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In the Houthis, Israel faces evolving threat far beyond its borders

Israeli officials are in disagreement over how to handle the threat posed by the Iran-backed militia in Yemen following most recent escalation

By Lahav Harkov / December 26, 2024

With Houthi projectiles sending residents of central Israel to bomb shelters four nights in the last week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed on Wednesday to respond to the ongoing attacks by the Yemeni rebel group. Yet, with limited intelligence on an enemy with few valuable assets, eliminating the Houthi threat may be a new challenge for Israel.

[...]

Yoel Guzansky, a senior fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies, said that continuing in the vein of Israel's efforts thus far is unlikely to be successful.

"Yemen is like Somalia," he said. "It's worse than Gaza. They have no infrastructure. We need to understand the nature of the enemy. They're not a country where you can attack their assets. They're something else."

[...]

Guzansky said that on a recent trip to Washington, he heard from Biden administration officials who felt they could have done more to address the challenge.

"There's a month now until Biden steps down; maybe they'll do more now. Maybe Trump will do more. There is more to be done," he said.

As for Israel leaving the Houthi problem to other countries, Guzansky said that "there's a limit to what Israel can do. It's a distant arena. We're a small country...We have an excellent air force, but it's small."

Guzansky also pointed out that Israel has more pressing priorities: "The Houthis were marginal and still are. We have to take them in proportion...The Houthis were prioritized correctly – but now they're coming up."

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