Politics



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Egypt, Saudi Arabia & Yemen Alert: Egyptian Parliament on October 26 authorizes defensive military support for Saudi Arabia amid Saudi-Houthi escalation; less likely to lead to Houthi attacks against Egypt

Current Situation:

- Egypt's House of Representatives approved President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's request to authorize military support for Saudi Arabia in a closed-door session on October 26, following earlier sessions on October 18 and 19.
- A two-thirds majority approved the authorization and empowered the president to take measures, in coordination with Riyadh, to defend Saudi territory, sovereignty, and holy sites against external aggression.
- Cairo has stated that its military support will focus on defending Saudi territory and borders rather than conducting offensive operations within Yemen.

Source: Al-Ahram

Assessments & Forecast:

1. This comes amid the Saudi-Houthi escalation and ongoing Houthi attacks against the kingdom's civilian infrastructure, which prompted Riyadh to seek military support from multiple international partners in its new campaign against the Houthis in Yemen. This includes the Mecca Pact members (Turkey and Pakistan), the UK, and France.
2. The new Egyptian measure aligns with pledges by the abovementioned international partners in supporting defensive measures to help protect Saudi infrastructure rather than become directly embroiled in offensive operations against the Houthis, which would also risk exposing them to Houthi attacks.
3. From Egypt's standpoint, this likely reflects a balancing act. It aims to extend support to a key regional ally that is also important to Egypt's economic viability while also reflecting Cairo's longstanding proclivity to avoid direct involvement in hostilities, a policy stance Cairo also maintained during the active phase of the regional hostilities involving Iran.
4. This Egyptian policy stance is unlikely to be regarded by the Yemen-based Houthi movement as a crossing of a red line that would warrant the launch of a Houthi aerial attack campaign against Egyptian territory at the current juncture. This is despite the Houthis' proven ability to infiltrate parts of Egypt's territory with their UAVs, as was highlighted in several instances in which drones penetrated Israel's southwestern border via the Sinai and several occasions where Houthi munitions impacted Egyptian Red Sea coastal areas as part of Houthi attempts to target Israel.
5. The Houthis are more likely to continue to focus their assaults on Saudi Arabia in an attempt to circumvent Saudi and allied defensive postures and successfully target strategic Saudi infrastructure. From a Houthi perspective, this approach also entails a balancing act. It would help the movement to continue containing its escalation to direct tit-for-tat with Saudi Arabia, without provoking a relatively strong regional state into getting directly embroiled in attacks on Yemeni soil. A direct Egyptian embroilment in Houthi attacks would also increase the prospects for a US military intervention in Yemen, which Washington previously considered at the request of the Saudi government.
6. That said, this development ties Egypt more closely to the Saudi campaign against the Houthis, exposing it to a comparatively higher risk of Houthi attacks, especially if conditions in the wider region or within Yemen deteriorate and make the Houthis and/or Iran more agitated. This includes a plausible renewal of the US/Israel-Iran conflict and the Houthis incurring significant territorial losses in Yemen within the context of their fight against Saudi-backed factions. In such circumstances, it cannot be ruled out that a decision by the Houthis and/or their backers would be made to launch sporadic attacks against infrastructure in Egypt as part of regional pressure and price tag campaigns, as was highlighted in the attack against energy infrastructure at Egypt's Damietta Port in July.
7. To prevent such a scenario, Cairo will likely continue to invest in mediation efforts vis-a-vis Riyadh and the Houthis, as well as between the US and its regional allies and Iran, in order to explore diplomatic avenues for deescalation.

Recommendations:

1. Travel to Egypt may continue at this time.
2. Throughout the region, conduct timely risk assessments, refresh security protocols and business contingency plans (BCPs) for short-notice escalation scenarios, and continuously confirm travel itineraries.
3. Avoid all travel to **Iran, Kuwait, Bahrain, Yemen, Syria,** and **Iraq** at the current juncture.
4. Avoid non-business-critical travel to **Israel, the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Jordan,** and **other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states** at this time, and reconsider the necessity of planned trips.
5. Remain cognizant of elevated risks to airports in the region. Conduct repeated, timely risk assessments before using commercial airports in these countries. Avoid using prominent

international airports in Saudi Arabia.
6. Continuously monitor official alert systems.
7. Identify protected areas in hotels/accommodations, such as shelters. If these do not exist, identify basements and interior stairwells, away from windows, exterior walls, and balconies.
8. Consider accommodations with underground parking lots that may provide a more secure protected area in times of need.
9. Refrain from staying above the sixth floor.
10. Verify emergency procedures with hotels.
11. Opt for hotels away from strategic targets.
12. Avoid all travel to military installations in the region, especially those hosting US personnel.
13. Avoid all travel to major energy and heavy-industry facilities (particularly petrochemical facilities), as well as major ports across the region, and implement precautions at such sites due to the continued threat to this infrastructure posed by Iran.
14. Avoid travel to US-linked diplomatic and academic institutions in the region amid Iranian threats to target such locations.
15. Monitor Iranian threats against private firms and specific hotels, which Tehran may claim host US personnel or contribute to US war efforts.
16. Avoid disseminating picture material and footage of interceptions, falling debris, and military assets on social media, as the circulation of such info is often illegal in Gulf states and may lead to prosecution.
17. **MAX Security has strong on-the-ground capabilities across several arenas in MENA, including secure transportation, the provision of safe havens, and contingency consultation and planning. Contact us at** operations@max-security.com“>operations@max-security.com”>operations@max-security.com“>operations@max-security.com“>operations@max-security.com **or +44 20-3540-0434.**
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