

An Heir and a Spare?

How Yemen's "Southern Hezbollah" Could Change Iran's Deterrent Calculus

by [Michael Knights \(/experts/michael-knights\)](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Michael Knights is the Jill and Jay Bernstein Senior Fellow at The Washington Institute and cofounder of the Militia Spotlight platform, which offers in-depth analysis of developments related to Iran-backed militias.



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Houthi militant activity during the Hamas-Israel war should challenge the perception that the group has a mere "marriage of convenience" with Tehran.

Since October 27, the Houthis have launched three medium-range ballistic missiles at Israel, a first since Saddam Hussein fired Scud missiles into the country in 1991. The Yemen-based jihadists have also launched at least eight salvos of cruise missiles and long-range explosive drones focused on the southern port of Eilat. Moreover, they have attacked U.S. assets directly during the Hamas-Israel war, shooting down one MQ-9 Reaper drone and routing numerous missiles near Navy vessels. If Iran continues to develop the group's capabilities, the Houthis may provide the broader "axis of resistance" with a potent new chess piece.

In this timely Policy Note, Michael Knights assesses the rising Houthi threat and explains how the United States and its allies can respond more assertively and effectively. A revamped policy would recognize the intimate alliance between the Houthis and Iran—which has never been a "marriage of convenience," as some analysts have imagined—and seek to counter the group's aggression with the goal of securing U.S. interests and providing a better future for the Yemeni people. ❖

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