



Houthis Attacked Riyadh

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Why in News

Recently, a **ballistic missile attack** by the **Houthis** on the Saudi capital **Riyadh** was destroyed by the **Saudi-led coalition** fighting Yemen's Iranian-aligned Houthi group.



Key Points

- **Reasons for Recent Attack:**

- **Taking Advantage:**

- The Houthis are winning, they have made significant advances on the ground, especially in Jawf province along the Saudi border.
 - They are now poised to attack the city of Marib, the last stronghold of the Yemeni government in the north.

- **Iran's Support:**

- **Iran is involved in Houthi decision making.** Tehran (capital of Iran) undoubtedly wants the Saudi kingdom to remain embroiled in the Yemeni chaos.
 - **Saudi Arabia and Iran have been engaged in proxy wars** with each other for 40 years, since the **Iranian revolution**. Yemen is now among the victims of that conflict.

- **Background:**

- **Yemen Conflict:**

- Since 2014, Yemen has been facing a **multi-sided conflict** involving local, regional, and international actors.
 - The **Houthis, a group of Zaidi Shia Muslims** who ruled a kingdom there for nearly 1,000 years, used widespread anger against President Hadi's decision to postpone long-awaited elections and his stalled negotiations over a new constitution.
 - They marched from their stronghold of Saada province to the capital Sanaa and surrounded the presidential palace, placing **Hadi under house arrest**.

- **Saudi Arabia's Intervention:**

A military coalition led by **Saudi Arabia intervened in Yemen in March 2015**, at Hadi's request, after the Houthis continued to sweep the south and threatened to conquer the last government stronghold of Aden, prompting **one of the world's worst humanitarian crises** ever.

- **Ceasefire:**

Yemen Houthi rebels and Saudi Arabia-backed forces loyal to the President of Yemen agreed to a **United Nations-mediated ceasefire agreement in 2018**.

- **Resurgence of Houthi Attacks:**

In 2019, the Yemen's Shia Houthi rebels, violating the ceasefire, attacked **Aramco crude oil production in Saudi Arabia**.

- **Concerns:**
 - Yemen is strategically important because it sits on a strait linking the **Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden**, through which much of the **world's oil** shipments pass.
 - It also worries the West because of the **threat of attacks** - such as from **al-Qaeda** or **IS affiliates**-emanating from the country as it becomes more unstable.
 - The Houthis have escalated **cross-border attacks** on the kingdom even after the **United States delisted the rebels as terrorists** and stepped up efforts to de-escalate the six-year conflict.
 - The conflict is also seen as part of a **regional power struggle** between **Shia-ruled Iran** and **Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia**.
- **India's Interest:**

For India, it is a challenge which cannot be washed away taking into consideration the oil security and 8 million expats living in the region with more than **USD 80 billion of incoming remittance** annually.
- **Indian Initiatives:**
 - **Operation Rahat:**

India launched a massive air and sea operation to evacuate over 4000 Indian nationals from Yemen in April 2015.
 - **Humanitarian Assistance:**
 - India has provided **food and medical aid to Yemen** in the past and thousands of **Yemeni nationals have availed of medical treatment in India** over the past few years.
 - India also continues to facilitate education of a large number of Yemeni nationals in various Indian institutions.

Source:TH