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ONC-001 - Ansar Allah / Houthis

Organizations and Networks in Conflict

Official / Primary Name	Ansar Allah
Common Name	Houthis / Houthi Movement
Primary Area	Yemen; Red Sea; Bab el-Mandeb; Gulf of Aden
Updated	25 September 2026

ATLAS profiles in this series are living intelligence documents. Facts, reported claims, and assessments are separated where possible; the concluding assessment states the analytic judgment and confidence.

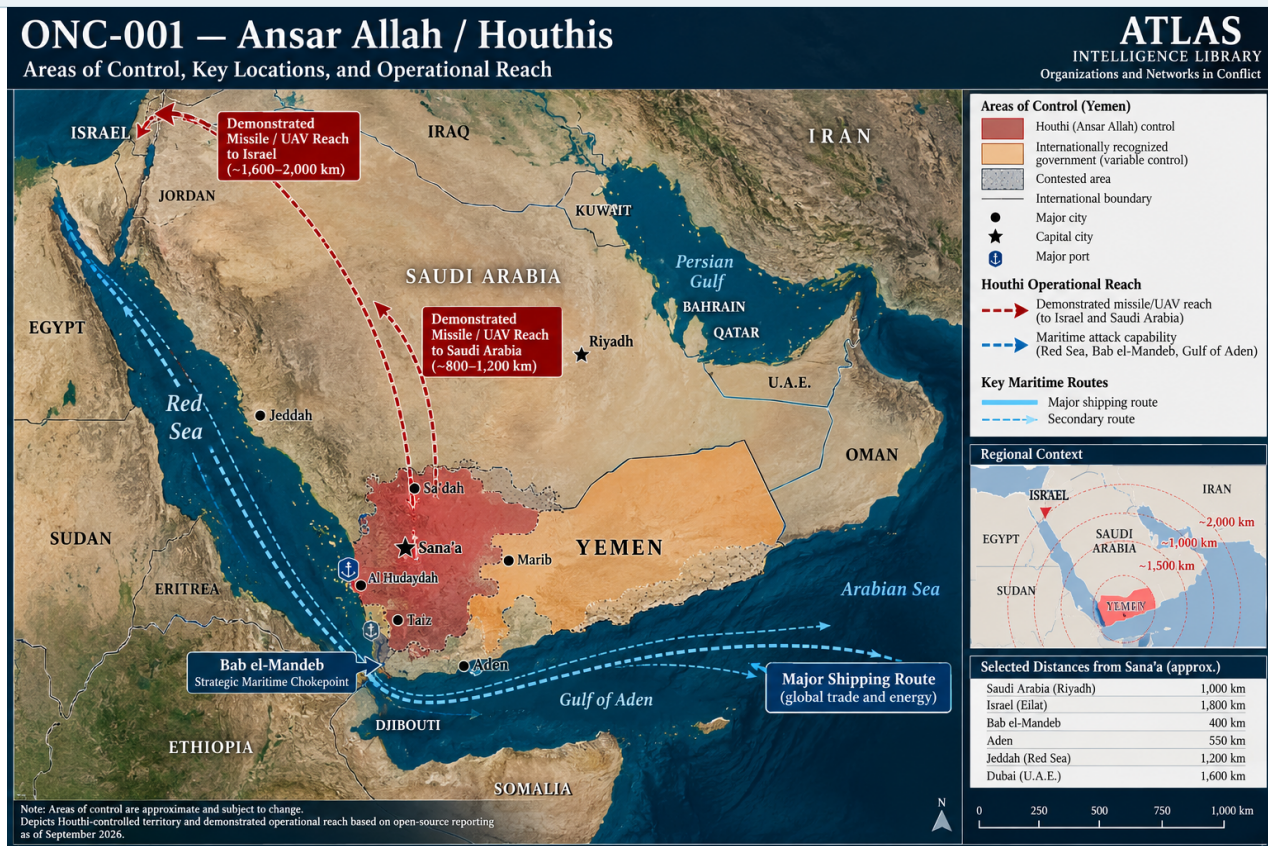


Figure 1. Houthi areas of control, key locations, maritime approaches, and demonstrated operational reach. Control boundaries are approximate and subject to change.

ENTITY

Ansar Allah, commonly known as the Houthis, is a Yemeni political-military movement originating in the Zaydi Shiite communities of northern Yemen. The movement emerged from a religious and political revival movement during the 1990s and developed into an armed insurgency during repeated conflicts with the Yemeni government beginning in the following decade.

Abdulmalik al-Houthi assumed leadership after the death of his brother Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi in 2004. Houthi forces captured Sana'a in September 2014 and subsequently became the dominant governing and military authority across much of northern Yemen.

The United States redesignated Ansar Allah as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in March 2025. That designation is a U.S. legal classification rather than a universally applied international designation.

Ansar Allah combines characteristics of an insurgent movement, political authority, conventional military force, and regional armed actor. It administers territory and population while maintaining armed forces capable of operations well beyond Yemen.

ACTIONS

Within Yemen, Ansar Allah has conducted conventional ground operations, missile and drone attacks, mobilization campaigns, and internal security operations. The movement's seizure of Sana'a in 2014 transformed it from a regional insurgency into one of the principal belligerents in the Yemeni civil war.

Beginning in 2023, Houthi forces expanded external operations against commercial shipping in the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb, and Gulf of Aden, publicly linking those operations to the war in Gaza. They have also conducted missile and unmanned aerial vehicle attacks against Israel and previously against Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

During the renewed regional escalation in 2026, Ansar Allah resumed and expanded operations against Saudi targets while conducting major ground operations inside Yemen. By September 2026, Houthi forces had made additional gains along Yemen's Red Sea coast and into strategically important highland positions.

The movement has also detained United Nations personnel and other humanitarian workers in territory under its control, complicating aid delivery and international operations.

WHERE

Ansar Allah's principal territorial base is in northern and western Yemen. It controls Sana'a and large portions of Yemen's populous northern highlands, while its operational reach extends substantially beyond the territory it governs.

Northern Yemen	Political, military, and administrative center of gravity.
Western Yemen / Red Sea coast	Ports, coastal infrastructure, and positions supporting maritime operations.
Bab el-Mandeb	Strategic chokepoint connecting the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean.
Red Sea / Gulf of Aden	Missile, drone, and maritime attacks against shipping.
Saudi Arabia	Missile and UAV operations against cities, airports, and energy infrastructure.
Israel	Long-range missile and UAV attacks.

The movement's ability to influence navigation through the southern Red Sea gives Ansar Allah strategic significance disproportionate to Yemen's economic or conventional military power.

ACTORS

Abdulmalik al-Houthi

Leader of Ansar Allah and the movement's principal political and strategic authority.

Mahdi al-Mashat

President of the Houthi Supreme Political Council and one of the principal figures in the movement's governing structure.

Mohammed Abdulkarim al-Ghumari

Senior military commander identified by the UN Panel of Experts as a key figure in strategic planning, resources, and military operations.

Youssef al-Madani

Senior commander associated with Houthi forces operating along the Red Sea and maritime approaches.

Mansour al-Sa'adi

Senior naval commander associated with Houthi maritime operations.

Yahya Saree

Military spokesperson and the principal public voice announcing Houthi missile, drone, and maritime operations.

The movement maintains additional military, intelligence, security, financial, political, and mobilization structures. Leadership information should be reviewed regularly because battlefield losses, internal appointments, and clandestine command arrangements may alter actual authority faster than formal titles change.

CAPABILITIES

Ansar Allah has developed a mixed military capability combining captured Yemeni state equipment, locally produced or assembled systems, imported components, and externally supplied technology.

Ground Forces

Organized ground formations capable of conventional offensive and defensive operations, irregular warfare, and territorial control. Published manpower estimates vary substantially and should not be treated as equivalent to continuously trained and deployable combat strength.

Ballistic and Cruise Missiles

Short-, medium-, and longer-range systems capable of striking targets throughout Yemen and across the Arabian Peninsula, with demonstrated ability to launch weapons toward Israel.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

One-way attack UAVs and other unmanned systems used against military installations, cities, energy facilities, and maritime targets.

Maritime Strike

Anti-ship missiles, UAVs, and other maritime attack systems capable of threatening commercial and military vessels in the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb, and Gulf of Aden.

Domestic Production and Assembly

Evidence indicates some indigenous manufacturing and assembly capacity for missiles and drones. The degree to which individual systems are locally produced rather than assembled from imported components varies and remains difficult to establish from open sources.

External Support

Iran has provided material, technological, financial, and training support. UN reporting also identifies Hezbollah-linked missile and drone advisers in Houthi-controlled territory. This support does not, by itself, establish direct Iranian command over individual Houthi decisions.

Financing and Procurement

Domestic revenue extraction is combined with international procurement and smuggling networks involving front companies, financial facilitators, trade, and acquisition of weapons and dual-use goods.

GOALS

Domestic

The movement seeks to preserve and expand its political and military dominance within Yemen and to prevent hostile Yemeni factions or external powers from removing it from the territory it controls. It also seeks a political settlement that protects the military and institutional power accumulated since its seizure of Sana'a.

Regional

Ansar Allah portrays itself as part of a wider regional resistance movement opposing Israel and Western military influence and supporting Palestinian causes. It maintains close relations with Iran and other members of what is commonly called the 'Axis of Resistance,' although its objectives are not identical to those of Tehran or other affiliated organizations.

Strategic

Control or disruption of the Bab el-Mandeb and southern Red Sea provides Ansar Allah with leverage extending far beyond Yemen. The ability to impose costs on international shipping, Saudi energy infrastructure, and regional military forces allows the movement to translate relatively limited national resources into regional strategic influence.

ATLAS ASSESSMENT

Ansar Allah has evolved beyond its origins as a localized Yemeni insurgency. It now functions simultaneously as a territorial authority, organized military force, and regional coercive actor.

Its most strategically important capability is not simply the number of fighters it can field. It is the combination of **geography, missiles, unmanned systems, and maritime strike capability**.

Control of territory adjacent to the Bab el-Mandeb gives the movement the ability to threaten a global shipping route with comparatively inexpensive weapons. This creates an asymmetric relationship in which defending commercial navigation can require naval, air-defense, and logistical resources costing substantially more than the systems used to threaten it.

The movement's relationship with Iran materially improves its military and procurement capabilities. Available evidence, however, does not establish that Ansar Allah is merely an operational extension of Tehran. ATLAS assesses that the Houthis should be treated as an **Iran-supported but independently governed actor whose interests frequently overlap with Iranian regional objectives**.

The 2026 expansion of Houthi operations against Saudi Arabia and renewed fighting inside Yemen demonstrates that the movement retains both long-range strike capability and the ability to conduct substantial ground operations despite years of military pressure.

Yemeni	Continued conflict over control of the state.
Regional	Missile and drone pressure against Saudi Arabia, Israel, and other regional actors.
Global	Potential disruption of commercial navigation and energy transportation through the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb.

The principal indicator to watch is whether Ansar Allah moves from episodic disruption of maritime traffic toward an enduring ability to regulate or deny passage through the Bab el-Mandeb. Such a development would represent a significant increase in the organization's strategic weight.

CONFIDENCE

OVERALL CONFIDENCE: HIGH

High confidence that Ansar Allah possesses substantial territorial, missile, UAV, and maritime-strike capability; controls a major political and military apparatus inside Yemen; and receives significant Iranian material and technical support.

Moderate confidence in estimates of total manpower, precise weapons inventories, domestic manufacturing capacity, and the current division between Iranian-supplied systems and locally manufactured or assembled weapons.

Moderate confidence regarding the degree of Iranian influence over specific operational decisions. Open-source evidence demonstrates extensive support and coordination but does not reliably establish external command authority over individual Houthi operations.

Collection Priorities

- Leadership changes and command succession.
- Missile and UAV production rates and inventories.
- Maritime weapons inventories and coastal launch capacity.
- Iranian and Hezbollah advisory presence.
- Revenue generation, procurement, and sanctions evasion.
- Recruitment sustainability and deployable combat strength.
- Territorial changes around the Red Sea coast and Bab el-Mandeb.
- Evidence of sustained rather than episodic maritime-denial capability.

SELECTED OPEN-SOURCE REFERENCES

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Analytic note: ATLAS uses open-source information only. Where evidence is incomplete or contested, the profile distinguishes reported information from ATLAS assessment and states the level of confidence.