



**BRIEFING PAPER**

Number CBP 8536, 27 March 2019

# Yemen's fragile peace process

By Ben Smith

**Contents:**

1. Ceasefire and negotiations
2. On the ground
3. Humanitarian situation and February pledges
4. Banning arms sales?



# Contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Ceasefire and negotiations</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Stockholm Agreement	4
Hodeidah	4
Prisoner exchange agreement	5
Taiz	5
1.2 Implementation still slow	5
<b>2. On the ground</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Outbreaks of conflict	6
2.2 Mercenaries and human rights abuses	6
2.3 Southern Yemen	7
2.4 AQAP and ISIS	8
2.5 Territorial control map December 2018	9
<b>3. Humanitarian situation and February pledges</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 Deepening need for aid	10
3.2 Famine danger	10
3.3 2019 pledging conference	11
<b>4. Banning arms sales?</b>	<b>12</b>
4.1 UK	12
4.2 United States	14
4.3 Germany	14
4.4 Elsewhere	15

## Summary

Talks in the Swedish capital Stockholm in December 2018 resulted in [agreement](#) between Yemen's warring parties. The sides agreed to a ceasefire around the port of al-Hodeidah, crucial for preventing famine because of its role in importing and storing food.

This was the first time the sides had agreed on anything for some time. As well as the ceasefire they [agreed to redeploy](#) their forces, demilitarising the port city and allowing for agencies to resume their humanitarian work.

The ceasefire has been implemented but is extremely fragile, with both sides accusing the other of violations. The crucial redeployment and prisoner exchange agreements have not been carried out, however, with the parties unable to agree on the force that should take over security in Hodeidah after redeployment. Unless there is progress, analysts fear that the ceasefire will break down.

On the ground conflict has reduced around Hodeidah but has broken out elsewhere. There has been concern about the employment of mercenaries, including minors, in the conflict. Analysts also argue that the conflict is complicated, with many different forces pursuing various ends. The Saudis and the Emiratis diverge particularly on the [fate of southern Yemen](#), which could end up splitting from the north again.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula remains a potent force in Yemen, where it sometimes forms alliances with local forces close to the Hadi government. Since being driven out of its base in the southern city of Mukalla, its presence is more diffuse, however. ISIS/Daesh has a Yemen "province" but it is not as strong as AQAP, being seen as less close to Yemeni interests. The US continues its drone strikes against terrorist leaders, sometimes killing civilians accidentally; the UK does not participate in counter-terrorism in Yemen.

Meanwhile, the suffering of Yemenis continues. While the danger of famine is not so pressing as in late 2018, experts argue that the ceasefire and access to Hodeidah will do little more than prevent the situation from deteriorating. In [February 2019 a pledging conference](#) took place, responding to the UN's largest ever single appeal for humanitarian funds. Saudi Arabia and the UAE each promised \$750 million, while the UK was the third biggest pledger.

The disastrous situation of Yemeni civilians already made the question of arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE controversial. With the death of Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Embassy in Turkey, pressure greatly increased.

The [UK says](#) that arms exports are judged according to strict criteria and, if there is a likelihood they might be used in violation of international humanitarian law, a licence is not approved. UK [ministers also say](#) that the UK is helping Saudi Arabia to comply with international law, and that it is better to maintain a strong relationship in order to keep some influence. Opposition politicians have disputed those arguments.

Some other countries have acted to restrict export licensing to Saudi Arabia, although several have continued to honour existing contracts.

# 1. Ceasefire and negotiations

## 1.1 Stockholm Agreement

On 6–13 December 2018 the of the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, convened talks between the representatives of the government of Yemen and of the Houthis in Sweden. Talks focused on humanitarian issues and the parties concluded the [Stockholm Agreement](#), which set out:

- An agreement on the city and port of Hodeidah and the ports of Salif and Ras Issa
- a mechanism for activating a prisoner exchange agreement, and
- an agreement on the city of Taiz.

The agreement was short and vaguely-worded. But it was significant because it was the first thing the two sides had agreed in two and a half years. Two humanitarian problems were not addressed at the talks: the closure of Sanaa airport and the collection of revenue by the Central Bank of Yemen.

### UN Security Council resolutions

On 21 December the UN Security Council endorsed the agreements in [Resolution 2451 \(2019\)](#).

On 16 January [Resolution 2452](#) established the United Nations Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), mandated for six months initially. UNMHA leads and supports the Redeployment Co-ordination Commission, which oversees the ceasefire, redeployment of forces and de-mining. UNMHA also monitors compliance with the ceasefire and coordinates UN support for the agreement.

UK is the 'penholder' for Yemen at the Security Council. This is a relatively new practice whereby one of three permanent members – France, the UK and the US, referred to as the P3 – perform leadership roles on most country-specific and some thematic issues on the Council agenda.<sup>1</sup> The UK drafted the two resolutions on Yemen.

Penholder

### Hodeidah

On Hodeidah, and the ports of Salif and Ras Issa, the [parties agreed](#) a ceasefire, the redeployment of forces, no military reinforcements into these areas and no military manifestations in the city of Hodeidah.

Forces from both sides would be redeployed within 21 days of signature of the agreement and would be overseen by the Redeployment Oversight Committee, chaired by the UN.

In further talks on 16 and 17 February 2019, the terms of the first phase of the redeployment were agreed with the head of the new UN Mission in Support of the Hodeidah Agreement, Lt Gen Michael Lollesgaard. Gen Lollesgaard also chairs the redeployment oversight committee.

---

<sup>1</sup> Security Council Report, [The Penholder System](#)

## Prisoner exchange agreement

An Agreement for the exchange prisoners and detainees was signed by both parties under the auspices of the Special Envoy. The prisoner exchange supervisory committee set up by the agreement to oversee the exchange process [continues to work](#) on facilitating prisoner exchanges. The committee is chaired by the Special Envoy.

## Taiz

The parties agreed to ease the situation in Taiz by improving humanitarian access, limiting fighting and conducting de-mining programmes.

## 1.2 Implementation still slow

Each side of the conflict accuses the other of violating the ceasefire, although it was implemented and is still in operation. The ceasefire has allowed the UN to gain access to the Red Sea Mills food storage facility.

On [23 February](#) Griffiths told reporters that the redeployments should start immediately.

It has been difficult to get the two sides to meet to discuss the second phase of the redeployment, providing for the demilitarisation of Hodeidah and humanitarian access.<sup>2</sup> One of the chief difficulties of implementing the Hodeidah redeployment is the question of who will take over security after both sides have redeployed their troops.

In March 2019 UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt made a statement after a visit to the region, calling for the Hodeidah ceasefire to be preserved and for Stockholm commitments to be honoured:

My message on this trip to all parties was simple: the ceasefire in Hodeidah, the first sustained ceasefire since the conflict began four years ago, is in peril. It will not last unless what was agreed is implemented in full – and time is running out.<sup>3</sup>

Mr Hunt said that his visit left him convinced that both sides genuinely wanted Stockholm to succeed but that mistrust on both sides was hindering progress. He went on:

The Stockholm peace process is our best chance yet to end this war. But the window for implementing it is closing. In the critical weeks that lie ahead, Britain will use every diplomatic and humanitarian lever we have to ensure this opportunity does not slip away.

Agreeing a force to take over the policing of Hodeida remained a sticking point in March 2019. Martin Griffiths was due to visit London in the week of 25 March to discuss that and other problems with implementation of the agreements.

Policing Hodeidah

<sup>2</sup> [‘The Hodeida Redeployment Plan: A Slow Start in Yemen’](#), Washington Institute, 26 February 2019

<sup>3</sup> [Written statement - HCWS1383](#), 7 March 2019

## 2. On the ground

### 2.1 Outbreaks of conflict

There are signs that both sides are using the Hodeidah ceasefire agreed in the Stockholm Process as an opportunity to gain ground or consolidate their position in other areas of Yemen. As fighting breaks out in other areas of the country nominally controlled by both sides, it undermines whatever trust has been created by the Stockholm Process and makes further progress difficult.



Map courtesy of University of Texas

### 2.2 Mercenaries and human rights abuses

Reports suggest the Saudi-led coalition has employed as many as 14,000 Sudanese mercenaries, many of them former Janjaweed militia but also many children from 14 to 17 years old.<sup>4</sup> Other mercenaries have come from South America, the US and Nepal.

A programme of assassinations was also reportedly run by an Israeli company. At least one retired US servicemen is also reported to be acting as a commander in the UAE forces on a private basis.<sup>5</sup> The UAE has also deployed Eritrean and Latin American mercenaries, according to reports.<sup>6</sup>

Assassinations

<sup>4</sup> 'On the Front Line of the Saudi War in Yemen: Child Soldiers From Darfur', *New York Times*, 28 December 2018

<sup>5</sup> 'Yemen's War Is a Mercenary Heaven. Are Israelis Reaping the Profits?', *Haaretz*, 17 February 2019

<sup>6</sup>

The US military has denied that its personnel were involved in abuses that were reported in secret UAE jails in southern Yemen; sexual abuse and torture were meted out to prisoners held without charge, according to reports.<sup>7</sup> The US authorities confirm that US personnel have interrogated detainees at UAE-run prisons.

The UAE denies running any prisons or detention centres in Yemen. The UK is not part of the counter-terrorist operation in Yemen.

## 2.3 Southern Yemen

Southern Yemen has been resistive since the unification of the two Yemens, North and South, in 1990. The conflict has provided opportunities for secessionists to press their claims.<sup>8</sup>

In February the Southern Transitional Council, a secessionist "government in waiting", held a meeting of its self-styled National Assembly in the southern port of Mukalla. Old grievances about the exploitation of the south by the north were aired.

Southern secession?

There were renewed clashes in March 2019 between forces connected to the STC and forces loyal to the Hadi government.

The STC said that it would not permit President Hadi's plan to hold a meeting of the House of Representatives in the south, underlining the fact that the STC does not accept the existing unified state. It also demands equal representation at the UN-sponsored talks.<sup>9</sup>

If the present negotiations are successful and fighting along the Red Sea coast around Hodeidah is dialled down, well-armed fighters from the south may return to Aden, possibly increasing the likelihood of conflict there.

### Saudi/UAE differences

The UAE is widely seen as supporting the STC in order to gain influence in the south of Yemen after the end of the conflict; in this its strategy is different from the Saudis', who support the Hadi government and oppose southern secession.

Despite general Saudi opposition to Islamism, the Saudis have also reluctantly dealt with Islah, Yemen's Islamist coalition and probably the second most powerful political grouping after the National General Congress. Islah is affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, which both Saudi Arabia and the UAE categorise as a terrorist organisation.

The UAE, influential on the ground in southern Yemen, was at first much more hostile to Islah and even [accused of](#) targeting Islah leaders for assassination in the south. The UAE also has had a very difficult relationship with the Hadi government, which has accused the UAE of "occupying" areas of southern Yemen. Militaries loyal to Hadi and the

<sup>7</sup> ['Sexual abuses rampant in UAE-controlled prisons in Yemen'](#), *Associated Press*, 21 June 2018

<sup>8</sup> For more discussion of this see the Commons Briefing Paper [Yemen and the death of Saleh](#), January 2018

<sup>9</sup> International Crisis Group, [Yemen's Southern Transitional Council Isn't Backing Down](#), 22 February 2019

UAE have clashed on the streets of Aden. Islah has supported the Hadi government in the south.

Now the Emiratis and Islah are working on building a functional relationship, united by their common enemy in the Houthis. Analysts say suspicions and differing interests mean the two sides will never be cordial allies.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.4 AQAP and ISIS

### AQAP

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) remains a significant force in Yemen, particularly in the south and centre. It is the dominant violent *jihadi* organisation in Yemen and supports al-Qaeda operations outside Yemen. It fights alongside tribal militias in central Yemen, and has received support from the anti-Houthi coalition, which “regularly enters into alliances with the group”.<sup>11</sup> The UAE has often co-opted former AQAP fighters into its forces.

Since 2017, AQAP’s position has weakened as US and UAE counterterrorism activities have targeted it, driving it out of urban areas. The US strategy of targeting AQAP leaders with drone strikes is ongoing, accounting for some 100 deaths each year, including a significant number of civilians.<sup>12</sup>

In 2016 Yemeni and UAE forces drove AQAP from the southern port of Mukalla; AQAP had established itself in the town, collecting customs payments, operating sharia courts, carrying out public executions, and screening *jihadi* films in the town centre.<sup>13</sup> The UAE and the Hadi government continue to target AQAP.

### ISIS/Daesh in Yemen

ISIS also has a minor presence in Yemen, where it is viewed as a more foreign organisation than AQAP. It has clashed with AQAP on several occasions; unlike AQAP, it has not forged alliances with tribal forces.<sup>14</sup> It has attacked Shia mosques and Houthi military targets.

Pro-government forces “regularly allied” with AQAP

<sup>10</sup> [‘The UAE and Yemen’s Islah: A Coalition Coalesces’](#), Washington Institute, 6 December 2018

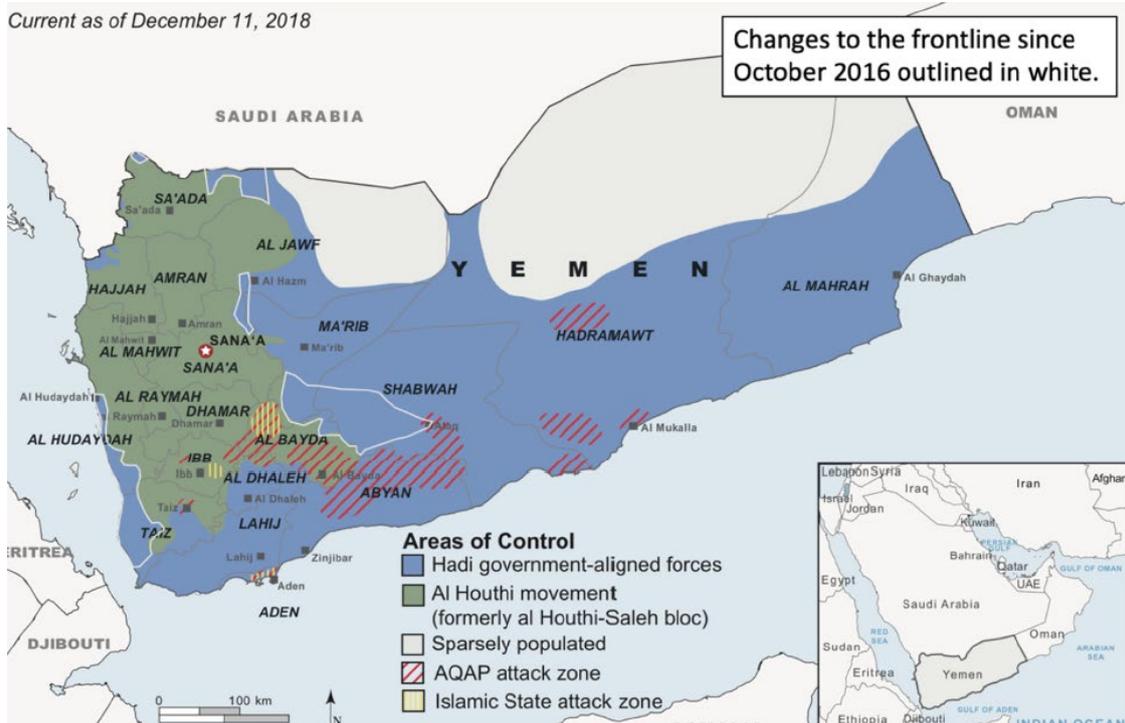
<sup>11</sup> Counter Extremism Project, [Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula \(AQAP\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> [‘Hidden toll of US drone strikes in Yemen: Nearly a third of deaths are civilians, not al-Qaida’](#), *Associated Press*, 14 November 2018

<sup>13</sup> [‘The Gulf Country That Will Shape the Future of Yemen’](#), *The Atlantic*, 22 September 2018

<sup>14</sup> Counter Extremism Project: [ISIS](#)

## 2.5 Territorial control map December 2018



Map of Yemen's frontlines as of December 2018 created by Maher Farrukh, American Enterprise Institute. Changes since October 2016 marked in white. [Evidence to the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs](#), March 2019.

Some maps show the Southern Transitional Council-held areas separately from the Hadi government-controlled areas.

## 3. Humanitarian situation and February pledges

### 3.1 Deepening need for aid

About 80% of Yemenis now live in poverty and require some form of aid. That is a total of around 24 million people, of whom 14.3 million are in acute need of help. The number in acute need has grown by 27% since last year, [according to](#) the UN's Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). [UNICEF reports](#) that 462,000 children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition and could die if not urgently treated.

On March 2019, the UK's Middle East minister set out the government's response:

Yemen remains the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with 80% of the population requiring humanitarian assistance. The UK will provide £200 million of support for the coming financial year. This will feed more than a million Yemenis each month over the year, treat 30,000 children for malnutrition and provide 2 million people with improved water supply and basic sanitation.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.2 Famine danger

Towards the end of 2018 there was widespread fear of impending famine in Yemen. The struggle over the port of Hodeidah was endangering food supplies for a majority of the population.

Since September 2018, the UN had not been able to gain access to the World Food Programme's (WFP) stores at the Red Sea Mills compound, where a quarter of all WFP's food supplies for Yemen were located. There are other grain stores in and around Hodeida, while Salif port is also used for grain imports (the other port mentioned in the ceasefire agreement, Ras Isa, is used largely for oil imports).

On 26 February the UN regained access to Red Sea Mills. The facility is reported to hold enough to feed 3.7 million people for about a month, although the food may have deteriorated.

Food for 3.7 million

While access to Red Sea Mills is a step in the right direction, delivery routes for aid are still far from secure. Even successfully distributing aid will not do much more than stabilise the situation. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation has published a [famine prevention plan](#) for January-June 2019.

#### **Economy and the rial**

One of the biggest factors in Yemen's humanitarian disaster has been a volatile and weak currency. Before the war, the Yemeni rial was worth around 215 YR to the dollar. It fell to as little as 800 to the dollar in 2018, recovering to around 570 in February 2019.<sup>16</sup> The Yemeni financial system was shattered in September 2016 when the

<sup>15</sup> [HC Written question – 909927](#), 20 March 2019

<sup>16</sup> [Yemen's shattered food economy](#), Oxfam, February 2019

government transferred the Central Bank to Aden, to prevent it falling into the hands of the Houthis. The liquidity crisis coincided with the government's inability pay some 1.25 million public sector salaries and social benefits. Letters of credit for food importers dried up. The Houthis have moved to stop private sector institutions in Sanaa from collaborating with the Central Bank.

The weakness of the rial combined with slow imports, job losses and non-payment of salaries has quickly pushed the price of imported food out of reach for many Yemenis.

Although the rial has gained in strength recently, analysts predict that oil exports, the principal source of foreign exchange, will not be enough to cover imports and that the rial is likely to continue its depreciation during 2019.<sup>17</sup>

Currency instability

### 3.3 2019 pledging conference

At the pledging conference in Geneva, also on 26 February, donors, led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), [pledged a total of \\$2.6 billion](#) for the UN's 2019 humanitarian plan for Yemen on 26 February. Pledges fell well short of the \$4.2 billion the UN wanted: the single largest humanitarian appeal in its history.

Largest appeal in UN history

The top six pledgers at the conference were as follows:

#### **High-level pledging event for the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, February**

Top six pledgers, in \$ millions

Saudi Arabia	750.00
United Arab Emirates	750.00
United Kingdom	261.44
Kuwait	250.00
European Commission	184.42
Germany	114.16

Source: [UNOCHA](#)

Many observers argue that the present humanitarian operation is effective enough to prevent a decline into full scale famine but not much more. Much will depend on the level of violence. The Famine Early Warning System website says:

In a worst-case scenario, significant declines in commercial imports and conflict that cuts populations off from trade and humanitarian food assistance for an extended period could lead to Famine (IPC Phase 5).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> [Conflict incidents continue in Yemen in January despite Stockholm Agreement](#), Famine Early Warning System, January 2019

<sup>18</sup> [Ibid.](#)

## 4. Banning arms sales?

With the disastrous scale of Yemenis' suffering, the pressure to stop military support to members of the Saudi-led coalition from Western countries has been widespread. On 2 October 2018 Jamal Khashoggi, a journalist with the *Washington Post*, was killed in the Saudi Embassy in Turkey, sharply increasing the pressure for Western countries to review their policies on arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

Responding to public concern while maintaining lucrative and potentially strategically important relationships with Gulf countries has been a balancing act for many governments. Several countries have banned new export licences while continuing to honour existing contracts for maintenance and ammunition, for example.<sup>19</sup> One country, Spain, announced a ban then reversed that decision.

Balancing act

### 4.1 UK

The UK provides some support to the Saudi-led coalition, particularly selling warplanes and ammunition to Saudi Arabia and providing engineering and training support for those warplanes. For details of arms sales to Saudi Arabia see the Commons Briefing Paper [UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia: Q and A](#), October 2018.

The training and engineering support was described in a PQ answer:

UK personnel provide routine engineering and generic training support for UK-supplied aircraft and aircrews assigned to operational squadrons under long-standing Government-to-Government arrangements.

These personnel do not provide direct support for Royal Saudi Air Force operational squadrons when engaged in the war in Yemen. They do not prepare aircraft for operations, this includes a prohibition on the loading of weapons, and they are not involved in the planning of operational sorties.<sup>20</sup>

There has been pressure in parliament and elsewhere for the UK to change its line on arms sales to Saudi Arabia.<sup>21</sup> The UK government's usual response to criticism over arms sales abroad is to say that:

All UK export licence applications for Saudi Arabia are assessed rigorously against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing criteria.<sup>22</sup>

In February 2019, however, the House of Lords International Relations Committee published a report that found that UK exports to Saudi Arabia in the context of the Yemen conflict were probably "narrowly on the wrong side of the law":

The Government asserts that, in its licensing of arms sales to Saudi Arabia, it is narrowly on the right side of international

"narrowly on the wrong side of the law"

<sup>19</sup> ['War in Yemen: European divisions on arms-export controls continue'](#), *Military Balance Blog*, ISS, 25 October 2018

<sup>20</sup> [HC Written question – 232090](#), 18 March 2019

<sup>21</sup> For more information see the Commons Briefing Paper [UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia: Q and A](#), October 2018

<sup>22</sup> [HC Written question – 225384](#), 4 March 2019

humanitarian law. Although conclusive evidence is not yet available, we assess that it is that it is narrowly on the wrong side: given the volume and type of arms being exported to the Saudi-led coalition, we believe they are highly likely to be the cause of significant civilian casualties in Yemen, risking the contravention of international humanitarian law.<sup>23</sup>

The government says it is helping the Saudi-led coalition comply with international humanitarian law:

We have provided training and advice to the Saudi Coalition, to support compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The British military has some of the highest standards in the world in how they conduct themselves in armed conflicts. We always seek to avoid civilian casualties and we are happy to share our hard-won experience with our partners. We regularly press, including at senior levels, the need for the Saudi-led Coalition to conduct thorough and conclusive investigations into reports of alleged violations of IHL.<sup>24</sup>

In March 2019 the Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt wrote an article defending the UK's position on arms sales, arguing that maintaining the UK's strategic relationship with Saudi Arabia and the UAE gave the UK the opportunity to influence those countries' leaders. If the UK ruptured those relationships it would become impotent, he argued:

Our policy would be simply to leave the parties to fight it out, while denouncing them impotently from the sidelines.

That would be morally bankrupt and the people of Yemen would be the biggest losers. We would have been unlikely to see Stockholm or the ceasefire that is now broadly holding in Hodeidah.<sup>25</sup>

In March 2019 the leaders of the Labour party, Scottish National party, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru and the Green party sent a joint letter to Jeremy Hunt. The opposition parties criticised the failure to halt UK arms sales:

It is morally reprehensible that the UK government is not only not considering changing its policy, but is actively lobbying other foreign governments, as it did with Germany, to resume arms sales to Saudi.<sup>26</sup>

An Urgent Question debate was held on 26 March, during which allegations were aired that UK special forces had been involved in gun battles with Houthi forces while providing support to the coalition.<sup>27</sup> Foreign Office minister Mark Field declined to comment on the activities of special forces, but said he would write to the opposition spokesperson on foreign affairs.

Special forces

<sup>23</sup> [Yemen: giving peace a chance](#), House of Lords Select Committee on International Relations, 6th Report of Session 2017-19, 16 February 2019, HL Paper 290, para 73

<sup>24</sup> [HC Written question – 230622](#), 19 March 2019

<sup>25</sup> Jeremy Hunt, '[Yemen crisis won't be solved by UK arms exports halt](#)', *Politico*, 26 March 2019

<sup>26</sup> '[Five opposition parties call on UK to end arms sales to Saudi Arabia](#)', *Guardian*, 25 March 2019

<sup>27</sup> [HC Deb 26 March 2019, c185-96](#)

## 4.2 United States

In December 2018 the Republican-controlled Senate passed a resolution ending US military help to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. The motion invoked the 1973 *War Powers Act* and directed the president to remove from Yemen US forces not directly engaged with al Qaeda and associated groups. It lapsed, since the Congress ended before it went to the House of Representatives.

At the same time as the military assistance resolution, the Senate passed another on the murder of Khashoggi, saying that the Senate “believes Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is responsible for the murder”.

In March 2019 the Senate, still in Republican hands, voted in favour of another similar resolution by 54 to 46 and it will now go the House for approval before being forwarded to the White House, where analysts predicted that the President would veto it.

The passing of the resolution showed that there is strong unease about the US involvement in Yemen and about the relationship with Saudi Arabia, particularly after Khashoggi’s death.

The President did not certify to Congress before the 9 February deadline that the Saudi-led coalition is doing enough to avoid civilian casualties. That made it illegal for the administration to resume the refuelling of coalition warplanes.<sup>28</sup> Intelligence sharing would continue.

Further attempts to control the US administration’s arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE are likely in the coming year.<sup>29</sup>

## 4.3 Germany

In October 2018, following the Khashoggi killing, [Germany said](#) that it would not approve further arms exports, awaiting clarification of what happened; Economics minister Peter Altmeier called for a unified European stance on the matter.

Arms deals with countries involved militarily in Yemen were already restricted. Pre-agreed deals were not immediately affected by the October move, but the German government [announced a complete ban](#) in November, along with a travel ban on 18 Saudi nationals suspected of involvement in the Khashoggi killing.

[According to German magazine \*Der Spiegel\*](#), in February UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt wrote to his German counterpart, Heiko Maas. He expressed concern about the German decision:

I am very concerned about the impact of the German government’s decision on the British and European defence industry and the consequences for Europe’s ability to fulfil its NATO commitments.

---

<sup>28</sup> [‘Trump blows off congressionally mandated Yemen certification’](#), *Al-Monitor*, 13 February 2019

<sup>29</sup> [‘How Congress Can Exert Responsible Oversight on Trump’s Dangerous Approach to Arms Sales’](#), Arms Control Association, 15 January 2019

The decision would interfere with UK supply and maintenance contracts of Eurofighter Typhoon and Tornado aircraft. The ban would also delay proposed sales of Airbus A400M military transport planes to Saudi Arabia.<sup>30</sup>

## 4.4 Elsewhere

Some nations have acted to restrict exports to members of the coalition fighting in Yemen, including the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden.

Despite the Netherlands parliament's resolution, the Netherlands does not supply arms to the parties in the Yemen conflict, [according to](#) the foreign minister; the resolution also requires the Dutch government to argue in favour of an arms embargo at the UN Security Council.

[Finland suspended](#) new arms export authorisations to Saudi Arabia in November 2018, although existing contracts were being honoured; [journalists revealed](#) that Finnish armoured vehicles were being used by the UAE in Yemen and that spare parts had been licensed by Finland twice in 2018.

Also in November, Denmark decided to ban future export licences for Saudi Arabia.

In October Switzerland halted the supply of spare parts to Saudi Arabia. Switzerland had banned arms exports in 2009, but [decided to end](#) the maintenance and ammunition contracts too, in the light of the Khashoggi death.

[Norway announced](#) in November 2018 that it would not issue new licences for arms exports to Saudi Arabia.

Sweden passed a law in 2017 restricting arms sales to dictatorships but has not implemented a specific ban for Saudi Arabia. Swedish arms manufacturer Saab announced a radar project with UAE in 2018 that would have military and civil uses.

Spain said it would halt the sale of laser-guided bombs but ten days later reversed its decision, after the Saudis threatened to cancel another order, for five frigates to be built in Spain, [according to reports](#).

European Parliament [passed a resolution](#) in October 2019 calling for an EU-wide arms embargo on Saudi Arabia.

Others, like France and Italy, have continued to license arms exports, taking a similar view to the UK.

---

<sup>30</sup> ['German halt in Saudi arms sales hurting UK industry – Hunt'](#), *Reuters*, 19 February 2019

### About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email [papers@parliament.uk](mailto:papers@parliament.uk). Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email [hcenquiries@parliament.uk](mailto:hcenquiries@parliament.uk).

### Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).