

# The Houthis Remain a Foreign Terrorist Organization

The Biden administration announced on November 21 that it is considering re-adding the Houthis to the U.S. list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO), after it de-listed the group in February 2021. The Houthis, also known as Ansar Allah, should be re-designated as an FTO as it meets the criteria for an FTO designation under U.S. law.[1]

## What makes the Houthis an FTO?

### Is it a foreign organization?

- YES** • The Houthis are based in Yemen, and control large portions of Yemeni territory, including by some estimates as much as 25 percent. The group has received funding, arms, training, and instructions from Iran since 2010.

### Is it an organization that engages in terrorist activities<sup>2</sup> or terrorism<sup>3</sup> and retains the capability and intent to do so?

- YES** • The Houthis' capabilities to launch terrorist attacks have been on full display in its recent attacks on U.S. forces and partners—including at least seven Houthi-linked attacks on Israel and at least five Houthi-linked attacks on U.S. military assets in the Middle East.
- » **12/03/2023:** The Houthis launch four ballistic missiles and a drone at three commercial vessels in the Red Sea, and launched a drone at the USS *Carney* as it responded to the incident. The three commercial vessels were struck by the missiles, causing property damage.
  - » **11/29/2023:** A Houthi drone launched from Yemen flies directly at a U.S. warship, the USS *Carney*, in the Red Sea and was shot down as it approached the ship.
  - » **11/26/2023:** The Houthis fire two ballistic missiles which land within ten miles of a U.S. warship in the Red Sea, the USS *Mason*.
  - » **11/22/2023:** The Houthis fire a cruise missile at Israel, which Israel intercepts over the Red Sea. The attack marks the seventh such attack the Houthis launched against Israel since the war began.
  - » **11/19/2023:** The Houthis seize a Bahamian-flagged and Japanese-operated ship, the *Galaxy Leader*, in international waters in the Red Sea. The group continues to hold the ship and its 25 crew members hostage as of publication.
  - » **11/15/2023:** The USS *Thomas Hudner*, a U.S. Navy warship, shoots down a drone from Yemen flying towards the warship in the Red Sea. The drone is strongly believed to be launched by the Houthis.
  - » **11/08/2023:** The Houthis shoot down a U.S. military MQ-9 drone off the coast of Yemen. The MQ-9 is a vital asset for U.S. intelligence collection which costs approximately \$32 million per unit.

- » **10/19/2023:** The Houthis launch five cruise missiles and thirty drones towards Israel, which are intercepted by a U.S. guided missile destroyer in the Red Sea.
- » **09/25/2023:** The Houthis kill four Bahraini servicemen in a drone attack on a coalition base in Saudi Arabia.
- The Houthis’ intention to launch perpetual attacks on the United States and U.S. partners in the region is well-documented in the group’s own statements.
  - » The Houthis’ official slogan, frequently chanted at rallies, is “God is the greatest, death to America, death to Israel. Curse the Jews, victory to Islam.”
  - » After seizing the *Galaxy Leader*, the Houthis’ political bureau stated on November 21 that the group seeks “the demise of Israel” and has “many options” to attack Israel.

### Is it an organization whose terrorist activities threaten the national security of the United States or the security of U.S. nationals?



- Houthi attacks have directly targeted U.S. personnel, such as the group’s January 2022 thwarted missile attack on Al Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates, where roughly 2,000 Americans are stationed.
- Continued Houthi attacks on U.S. partners—such as the group’s seven drone and missile attacks on Israel since the war began or its fatal attack on Saudi Arabia in September—threaten to injure or kill U.S. nationals in countries across the region.

### Have the circumstances permitting the de-listing changed sufficiently to warrant a re-designation?



- The Biden administration’s justification for de-listing the group in February 2021, that the designation impeded humanitarian efforts in the midst of the Yemeni Civil War—even given the dubiousness of this claim—no longer applies.
  - » The administration said at the time that the Houthis being listed as a foreign terrorist organization “could have a devastating impact on Yemenis’ access to basic commodities like food and fuel” in light of “the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen” due to the Yemeni Civil War.
  - » Conflict in Yemen has generally subsided in 2023 due to a ceasefire between the warring parties. The United Nations said in September that 211 humanitarian organizations were operating in Yemen and delivering aid to an average of 8.7 million Yemenis a month.
  - » Moreover, the administration’s claims elide over the fact that the Houthis obstructed humanitarian efforts throughout the war, irrespective of its designation status.

1. As defined by §1189(a) of Title 8 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.
2. As defined by §1182(a)(3)(B) of Title 8 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.
3. As defined by §2656f(d)(2) of Title 22 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.