

# The U.A.E. Approach to Counterinsurgency in Yemen

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 Fellow of The Washington Institute, specializing in the military and security affairs of Iraq, Iran, and the Persian Gulf states. He is a co-founder of the Militia Spotlight platform, which offers in-depth analysis of developments related to the Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria.



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The conflict in Yemen cannot fairly be described as a singular war. The main war is being fought between a Saudi-led coalition of Arab states who back the Sunni-dominated internationally recognized government against Shia clans called the Houthis. But amid this, another war is being fought against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the Yemeni-based terrorist group responsible for two efforts to destroy U.S.-bound airliners and ostensibly the January 2015 Charlie Hedbo attack in Paris. This specific conflict, led by the United Arab Emirates and its other Arab partners, is an interesting case study of how a Muslim nation has adapted U.S. counterinsurgency and civil-military approaches to the fight against AQAP.

The scale of the Arab (and predominately Gulf) military intervention in Yemen is surprising to some observers. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates lead the 10-nation Arab coalition, with Riyadh focusing its efforts in northern Yemen and the United Arab Emirates leading in Yemen's south and east. The objective of the Arab coalition is to help the U.N.-recognized Hadi government return to power in the Yemeni capital of Sana'a. Bolstered by quiet American support in the form of munitions, intelligence, and fuel tankers, the coalition worked with government forces and pro-government tribes to push the Houthi rebels out of the southern port of Aden, the country's second-largest city. Thereafter, the Arab coalition launched ground forces from Aden and Saudi Arabia to push the Houthis back from a range of other Red Sea ports and cities in the Yemeni interior. Currently, the anti-Houthi campaign is on pause as international peace talks continue...

**[Read the full article at the War on the Rocks website. \(http://warontherocks.com/2016/05/the-u-a-e-approach-to-counterinsurgency-in-yemen/\)](http://warontherocks.com/2016/05/the-u-a-e-approach-to-counterinsurgency-in-yemen/)** ❖

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