 kilometers. Missiles or anti-aircraft defense cannot reach this range.

- The warplanes cannot target the Houthis in their fortifications, but they can destroy their supplies and attack militias when they come out of their hideouts to attack the positions of the National Army. Airplanes can also destroy the Houthis roads, communication stations and artillery.

”
The Houthis use a successful way to escape the coalition's air raids as they have dug large cavities in the mountains of Nehm
”

- The Houthis use a successful way to escape the coalition's air raids as they have dug large cavities in the mountains of Nehm – taking advantage from the difficult terrain - and stored food supplies and weapons. They also made small holes in those mountains to watch outside and point their guns, so whatever raids targeting them cannot reach their positions in the mountains. This requires a ground attack after extensive artillery shelling.

- The Houthis monitor the withdrawal of soldiers from their positions to «Marib» to stay there or to visit their parents because the leadership has not a clear vision to solve their problems. The Houthi fighters take the advantage and attack the positions of the National Army and takeover the positions.

- The length and width of the front's area is also an obstacle against any uncoordinated advances. The absence or delay of the coalition's aircraft when requested causes another problem due to the lack of an operational command in this front, like other fronts – for example but not limited to the West Coast Front.

- In the battles that took place in early June 2018, 12 of the Houthis fighters were captured. Most of them were new recruits. This indicates that Houthi force has been depleted and that the well-trained Houthi fighters were sent to the fronts in the West Coast and Al-Jawf to achieve any easy victory away from the complexity of the terrain.



The Needs of Troops in Nehm Front:

- **Military training:** Most of the forces are new (70%) recruits, who have not received sufficient training. Many of them have been promoted to «officers» without receiving any training or academic courses. The other 30% are members of the pre-2015 Army who joined the National Army.

- Most of brigades of this front have not long-range armored vehicles or artillery. They fight with machine guns and Kalashnikovs.
- Most of brigades have not ammunition and they were not equipped with modern weapons like those possessed by the Houthis such as anti-tank missiles (Kornet).
- Fighters in this front do not have chest shields or «sensors» to detect mines, although these military brigades continuously suffer from thousands of mines that the Houthis planted everywhere.



Problems and solutions in Nehm front:

- 1- The problem of geography and terrain can be easily solved through well training, well armament, including professional forces, creating operations room to organize the military action and providing the troops with helmets, shields and minesweepers.
- 2- In terms of logistical support and strategic weapons, the majority of the army brigades that fight in Nehm are infantry (90%) because they do not have tanks and artillery. Therefore, they need tanks and artillery and strategic weapons, in addition to engineering units that can handle the task of demining, building bridges and opening roads.
- 3- With regard to salaries, the coalition and the government should pay salaries and daily allowance to the troops in this front regularly like other fronts.
- 4- Providing all brigades in Nehm with live ammunition for all types of weapons to minimize the losses due to the Houthi attacks and to transform from defense to attack.

5- What make the rest of the fighters in the front continue fighting are two things: the combat doctrine of the majority of those troops who are not interested in material matters, as well as the recent movement by the Arab Coalition to improve the nutritional status of the troops in the front.

6- There is a problem related to the social incubator. In the contact lines between the National Army and the Houthi militias, some tribes that used to be loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh have become involved in fighting along with the Houthis. So there is a need for a plan to activate the social communication with those tribes via acceptable personalities that have family or regional relations with leaders of tribes that support the Houthis.

7- Unifying the operations rooms, creating a joint command room for the Arab Coalition, replacing failed and corrupt officers with professional ones, and continuously evaluating and inspecting the performance of all brigades.

8- Establishing modern field hospitals in the front to reduce the human cost.



Second: Al-Bayda front

Most of Al-Bayda governorate (in the middle) is still under the Houthis control. For more than two years, the fighting fronts have been run by anti-Houthi tribesmen since the Houthis invaded the capital Sana'a. Even if media outlets of the government and the Arab coalition are interested in the fighting between the popular resistance in the districts of Al-Bayda, the involvement of regular forces in the fight against the Houthis in Al-Bayda began only one year ago in border areas between Al-Bayda and both Shabwa and Marib.

The governorate of Al-Bayda has borders with other eight governorates. It is bordered to the north with parts of Marib and Shabwa, with parts of Shabwa and Abyan to the east, parts of Abyan, Lahj and Al-Dali to the south, with parts of Al-Dali, Ibb and Dhamar to the west and with part of Sana'a to the north-west. It is the passage for supplies to Houthi fighters in different fronts. It is close to Dhamar, the southern gate of Sana'a and the training center for most of the Houthi recruits and storage of Houthi fighters.

The tribesmen fight in al-Bayda against the Houthis and receive support from the villagers and expatriates outside the country ⁽¹⁰⁾. The government forces have two axes:

- The first axis includes Marib through Qanya district of Al-Bayda
- The second axis includes Baihan of Shabwa through Natea and Numan districts of Al-Bayda

Table of Troops Deployment

Military Unit	Deployment Location	Approximate Number	Equipment and capacity
Brigade 117	Qanya	1800	6
Brigade 159	Al-Abdya	1200	5
Brigade of (Special Security Forces in Al-Bayda)	Qanya (Along the way from Qanya to Marib)	1000	4
Brigade 26	Numan and beyond it towards Al-Malajem	2000	6
Brigade 19	Natea and beyond it towards Al-Malajem	1800	6
Brigade 173	Numan	1700	5
Brigade 153	Natea	1200	5
Brigade 163	Natea	1500	5
Battalion from al-Bayda	Numan- Natea	300	4
Al-Bayda Resistance	Fighting Houthis in other areas	2500	4

Troops capabilities and leadership problems

Abandoning the resistance:

The popular resistance, which does not have combat experience, is distributed in some districts of Al-Bayda and suffers some problems, most notably is the lack of armament. The fighters have personal arms, but they do not have medium and heavy weapons, artillery and armored vehicles. The resistance does not have a command and control center that coordinates operations between the resistance and air strikes.

Western countries, including countries in the Arab Coalition (especially the UAE), accuse the resistance of being infiltrated by al-Qaeda, without regard to the state of hostility between al-Qaeda and the tribesmen who fought against al-Qaeda for years under the umbrella of the state. The tribes currently try not to clash with al-Qaeda that claims that it protects people from the Houthis, but the Arab Coalition does not support the tribes in their fighting with the Houthis. If the Arab Coalition supports the tribes to defeat the Houthis and restore the state, the tribes and the state can pursue al-Qaeda together.

Corruption: In Al-Bayda, some military commanders practice corruption. For example, in mid-April 2018, Saudi Arabia provided 50 patrols (military vehicles), 30,000 rounds of ammunition and 50,000 Saudi riyals for each combat group, but half of those patrols, ammunition and money disappeared with the beginning of "Qanyah" battle. The reason - according to informed military sources - that those supplies reached to military figures who are believed to be loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh and are still linked to the Houthis. The resistance the National Army received nothing of those supplies.

Allies accounts: The front of "Qanyah" stopped weeks after its launch due to a series of actions and decisions taken by the Coordination Officer in the Arab Coalition, including the establishment of a parallel entity working outside the National Army Command, similar to the formation of entities by the UAE in the southern regions and the West Coast. There are also accusations of ignoring reports from the Popular Resistance to the Arab Coalition on the movements of the Houthis in order to target them by aircrafts.

Third: Al-Jawf front

The battle of Al-Jawf governorate represents a point of light towards the stronghold of the Houthis. The plans indicate that this front aims to cut the road between Amran and Sa'ada governorates. This makes the front pivotal to liberate Sana'a, Amran, and Sa'ada

The Sixth Military Region manages this front under the supervision and with support of the Arab Coalition through Saudi Arabia. But it suffers from the same problems in Nehm and Serwah in terms of administrative, leadership, armament and ammunition. However, it is easier in terms of the terrain and geographic nature. Most of the land is desert except a chain of mountains where fierce clashes are going on.

”
The battle of Al-Jawf governorate represents a point of light towards the stronghold of the Houthis
”



Table of Troops Deployment

Military Unit	Deployment Location	Approximate Number	Equipment and capacity
Brigade 9	Al-Hazm	1200	6
Brigade 22	Al-Hazm	1100	5
Brigade 27	Al-Hazm	1400	6
Brigade 101	Al-Hazm	1200	5
Brigade 122	Al-Hazm	1000	5
Brigade 3 Aroba	Al-Hazm	1500	6
Brigade 89	Al-Moton	1500	6
Brigade 155	Al-Sadrein	1300	6
Al-Fath Brigade	Al-Sadrein	1400	6
Brigade 147	Al-Khanjar	1500	7
Brigade 1- Border Guards	Al-Rowaik	1200	6
Brigade 4- Border Guards	Al-Mahashimah	1100	7
Brigade 141	Moved from Sharorah to Al-Jawf	2000	8

This front and the status of the troops can be analyzed as follows:

• The forces can be classified as follows:

1- The effective force is 40% and troops already exist in their camps.

2- About 10% of the troops were killed and wounded.

3- Approximately 25% of the people of Al - Jawf are (Bedouins) and some of them attend during the fighting only and some are old.

4- About 10% are companions and relatives of military commanders.

5- About 15% attend only during salaries delivery (workers, vendors, new recruits.. etc.)

The Front Conditions:

• Compared to other fronts, the troops are stationed in Al-Jawf and Special Forces are being sent to battles in different areas in contact points. After the liberation of the areas, the Special Forces handover the liberated areas to the security forces to manage them and return to their camps.

• The Houthis are concentrated in spaced out areas of Al-Jawf. As a result of the large size of Al-Jawf and its terrain (80% of the governorate is desert), the Houthis cannot station in most of the areas). However, there are some mountains that hamper the progress of the National Army.

• The Popular Resistance in Al-Jawf has been integrated into the Yemeni National Army, and most of them have military numbers.

• Soldiers have not received their salaries for nearly a year. In May 2018, they received salaries for May and June 2017, and January and February 2018.

• The front suffers from a lack of ammunition. Saudi Arabia supplies ammunition for cannons, machine guns and Kalashnikovs only when the front is to be moved forward and not permanently. If ammunition and salaries were available regularly, the National Army could have achieved rapid progress. The troops need some equipment (helmets, lead shields, minesweepers,..etc).

• The Houthis have not been able to recover any of the sites they have lost in Al-Jawf front - despite their attempts - for a year and a half. They have recently launched multiple attacks and tried to control the Mazwiah area, which overlooks the Al-Jawf's capital, Al-Hazm, but the area was restored by the army.

The National Army in Al-Jawf could reorganize the brigades via mobilizing all officers and soldiers to identify the absentees and replacing them with new recruits.

- Good attendance of the fighters in the front in June 2018 was a result of the high morale of the fighters after the disbursement of salaries for four months (May and June of 2017, January and February of 2018), as well as the participation of the Sixth Military Region's commander and Al-Jawf governor in the field.

Fourth: Sa'ada Front

Saada governorate is the stronghold of the Houthi group, and one of the governorates that the group used to launch ballistic missiles towards Saudi Arabia.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia directly oversees this front and provides money, salaries, tactics and war plans to fight the Houthis. There are four main fronts: Boqee (north-east of Saada), Bakem (north), Razih (northwest) and Al-Dhaher (southwest). Most of the governorate remains under the control of the Houthis.



Troops positions and movements:

- The front has three axes: «Kitaf-Al-Boqee, Bakem-Mandaba and Razih-AlQalaa.
- The Razih Front is advancing towards Maran area, while the Bakem Front is approaching the governorate center (Sa'ada city) and the Al-Dhaher Front is close to Dahyan. There are still only the south and southeast of Saada, from Amran and Al-Jawf, to completely block the governorate.
- The Sa'ada Front belongs to the Sixth Military Region but it is currently separated to be run by Yemeni / Saudi administration.
- The front is supported by Saudi Arabia and the troops and commanders receive their salaries on a permanent basis, compared to Al-Jawf and Nehm.

”
Sa'ada governorate is the stronghold of the Houthi group, and one of the governorates that the group used to launch ballistic missiles towards Saudi Arabia
”

Table of Troops Deployment

Military Unit	Deployment Location	Approximate Number	Equipment and capacity
Brigade 143	Al-Boqee- battalion of it in Serwah	800	6
Brigade 151	Al-Boqee	1200	6
Brigade 84	Al-Boqee	1100	5
Brigade 63	Bakem	1200	6
Brigade 102 (Special Forces)	Al-Boqee	1100	7
Brigade 3 – Border Guards	Al-Boqee	1300	5
Brigade 5- Border Guards	Al-Boqee	1100	6
Decisiveness Brigade	Al-Boqee	1200	7
Brigade 6- Border Guards	Razih	1100	5
Brigade 7- Border Guards	Razih	1200	6
Brigade 12	Razih	1200	6
Engineering Units	Kitaf	200	6
Special mission battalion	Bakem	300	6
Brigade formed of former Re- publican Guard and Salafies	Razih	Unknown	Unknown

Fifth: Military operations in Hajjah

Saudi Arabia is leading a large-scale military operation in Midi and Haradh districts, north-west of Hajjah and north of Hodeidah on the Red Sea coast. The two districts belong to the Fifth Military Region. The operations room and headquarters that run the two fronts are based in Jazan, Saudi city on border with Yemen.

During the first half of 2018, the Yemeni-Saudi joint forces were leading the operations, which eventually could liberate the entire coastal city of Midi and large parts of Haradh, most notably Jabal Annar, which controls most of the towns bordering Haradh.



”

Saudi Arabia is leading a large-scale military operation in Midi and Haradh districts, north-west of Hajjah, and north of Hodeidah on the Red Sea coast

”

Table of Troops Deployment

Military Unit	Deployment Location	Approximate Number	Equipment and capacity
Brigade 2- Border Guards	South Midi	1700	6
Brigade 82	West Midi	1800	6
Brigade 10 (former Al-Fath)	East Midi	1500	5
Brigade 25	Midi city	1400	5
Brigade 105	Midi city	1700	5
Special Forces Brigade	Haradh	1500	9
Marine Formation Unit	Midi Port and Baklan island	200	5
Units of the Sudanese Army	Midi	1000-1200	8
Engineering units	Midi	300	5

The Troops Status and Military Operations:

- This front suffers from the same problems in other fronts in terms of the commitment of soldiers and officers.
- Yemeni forces have been fighting against the Houthi militias in the Midi and Haradh fronts since the liberation of parts of them in 2016, but the two fronts have been suspended due to very weak armament, especially in Midi, and mines that the Houthis planted. The two fronts are considered to be the first line of defense to exhaust the Houthis and prevent them from advancing towards Saudi territories, so the two fronts have not witnessed any pivotal progress since a long time.

- Military costs and losses in the Midi front are big because of the lack of adequate preparations for the battles there.
- There is no single tank in Midi. The existing vehicles are out of service ⁽¹¹⁾ and cannot be used in decisive battles to make progress.
- The liberated areas in Midi include Midi city and its port, and the neighboring Hairan district. In Haradh, the liberated areas include Jabal Annar, northern Haradh and the port of Tewal. All these areas were liberated during military operations in April and May 2018.
- The Houthis planted 6000 mines in Midi alone, which means 100 mines per square kilometer. This number of mines covers a very large part of Midi that is (60 km²). Yet the engineering teams are weak in terms of tools and staff.
- The naval force in Midi does not have combat equipment, although it is the first naval unit that was established after the Arab Coalition's "Decisive Storm." Its task is to observe and patrol the territorial waters off Midi port and Baklan Island. The naval force dismantled 160 naval mines so far.
- The troops in Midi are waiting for any advance by the National Army from the south of the country towards Hodeidah to start moving towards Hodeidah as well - according to military sources, especially as the fighters have completed the liberation of the city of Hairan and parts of Haradh.

Importance of Midi Port:

Midi had already been liberated in early 2016, but was quickly restored by the Houthi and Saleh militias. Observers attributed the disability to keep control of the city to corruption within the National Army brigades there and the weak armament of military units stationed in Midi.

Midi is located close to the Saudi territorial waters and is adjacent to the Kingdom as one a part of Hajjah on border with the Kingdom. The Houthis can attack Riyadh with their missiles or shell Saudi border regions as Midi has many mountainous highlands.

Midi has a strategic location that has become the focus of the Houthis as Midi includes the island of Thu Hirab on the waterway in the Red Sea, the Baklan island and Doweima island, which is parallel to the Red Sea coastline, just 300 meters from Midi coast. Midi also has the historical port that can work for the governorates of Hajjah, Al-Mahweet, Al-Jawf and Sa'ada.



Before the 2014 coup, the takeover of Midi port was very important for the Houthis. The Houthis used Midi port to receive weapons smuggled from Iran via the Eritrean port of Assab and then transported to Saada. When the National Dialogue Conference declared the partition of the country into six regions, the Houthis rejected the new division because it took out the port of Midi from the region that contains the governorate of Sa'ada, the stronghold of the Houthi group. The group wanted Midi to be their own port.

Taiz Front:

Taiz governorate represents the biggest front in terms of the number of confrontation points. The front contains 22 confrontation points around the city. The Houthis impose blockade against the city since three years. The confrontations between the National Army and Popular Resistant and the Houthi armed militias are still going on. Every time the National Army and Popular Resistant break the blockade in the western part of the city, the Houthis return.

The battles in Taiz are being run by a local military leadership that belongs to the Fourth Military Region. The two sides are fighting on almost 50 kilometers, in addition to battles in the southern and western districts of the city.



”
Taiz governorate represents the biggest front in terms of the number of confrontation points. The front contains 22 confrontation points around the city
”

Table of Troops Deployment

Military Unit	Deployment Location	Approximate Number	Equipment and capacity
Brigade 35	Southern Taiz front	7500	7
Brigade 17	Western Taiz Front	4000	5
Brigade 22	Eastern Taiz Front	5000	6
Brigade 145	Near the Central Security Prison and Taiz Axis Leadership	2000	5
Brigade 5 – Presidential Protection Guards (former Decisiveness Battalions)	Near Al-Saqr Stadium (western Taiz)	2500	6
Fourth Mountain Infantry Brigade	Rassen-Hirdad area	3000+	6
Al-Usba Brigade	Some buildings in eastern Taiz	2200	5
Police Battalions	Taiz streets and government offices	1200	4



Capacity and problems:

- The number of troops that fight against the Houthis in Taiz can be estimated at 35,000, including the military police that support the guards of the institutions in the city.
- The battalions in the city suffer from imbalances due the weakness of the government's control of all combat brigades because the United Arab Emirates supports battalions out of the National Army such as Abu al-Abbas battalions. The number of fighters affiliated with Abu al-Abbas (Adel Fare) is approximately 1,200, who just nominally belong to the 35th Brigade. Abu al-Abbas battalions are accused of being linked to al-Qaeda and the Organization of the Islamic State (Daesh). The commander of those battalions, Adel Fare, and a number of his aides are on lists of terrorism announced by US and Gulf States for their financial support to the organization and contributed to strengthening its power and influence in the city. ⁽¹²⁾
- The Army and Popular Resistance in the city suffer from the same problems of other fronts including the armament that is very bad. Military leaders in the front complain of a shortage of ammunition permanently. The fighters in all fronts in Taiz move forward only when the Arab Coalition provide them with ammunition. When the coalition wants to stop the fighters it cuts off the ammunition.

The government forces withdraw from their sites due to the lack of ammunition and then the Houthis advance to take control of those.

- Taiz has turned into a great war of attrition for the Houthis as well as the Army and the Resistance, because of the failure of the coalition to support the liberation of the city. This failure resulted in political and regional conflicts within the front. The conflicts led to assassinations against political and military leaders.
- The liberation of Taiz could have helped the legitimacy and the Arab Coalition to make an easy victory against the Houthis in the West Coast Front, as the Houthis still use mountains in Taiz to attack the Army in the West Coast. The Houthis on mountains in southern Taiz impose a threat against the strategic al-Anad base in Lahj that borders Taiz. In addition, the liberation of Taiz facilitates the liberation of Ibb and Dhamar, the southern gate of Sana'a.

”
Taiz has turned into a great war of attrition for the Houthis as well as the Army and the Resistance, because of the failure of the coalition to support the liberation of the city
”

Seventh: The West Coast Front

The government forces, backed by Sudanese and Emirati forces, have been fighting the Houthi and Saleh militias in the Western Coast of Yemen since the liberation of Aden to protect the city from any Houthi attacks. The troops slowly advance in the West Coast Front. In early 2017, the forces liberated the vital port of Makha, but after that the forces remained in a state of stagnancy except for very slow progress to the "Khokha" twon, close to Makha. In mid-May 2018, however, troops advanced rapidly on the West Coast, 50 miles in days until they approached the Hodeidah city and its port, which is under the Houthi control since 2014.

The commander of the West Coast Front was the former commander of the Fifth Military Region, Major General Omar Sajaf, but differences with the coalition have removed him from his position. The coalition appointed Colonel Ibrahim Masali as commander of the front.



Multi-loyal forces are also participating in this military campaign. They can be divided into four main sections:

First: Giants Brigades:

The Giants Forces are participating in the campaign with five brigades (first, second, third, fourth and sixth). The seventh brigade is still under construction and the fifth is tasked to support the other government forces to secure the liberated areas. Members of these brigades are equally from Tihama and southern governorates, although the majority of their leaders belong to southern areas including Al-Sabiha, Al-Wazeia, Mouza. However, a good number of soldiers are from Hodeidah and other soldiers are from Shabwa, Abyan, Yafea, Radfan and other parts of the South. Members of these brigades mostly «Salafist» but they are opposite to the directions of the Salafi Hani ibn Buraik, who is loyal to UAE. The brigades are led by Abu Zara,a al-Mahrami, his real name is Abdulrahman al-Mahrami al-Yafei, who has a family relationship with former Deputy Chief of General Staff, Major General Ahmad Saif al-Yafei ⁽¹³⁾. All brigades are loyal to the legitimate government and President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi and Saudi Arabia.

Second: Hodeidah brigades:

They are five brigades. The brigades form what it is called «Al-Tihamiya Resistance," refers to Tihama. They are a mixture of villagers, and sons of Tihama districts and the Zaranik tribes. Two of these brigades are loyal to the UAE, but other brigades are loyal to the legitimate government. The goal of all brigades is to militarily liberate the Hodeidah city and its port from the Houthis.



Third: Brigades of Tariq Saleh (nephew of the late Ali Abdullah Saleh)

The brigades are assembled from the remnants of the Republican Guard, the Central Security Forces, Special Forces, Counterterrorism Forces, and tribes that are loyal to the late President Ali Abdullah Saleh and his former ruling party.

Although these forces are fighting to «revenge» the killing of «Saleh» by the Houthis or to restore the rule of Saleh's family, the purpose is not a strong combat doctrine that is able to organize them. It is the UAE desire to collect these forces under the leadership of Tariq Saleh who did not recognize the legitimacy of President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi. Tariq and his force, which was double, participated in fighting along with the Houthis until the Houthis killed Saleh in December 2017. Tariq changed his loyalty from the Houthis to the Arab Coalition.

The UAE is training new forces in training centers in Makha, Khokha, Aden, Al-Anad military base and other areas under the leadership of Tariq Saleh, estimated at four thousand fighters. Military commanders say that they did not engage in real battles with the Houthis in Hodeidah. They said that some of the liberated areas were handed over, but they said a Houthi breakthrough enabled the Houthis to takeover those areas again. This is why the losses among the Army forces, which are fighting near Hodeidah, increased, as they said.



Fourth: External Forces

These forces include UAE and Sudanese forces. Members of the UAE Presidential Guard, which is based in Makha, and Sudanese forces are fighting in special operations. The Sudanese troops in this front are at least 500, but the number of UAE troops is unknown.



West Coast Forces Distribution Map:⁽¹⁴⁾

- 1- Giants forces will be tasked to secure the outskirts of Hodeidah and its entrances.
- 2- Al-Hodeidah will be assigned to liberate the city of Hodeidah.
- 3- Tihama brigades will be assigned to liberate the countryside of Hodeidah and some areas of Tihama.
- 4- The Al-Zaranik Brigades will support some operations in the countryside and its surroundings.
- 5- Tariq Saleh forces are assigned to secure secondary cities and villages outside the city of Hodeidah.
- 6- The attribution and cover is the task of a brigade led by Major General Haitham Qassim Taher and another brigade led by Nabil Mashushi, commander of the UAE-supported security belt in Aden.

”

Members of the UAE Presidential Guard and Sudanese forces are fighting alongside with the National Army in the west coast front

”

Yemen's National Army in the Hot Fighting Fronts

Military Unit	Deployment Location	Approximate Number	Equipment and capacity
First Giants Brigade	The coast- al- -Dureihimi –al-Nakhila	2000	9
Second Giants Brigade	Zabid, al-Jarahi	1800	8
Third Giants Brigade	The coast- al- -Dureihimi – al-Nakhila	1600	9
Fourth Giants Brigade	Joined military operations in June 16, 2018	+1500	8
Fifth Giants Brigade	Support and cover operations in liberated areas of Makha		
Sixth Giants Brigade	Zabid and Tahita suburbs	1800	8
Seventh Giants Brigade	Under construction		
Brigade 1 Hodeidah	Al-Jabalia intersection	2000+	7
Brigade 2 Hodeidah	Coastal line	1700	7
Brigade 1 "Tihama"	Districts	2000+	8
Brigade 2 "Tihama"	Districts (Zabid & Jarahi)	1700	7
Al-Zaranik Battalions (falcons)	Distributed to areas that need reinforcement	Unknown	5
Tariq Saleh Brigades	They did not join the battles until June 10	3000+	9
UAE troops	Special Operations and Reinforcement	Unknown	10
Sudanese troops	Special operations	500+	8

Management of military forces:

- The UAE is actually leading military operations towards the port of Hodeidah, and five military commanders ⁽¹⁵⁾ said that they receive orders from UAE forces.
- In the advisory body of the military operations, there is Haitham Qasim Taher, an adviser and representative of the UAE forces, and Thabet Muthana Jawas, representative and adviser of the legitimate government. The two men have an old antagonistic relationship dating back to the 1986 Southern Civil War.
- According to military plans, the Giants Brigades and Hodeidah brigades are responsible for liberating the city of Hodeidah and its port. These forces are loyal to the internationally recognized government and have completely refused to be led by Tariq Saleh ⁽¹⁶⁾. This raises speculations about the future of the coastal city after liberation.

”
**Tariq Saleh's forces,
equipped with all light
and medium weapons,
vehicles, guns and
some tanks**
”

- Tariq Saleh forces were formed from the most loyal areas to the family of Saleh, for example Dharmar. Those forces are mostly middle-ranking officers and soldiers. Upon arriving in Aden, four months after the killing of Saleh, they received 200,000 Yemeni riyals per person (US \$ = 483 YR) as a reward from the coalition. They receive their salaries periodically. Currently, UAE runs training camps in Hodeidah for new recruits to be added to the forces of «Tariq Saleh» in order to enter the Hodeidah city.
- Tariq Saleh's forces are equipped with all light and medium weapons, vehicles, guns and some tanks that were taken from the Houthis in "Thu Bab» and other towns, in addition to the sufficient ammunition. The number of Tariq Saleh forces is not known exactly because some of them fled. In the period of April 2018, so many troops escaped from the brigades of Tariq Saleh with ammunition and weapons, especially after Tariq Saleh announced a military operation with support from UAE in Makha of Taiz. They received a very painful blow and the troops that were stationed at Khalid bin al-Walid Camp dispersed. A document from the UAE Presidential Guard described those battles as «hellish.»⁽¹⁷⁾

- The coastal front is considered to be the easiest fighting area. Helicopters, warplanes and barges are used in the fighting in contrast to the Nehm front, where the Houthis are fortified in the mountains. The West Coast is an open place where aircrafts can pick up the Houthis.
- The most Sudanese presence is in the West Coast, compared to their presence in «Midi» town of Hajjah.
- It was the brigades of the Giants that liberated the areas of Al-Wazeiya, Mouza and Kahbob Mountains after Tariq Saleh Brigades were annihilated by the Houthis in April. The defeat of Tariq Saleh forces caused a big shock to the Arab Coalition due to the poor performance of Tariq Saleh's forces despite they were well-trained. Media reports said that breakthrough by the Houthis into Tariq Saleh's brigades contributed to the transformation of the battle into «hell» against the forces of Tariq Saleh.
- The government forces loyal to the legitimacy took a new route in the West Coast, bringing them easily to the Al-Dureihimi instead of passing through Zabid, Al-Jarahi and Beit al-Faqih. The new route passes along the coast, where there are no houses or hiding places for the Houthis with the ability of battleships and apaches to hit the Houthis more accurately. Although it is not free of risks, the government plan was smart as it facilitated the access of the

government forces to the nearest point to the city of Hodeidah in a few days and with less costs.

However, the delay to liberate areas where the Houthis are launching attacks against the government forces to cut the supply lines, especially in "Al-Faza" and "Al-Jah," what will obstruct the arrival of supplies to the front lines of the fighting areas of the "Taif" and al-Dureihimi.

Status of military troops in the West Coast

- Compared to the Nehm Front, the West Coast Front is the most heavily armed and equipped with tanks, patrols and minesweeper more than the other fighting fronts all over the country. Land, air and naval forces are also engaged in regular operations in the West Coast Front.

The UAE is committed to providing monthly salaries and daily expenses for the troops. There are field hospitals that provide medical care to the injured, and if the case is serious, it is transferred to Aden as a matter of urgency. The Yemeni government also commits another salary to these forces.

- There are no «escape» cases among the fighters because of the lack of salaries like other fronts. There is an incentive to stay through providing all requirements of soldiers. In addition, the Special Forces (Yemeni-Sudanese-UAE) are available to save the fighters in case they are besieged or the supplies were cut off.

Why is Hodeidah important for the Houthis? ⁽¹⁸⁾

- It represents an important strategic center that raises grievances internationally. It controls the local economy and a center that gathers the fighting forces on several fronts.
- New Houthi recruits come to Hodeidah from the northern governorates. It has a vital link with Jabal al-Sharq in Dhamar where the Houthis group has more than 40 training sites ⁽¹⁹⁾. Hodeidah is also linked to Mahweet, Raimah and Hajja. The members of the armed group also move from Hodeidah to the fighting fronts in Taiz in the south, and Midi and Haradh in the north.
- According to previous economic reports, the Houthis revenues from the port of Hodeidah in 2015 reached 47 billion Yemeni riyals, which is enough to manage a long-term battle, in addition to their black markets and the accumulation of funds outside the Central Bank of Yemen, according to observers.

- Through ports, run by the Houthis in Hodeidah, they get huge revenues from the black market of oil derivatives, equivalent to 3.5 million dollars, per a day from the additional price to the real price of oil derivatives.
- The revenues of taxes in Hodeidah - collected from companies for the government office and not through levies, during the last two months of 2016, amounted to (130) million riyals. During the month of January 2018, the amount reached up to (78) million riyals, revenues that the office did not receive since 2012 ⁽²⁰⁾.
- The ports, islands and coasts of the West Coast plain are the main outlets for obtaining weapons and for communication between the Houthi forces and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

”

The ports, islands and coasts of the West Coast plain are the main outlets for obtaining weapons and for communication between the Houthi forces and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards

”

Complexities of Hodeidah

Liberation

The complexities that obstruct the liberation of Hodeidah seem to be many, and perhaps the humanitarian aspect has become the most exciting since the arrival of government forces in the outskirts of the city. The city has one of the largest ports in Yemen and receives 70% of food and trade imports to the country. The Houthis earn \$ 30 million per a month through the port and it is very difficult for the group to give up it. ⁽²¹⁾

Although the Saudi-led military coalition said it will do all possible to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure in Hodeidah, the Houthis will prevent the government troops from entering the port whatever the cost. The leader of the group, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, expressed his strong rejection to surrender: «I call on the people of Hodeidah and all Yemenis to confront the invaders with determination.» ⁽²²⁾



These forces cannot succeed against the Houthis without the support of the Arab Coalition, and the coalition cannot carry out military operations without a green light and support from the United States.

On June 4, 2018, The Wall Street Journal reported that President Trump Administration was considering a request from the UAE for direct US support for the liberation of the port of Hodeidah in western Yemen ⁽²³⁾.

The UAE said it will not be able to stop militants from going forward if they decide to enter the city because of the Houthi provocations ⁽²⁴⁾. But military commanders say they are receiving orders from the UAE military leadership.

Although Washington is following the position of the EU, Russia and the United Nations from the process, it may support the military operation to bring about a fundamental change in the Yemeni war ⁽²⁵⁾ that might force the Houthis - according to the coalition and the United States believe- to engage in peaceful talks.

The Arab Coalition may have considered the liberation of Hodeidah as an unannounced condition to agree to start UN-sponsored Yemeni consultations so that the Houthis will appear to be weaker. ⁽²⁶⁾

Yemen's National Army in the Hot Fighting Fronts

There are some fears that the liberation of Hodeidah could lead to a street war in the city and then to the closure of the port that may affect millions of Yemenis, who depend on emergency aids, and the population of the city, 320,000 out of 700,000, will be displaced ⁽²⁷⁾. This means a new increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), who are estimated as three millions. The Arab Coalition seems to be unaware of these risks and it has not created shelters and other options before the launch of the military operation.

The United Nations and Western diplomats believe that a military operation in Hodeidah will obstruct efforts of the UN Envoy to Yemen Martin Griffith, who has been looking into a special deal on Hodeidah port that could transfer the administration of the port to the United Nations instead of the Houthis. US officials suggest to wait to see the result of the UN Envoy efforts to decide then if there is a need for a military operation in the coastal city or not.

The UAE tries to impose «Tariq Saleh» as a commander of the battle in Hodeidah, instead of the commander «Abu Zara'a al-Mahrami,» but the brigades of the Giants Force reject this definitely and threaten to withdraw to Aden ⁽²⁸⁾. As the differences between the components are big and their loyalty is divided between the legitimate government and the UAE, the recurrence of the Aden scenario is a matter of concern to the population and even to the international community. The UAE seriously plans to control the vital city and its port to complete its control of the Yemeni coasts. ⁽²⁹⁾

”
Imposing Tariq Saleh as commander of military forces in Hodeidah may repeat the scenario of Aden
”



Scenarios of Hodeidah Battle

All developments on the ground indicate that the entry of the joint forces, led by Saudi Arabia and UAE to the city of Hodeidah is inevitable and that it is a matter of time. So the most expected scenarios are as follows:

1- Hodeidah invasion: this scenario is difficult and its cost will be huge, especially for civilians. So to reduce the cost, the port should not be closed. The task of hunting the Houthis inside the city should be left for local forces and resistance to be organized all over the city and the invasion should go in line with huge military operations in Nehm, Serwah, Al-Jawf and Sa'ada in order to disperse the large number of Houthi fighters in the West Coast to other fronts. The liberation of mountains around the city is also very important to protect the city and the port from the Houthis attacks. After the government forces took over the Hodeidah airport (as announced in June 19, 2018), the Houthis will try to drag those forces into streets war to make the city lives the same situation of Halab in Syria due to streets war between the forces of Bashar al-Assad and the opposition forces in 2016. Therefore, the Arab Coalition should find other alternatives and not to engage in streets war.

2- The Houthis Surrender: This is a weak scenario. This scenario assumes that the Houthis will declare their surrender and hand over the port and airport of Hodeidah to the legitimate authorities in return for securing their exit under the supervision of the United Nations.

3- The Suspension of military operations in Hodeidah: This scenario is impossible, according to statements from the legitimate government and the coalition. It will not be achieved unless a pressure from major countries on the Arab Coalition and the Yemeni government. The pressure is not only significant through statements, but also through confusing the military operations in Hodeidah via a sudden halt of logistical and intelligence support from US, Britain and France.



Wrong Raids by the Arab Coalition

The wrong strikes by the Arab Coalition's air force against the pro-coalition forces were one of the most important factors behind the slow progress of military forces and the lack of confidence between the coalition and some units of the Yemeni army. The National Army has been subjected to fatal erroneous raids by the coalition's aircraft and sometimes by shelling with artillery from the back. This is mainly due to the lack of command and control centers for each single front to coordinate the movement of the government forces and the coalition's air force. ⁽³⁰⁾

”
The wrong strikes by the Arab Coalition's air force against the pro-coalition forces were one of the most important factors behind the slow progress of military forces and the lack of confidence between the coalition and some units of the Yemeni army
”



The most prominent wrong air raids that targeted the National Army and Resistance can be noted in the following table:

Date	Governorate	Location	Losses
26-2-2018	Sana'a	Al-Manara Mountain /Nehm	7 killed including MG Abdullah al-Abed, General Staff of Brigade 133 and command of operations of the same brigade MG Mohamed al-Hawiri, and 17 injured
16-2-2018	Hajja	Midi	3 soldiers were killed, 4 injured by Saudi artillery from the back
14-11-2017	Taiz	Al-Aroos site	Equipment belong to Brigade 22 and aerial of the Resistance radio in Taiz The site was freed from the Houthis one year before the coalition's airstrike
30-7-2017	Sa'ada	Al-Shabaka Mountain (Al-Boqe/ Kitaf	soldiers were killed 8
29-6-2017	Marib	Al-Ashqari/Al-Makhdara/Serwah	80 soldiers were killed and injured by four airstrikes
27-6-2017	Marib	Al-Naseeb Al-Ahmer Mountain/ Serwah	40 soldiers were killed and injured in UAE shelling from the back
30-5-2017	Taiz	Al-Khazan/ Al-Wazea	6 soldiers were killed and others injured
17-5-2017	Taiz	Al-Wazea highway	20 members of the Popular Resistance were killed and injured

Yemen's National Army in the Hot Fighting Fronts

Date	Governorate	Location	Losses
23-1-2017	Taiz	Kahbob/Al-Wazea	12 soldiers were killed and injured
11-10-2016	Abyan	Naqeel Thera/ Mukairas	3 soldiers were killed 13 were injured
30-1-2016	Marib	Al-Jawf Intersection	One member of the Popular Resistance was killed and 5 injured
23-1-2017	Hadramout	Brigade 23/ Al-Abr	More than 53 soldiers and officers were killed ⁽³¹⁾ including commander of the brigade and tens were injured. The brigade was 100km far from the closet fighting front
11-10-2016	Al-Jawf	Al-Moton	15 soldiers were killed and 5 injured
30-1-2016	Taiz	Al-Afiosh/Al-Wazea	15 soldiers were killed and injured



Evaluation and Results:

Through the assessment of the government forces in the contact areas with the Houthis armed group within the strategic fronts that are effective in terms of the military balance equation, we have found the following:

- The establishment of a national army from the zero point is not an easy matter. And to make that army strong, it must be maintained and its capabilities must be developed as this army will bear the responsibility of imposing the presence of the state after the war and the prevention of parallel force and dealing with it militarily in the same way as dealing with the Houthis.
- The military operations are restricted with the decision of the center (the Arab Coalition), the loyalty of the field allies and the human cost
- The delay of military decisiveness is not due to the power of the Houthis, but due to reasons that are related to the legitimate government and the coalition. There are fronts that have been hindered from progress, taking into consideration the parties in the international community and some major countries that used to see the vicinity of the capital Sana'a and the port of Hodeidah as red lines.

- Pressure on the National Army and preventing it from advancing in some fronts was not according to gradual military orders or through coordination between the legitimate government and the coalition, but through the use of military support and salaries, as only some fronts, which the coalition want them to progress, receive regular salaries, ammunition and qualitative weapons.
- There is a problem in the command order. Leaders do not adhere to the hierarchy, including military appointments. The commander of the brigade can communicate with the president, the deputy or Defense Minister or an advisor, ignoring the chief of staff and the commander of the team. This leads to conflicting decisions between the office of the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, his deputy and the chief of staff on one hand and the office of the Ministry of Defense on the other.
- There is prejudice and discrimination between combat fronts in terms of taking care of the soldiers and military support. At the time of a regular delivery of salaries for military units in some fighting fronts, other fronts have not been paid for months. This prejudice is based on political motives, not military.

The establishment of a national army from the zero point is not an easy matter. And to make that army strong, it must be maintained and its capabilities must be developed

• Some fronts are neglected although they need an urgent support from the leadership of the Army and the Arab Coalition, for example in «Nehm» and «Al-Jawf.» Their problems can be classified as follows:

- Most of soldiers in these two fronts are newly recruited and did not receive sufficient training

- Ammunition is available only short time before the battle begins, which is not done only by a decision from the coalition.

- The delivery of salaries is nor regular and the daily expenses are almost not exist, so some soldiers leave the fronts and move to other fronts to look for a source of livelihood in order to feed their families.

- Modern weapons "armored vehicles", tanks, heavy artillery and thermal missiles are not available in most of the fighting areas except a few of them in some areas, unlike the heavy presence of those weapons in the West Coast Front. If those weapons are available provided, ammunition is not available.

- Soldiers do not have chest protectors, helmets or minesweepers despite the dire need for them in "Nehm" and "Al-Jawf" fronts.

• There is no a joint command room in Nehm comprising military leaders from the Arab Coalition and the Yemeni Army, which leads to a poor coordination between air raids and military operations on the ground. This is one of the reasons why the Houthis have been able to regain positions in the largest front where there are no rescue and coordination teams in the event of Houthi attacks on their positions.

• Corruption of military commanders and the recruitment of relatives and acquaintances to form more than 10% of the Yemeni Army, although 60% of the military commanders are not on the front lines, leaving the battle management in the field.

• A complex corruption and responsibility is borne by the Yemeni military leaders and their counterparts in the coalition, especially with regard to transactions of spoiled weapons.

• Disregarding the wounded soldiers and «families of martyrs» from the army forces has a negative reflection on the rest of soldiers.

• Leading military operations by Saudi Arabia or the UAE without the involvement of the Yemeni legitimacy will actually affect the loyalties of the Yemeni army.

• In the western coast, unrelenting forces are fighting alongside each other to liberate the city and port of Hodeidah, but fears are still exist that Aden's experience of chaos may be applied to Hodeidah after the liberation.

”
There is no a joint command room in "Nehm" comprising military leaders from the Arab Coalition and the Yemeni Army
”

- It is clear that there is a Houthi penetration in some units of the National Army as the Houthis attack some fronts at a certain time and according to accurate information when there is an absence or weakness of fighters in a specific front, or when there is a gap in a military unit or military location.
- The urgent need for the re-evaluation of the main reasons behind the wrong air strikes.



Recommendations:

The prolonging of this war due to mistakes or differences between the Yemeni legitimate government and the Arab Coalition countries and the failure of military operations leadership make both sides bear additional diplomatic, political and moral burdens even after the end of military operations. Therefore, the war must be ended without delay, either by a political agreement that guarantees that the Houthis handover heavy and medium weapons, ballistic missile stockpiles or a quick military operation. But the quick military operation requires addressing the situation of soldiers and correcting the course of the Army as follows:

- Transferring the leadership of the army and any other Yemeni forces and armed formations to the Yemeni Staff to be managed from the interim capital of Aden and from the military regions and operations rooms of the field units.

”

Transferring the leadership of the army and any other Yemeni forces and armed formations to the Yemeni Staff to be managed from the interim capital of Aden

”

- Correcting the situation of the Army forces and delivering their salaries from the Yemeni government only, even those received from the coalition as salaries must be paid through the Yemeni government and not directly from others, like Saudi Arabia and UAE, to ensure the principle of equality between all brigades and military units without any discrimination.
- Replacing the military leaders who are accused of corruption or those who do not exist in the fighting fronts with their soldiers, and removing the names of relatives and those who are not really recruited and do not fight.
- The treatment of the wounded soldiers and the families of the martyrs must be at the top of the pyramid of priorities of the Yemeni government and the coalition countries.
- Providing necessary and sufficient ammunition for a quick and decisive military operation, and other requirements of the soldiers: "Chest protectors, helmets, minesweepers, field hospitals and good nutrition," in addition to armored vehicles and artillery as well as military experts to progress quickly and easily towards Sana'a and Amran.
- To begin in building naval and air forces and special security forces to cover the vacuum after the liberation and restoring the cities and facilities, particularly ports and airports.
- For those field commanders outside the military, they must be trained quickly and fully to become military leaders. If not, the state should open the way for credible military commanders to get advance ranks and lead the military units.
- Integrating all military components of the Popular Resistance into the National Army and rehabilitating them.
- The handover of the liberated areas to the local leadership to manage them while building strong national security agencies to help the state normalize the life of people.
- Launching urgent public service projects in the liberated areas to provide essential services such as food, treatment and water to the affected families and care for displaced families and return them to their areas with the start of reconstruction operations for each liberated area, as the stability of these areas helps to liberate the other areas, particularly the capital Sana'a.

”
**Replacing the military leaders
who are accused of corruption
or those who do not exist in
the fighting fronts with their
soldiers**
”

The conclusion:

The Arab Coalition and President Abd-Rabbo Mansour Hadi believe in the military solution and the Houthis believe in chaos and violence. As much the Houthis are pressured as they increase the cost of war through planting more mines, firing more missiles, using people as human shelters and detaining more people as hostages.

After four years of war the hope of an end in the near future is still away and all scenarios are still open. The most important scenario will be determined by the west coast battle, specifically in Hodeidah.

The Military Solution Scenario:

The cost of this scenario is high and it requires more capacities and accurate planning, but it is in the interest of the legitimacy as no more conditions can be imposed after the restoration of the state.

If the Arab Coalition forces could crack down the city of Hodeidah, other forces in other fronts will be encouraged to approach towards Sana'a. The National Army forces in the Nehm Front will advance towards Arhab and then to Sana'a International Airport, eastern Sana'a. The forces in Al-Jawf will move to Amran and then to Sana'a from the north. The forces in Serwah of Marib can move to Khawlan and then to Sana'a from the south. Other forces in Al-Bayda, Taiz and the west coast can move to other cities.

The Houthis Surrender Scenario:

This scenario is in the interest of the Arab Coalition as the coalition can impose its conditions on all parties in Yemen. I will also be sponsor and supervisor of a transitional period in Yemen and an influential in all decisions regarding Yemen during that period.

If the Houthis surrender to the coalition and the legitimacy in Hodeidah, they will do in Sana'a, but they may increase the cost of conflict in Hodeidah so that they can raise the ceiling of negotiations about Sana'a.

The Political Solution Scenario:

The scenario of "sharing and quota» is in the interest of the Houthis, who have exhausted all their capabilities to control the Yemeni state. Instead of going out of this war as the defeated party that is unable to impose their political participation, and to escape any retaliation, their presence will be legitimized under any name as a sectarian or regional minority or a political party or bloc without paying the cost of the war they waged.

”
The cost of this scenario is high and it requires more capacities and accurate planning
”

Margins:

- 1- The National Army Command takes the 3rd of June as an annual commemoration of its formation after the fall of Sana'a
- 2- Due to the state of war, some sensitive military information in this study will be concealed from the media
- 3- Report of experts of the Security Council, January 2018
- 4- An approach to the Yemeni Case by Mounir Al-Khatib, The Syrian Component and the Concept of the People - Al-Hayat Newspaper <http://www.alhayat.com/article/825877/> Youth / Components - Syrian - Concept - People
- 5- The Houthis killed Ali Abdullah Saleh in December 2017
- 6- 200 thousand fighters under the leadership of the Yemeni legitimacy - the UAE statement <http://www.albayan.ae/one-world/arabs/2016-12-31-1.2812625>
- 7- Control of Serwah paves the way for the government to liberate Sana'a - Arab - 4/10/2016 <https://alarab.co.uk/Control-on-Serwah - paving the way for the government to liberate Sana'a>
- 8- As narrated by three military leaders and two informed people to Abaad Center in 18 May 2018
- 9- A report by Abaad Center (Sana'a Battle- The Last Chance), August 2016
- 10- In Al-Bayda, tribal fighters are out for revenge against the Houthis
The National-20 Jun 2018 <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/in-yemen-s-bayda-tribal-fighters-are-out-for-revenge-against-the-houthis-1.742007>
- 11- Midi front lost a military deal of armed vehicles that Saudi Arabia bought from South Africa but then discovered that the vehicles is corrupt
- 12- In 2017, Abu al-Abbas was included in the Gulf and US lists of terrorism. In its research "The Brutalization of Terrorism in Yemen (1) - Fragile War on al-Qaeda, October 17, the Abaad Center dealt with the organizational activity of al-Qaeda and the ISIS in Taiz
- 13- AbdulRahman bin Saleh al-Mahrami al-Yafei is a Salafi sheikh from Yafe in Lahj, the same area of Major General Ahmed Saif al-Yafei, Deputy General Staff of the Yemeni Army, who was killed during his check mission in the West Coast Front in February 2017
- 14- The positioning of the forces can be changed according to orders by the Joint Force Command led by UAE or due to any developments in the military operation. The mark (+) means that it exceeds this number
- 15- In telephone calls with Abaad Center in May 2018
- 16- A military leader said that UAE wants to handover Hodeidah to the forces of "Tariq Saleh to make his family heroes, and this cannot be happened."
- 17- UAE SAYS IT CAN'T CONTROL YEMENI FORCES — EVEN AS IT HANDS THEM BAGS OF CASH - Iona Craig -June 8 2018 -
<https://theintercept.com/2018/06/07/yemen-hodeidah-uae-saudi-arabia-houthis/>
- 18- Strategy and Scenario of the liberation of Hodeidah in both military and political balances- A geopolitical study by the Abaad Center 2017
- 19- Tribesmen talked to Abaad Center
- 20- A source in the office, asked for anonymity, told Abaad

Yemen's National Army in the Hot Fighting Fronts

- 21- Die Schlacht um Jemens Nadelöhr <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/jemen-die-schlacht-um-das-nadeloehr-hudaida-a-1210751.html>
- 22- The battle in Hodeidah, fighting on “the eye of the needle” in Yemen
- 23- U.S. Weighs Expanding Military Role in Yemen War <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-weighs-expanding-military-role-in-yemen-war-1528064393>
- 24- Despite U.S. warnings, Yemeni forces backed by UAE advance toward crucial port https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/despite-us-warnings-yemeni-forces-backed-by-uae-advance-toward-crucial-port/2018/06/04/08a1af40-6765-11e8-bf8c-f9ed2e672adf_story.html?utm_term=.6c6eb6067206
- 25- Wall Street Journal- previous source
- 26- American Enterprise Institute, May 2018
- 27- https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/201800528_Humanitarian_Update_Final.pdf
- 28- Field leader in the battle told Abaad, May 2018
- 29- German Der Spiegel – previous source
- 30- Wrong strikes affected the morals and capacities of the Army and Popular Resistance, especially when the coalition is accused of carrying out such strikes deliberately to get rid of specific leaders or to prevent the Army from taking the decision of attacks or progress without a permit from the coalition
- 31- Yemen Satellite Channel announcement – 13 July 2015
<http://mosnad.com/news.php?id=1420>