

Exhibit 2

Military

U.S. troops are on the ground in Yemen for offensive against al-Qaeda militants

+ Add to list

By Thomas Gibbons-Neff

August 4, 2017

A contingent of U.S. troops is involved in a Yemeni operation to push al-Qaeda militants from one of their key strongholds in central Yemen, the Pentagon said Friday.

A small number of troops are there to help with “intelligence sharing,” Pentagon spokesman Capt. Jeff Davis said, though he did not rule out that more U.S. forces could be committed to the operation in the coming weeks.

The announcement comes a day after the United Arab Emirates said in a statement that its forces, along with U.S. troops, were supporting the Yemeni military in the Shabwa governorate in a bid to oust al-Qaeda fighters entrenched there. The operation is just the latest U.S.-backed move against the terrorist group, known as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and signals the next phase of the invigorated U.S. counterterrorism campaign against the militants that began shortly after Donald Trump took office.

Since Feb. 28, the United States has conducted roughly 80 airstrikes against al-Qaeda militants in Yemen, Davis said, a number that remains little changed in past weeks. U.S. Special Operations forces have also been involved in a limited number of ground operations in the country, including one that ended in the death of a Navy SEAL in January.

Aside from intelligence sharing, Davis said, the United States is providing midair refueling and overhead reconnaissance for forces involved in the operation. The Bataan Amphibious Ready Group, a collection of U.S. Navy ships loaded with Marines, is in the region and is probably assisting the operation with aircraft and personnel. In the past, amphibious groups much like the Bataan’s have been integral in supporting U.S.-led operations against al-Qaeda in Yemen.

The last large-scale operation against al-Qaeda militants in Yemen was in 2015, when UAE and Yemeni forces, backed by another small element of U.S. Special Operations troops, helped seize the port city of Mukalla. The operation faced relatively little resistance as the militants mostly fled into the interior of the country.

While the United States has remained focused on striking al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, a terrorist group U.S. officials see as especially potent, a Saudi-led coalition, propped up by U.S. support and munitions, has been waging a parallel war against Iranian-backed Houthi militants in Yemen for more than two years.

In 2015, Houthi forces ousted the Saudi-backed Yemeni government led by President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, and in the ensuing vacuum of the civil war, al-Qaeda militants wrested control over large areas in the south of the country.

The war has killed thousands and displaced millions, with both sides accused of targeting civilians. With air and port access limited and access to medical care nearly nonexistent, famine and cholera have swept the country, leaving its population facing a humanitarian crisis on a scale not seen in decades.

Read More:

[Hundreds of thousands of Yemeni children are nearing starvation](#)

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Thomas Gibbons-Neff was a Washington Post staff writer. He left The Post in September 2017.
