Armed Conflict



07
OCT
18:42 UTC

Saudi Arabia & Yemen Alert (UPDATE): Saudi authorities on October 7 confirm casualties in previous Houthi attacks against Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport, Abha Airport; further underscores increased Houthi threat against airports

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Current Situation:

- During the evening hours of October 7 (local time), the Saudi General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) confirmed that on October 6 and 7, two separate attacks targeted Abha International Airport and King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh.
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- At King Khalid International Airport, the attack resulted in one foreign fatality and eight injuries involving Saudi, Egyptian, and Pakistani residents, with ranging from minor to critical.
- The two attacks also caused material damage.
- GACA stated it is working with the relevant authorities to assess the damage, verify the safety of the facilities, and take the necessary measures to ensure passenger safety and maintain the security and safety of operations within the Kingdom’s civil aviation system.

Source: GACA

Assessments & Forecast:

1. This follows the new indications of damage within the perimeter of King Khalid International Airport, as highlighted in satellite imagery on October 7. In this context, the latest announcement is highly notable, as it constitutes the first Saudi confirmation that a Houthi attack indeed impacted the airport and led to casualties. As we previously assessed, this further underscores the increasing threat to airports that the Houthis pose, as part of the substantial escalation between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia and its backed forces in Yemen.
2. In the same vein, the extensive casualties at the Abha International Airport reiterate that this specific facility in southern Saudi Arabia constitutes a frequent go-to target for the Houthis, with the Houthis repeatedly and relatively frequently proving that they retain the capacity to attack the facility.
3. **FORECAST**: Additional Houthi attacks against airports in the kingdom, including Riyadh's airport, should be expected within the context of escalating violence between the parties, and they are liable to include ballistic missiles, UAVs, as well as cruise missiles, which the Houthis possess. As mentioned in previous reports, the risks to individuals operating in such facilities in Saudi Arabia will be compounded by the fact that the Saudi Civil Defense currently does not provide timely notifications for incoming aerial threats, hindering individuals' ability to take precautions on the ground and seek shelter.

Recommendations:

Saudi Arabia:

1. Conduct only critical business travel to Saudi Arabia at the current juncture and reconsider the necessity of currently planned trips, including to Jeddah and Riyadh.
2. Refresh security protocols and business contingency plans (BCPs) and consider bolstering security measures on the ground in Saudi Arabia at the current juncture.
3. Conduct frequent, timely risk assessments before and during operations in the Kingdom, including before using international airports. This includes monitoring flight-tracking platforms to identify air traffic anomalies. Also minimize personnel and assets footprint at airports as much as possible.
4. Consider restricting operations via the King Khalid International Airport at the current juncture, amid escalating Houthi attacks against the facility. Avoid using international airports in southern Saudi Arabia's Najran, Jazan, and Abha.
5. Try to acquire flexible flight tickets and continuously confirm travel itineraries.
6. **MAX Security has strong on-the-ground capabilities in Saudi Arabia and the wider region, including secure transportation, safe havens, and contingency consultation and planning. Contact us at operations@max-security.com or +44 20-3540-0434 for further consultations.**
7. Remain cognizant of the gap in Saudi Civil Defense alerts and bolster situational awareness and preparedness. Continue to monitor updates from the Saudi-led Arab Coalition and the Houthi military spokesperson and leadership.
8. Particularly follow up on Houthi allegations of Saudi strikes in Sanaa, which the Houthis use to legitimize attacks against Riyadh.
9. Avoid travel to areas along the Saudi-Yemen border and Saudi Arabia's southern provinces, including Jazan, Asir, and Najran, due to the elevated risk of cross-border attacks.
10. Avoid travel to key, strategic civilian infrastructure across Saudi Arabia, especially in the abovementioned areas.
11. Map and avoid the vicinity of oil and gas-related infrastructure within Riyadh and its surroundings as much as possible.

12. Consider accommodation with underground parking lots that may provide a bolstered protected area in times of need. Refrain from staying above the sixth floor.
13. **Contact us at** intel@max-security.com **for tailored, timely risk assessments and/or tactical monitoring services.**

Yemen:

1. Continue to avoid all travel to Yemen at the current juncture, especially to Houthi-controlled territories and frontline areas amid elevated security risks due to the ongoing armed conflict.
2. In PCC-controlled areas, avoid all travel to airports, energy facilities, and ports in light of escalating tensions and potential for Houthi attacks against these assets.
3. Specifically, remain cognizant of increased prospects for missile and UAV attacks against Aden and Sanaa in the coming hours and days, which increase risks to the cities' strategic infrastructure, including aviation infrastructure. This includes Aden International Airport.
4. Those operating within Yemen are advised to avoid all travel to governorates with active frontlines between the Houthis and anti-Houthi forces, including Marib, al-Jawf, Bayda, Ibb, Dali, Taiz, and Hodeidah governorates, due to the persistent risk of armed conflict.