



## Armed Conflict

**31**

AUG

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### **Saudi Arabia & Yemen Alert (UPDATE): Houthi UAV attack wounds eight individuals at Asir Province's Abha International Airport on August 31; shows risk to civilians**

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#### **Please be advised:**

- According to Saudi Arabia's official news agency, the Saudi-led Coalition intercepted a booby-trapped unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) targeting Abha International Airport during the morning hours on August 31. The shrapnel from the interception fell within the airport, wounding eight individuals, all employees of the airport. The casualties include Bangladeshi, Indians, Nepalese, and Saudi nationals.
- Saudi authorities also confirmed that a civilian aircraft as well as ground support equipment incurred material damages in the airport.
- The Saudi-led Coalition retaliated by conducting airstrikes targeting a mobile platform used for launching UAVs in Yemen's Sanaa Governorate on August 31.
- The Houthis have not claimed responsibility for the attack as per the time of writing.

#### **Assessments & Forecast:**

1. This incident comes amid an uptick in Houthi-perpetrated cross-border attacks towards Saudi Arabia's southern provinces in August. Asir Province is a particular focal point of such UAV attacks, with at least thirteen interceptions recorded since August 22. This includes the Abha International Airport, which has been subject to two such operations, including the current one, over the last 24 hours. The latest incident is notable given that the last attack that caused casualties at Abha International Airport was recorded on [June 23, 2019](#). Overall, such attacks fall in line with the Houthis' efforts to portray the Kingdom as unsafe, thereby deter foreign investments and harm the Saudi economy. This is because the Houthis aim to project their ability to destabilize the Kingdom's security environment as pressure tactics to force Riyadh to lift the blockade over Houthi-held territories and cease its military intervention in Yemen.
2. The fact that the Saudi-led Coalition intercepted the UAV points towards the Royal Saudi Air Defense's (RSAD) heightened vigilance and responsiveness towards the threat posed by the Houthis. However, despite this capability, falling shrapnel during interceptions nonetheless continues to pose an elevated risk of indiscriminate collateral damage. This is illustrated by the relatively high number of individuals wounded as well as the damage incurred to a commercial aircraft, highlighting the acute threat that such attacks pose to civilians present at such sites.

**3. FORECAST:** The attack will likely embolden the Houthis to conduct further attacks targeting strategic and civilian infrastructure located in Saudi Arabia's southern provinces over the coming weeks and months. The Saudi-led Coalition will likely conduct further airstrikes targeting the Houthis' weapons arsenal in northern Yemen, from where most cross-border attacks are launched. This may trigger a tit-for-tat dynamic, with the Houthis' attempting to launch further attacks into Saudi Arabia as retaliation for the Saudi-led Coalition's airstrikes. Thus, the risk posed to civilian infrastructure due to such attacks will continue to remain elevated in Saudi Arabia's southern provinces. The high frequency of such cross-border attacks will also likely be perceived as the Houthis' lack of resolve to advance the peace process, which will prolong further the ongoing stalemate in the UN-led talks to reach a ceasefire.

## Recommendations:

1. Travel to Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam can continue as normal while adhering to basic security precautions and adherence to cultural norms. Contact us at [Operations@max-security.com](mailto:Operations@max-security.com) or +44 20-3540-0434 for itinerary and contingency support plans.
2. Those operating in the vicinity of strategic military and economic infrastructure in Saudi Arabia are advised to ensure the preparation of emergency plans and shelters due to the currently heightened risk of Houthi-perpetrated attacks.
3. In the event that an explosion is heard, immediately seek cover. Remain cognizant that even if an incoming projectile is intercepted, falling debris constitutes a significant risk.
4. Avoid travel to the border areas with Yemen in Asir, Najran, and Jazan provinces, given daily cross-border hostilities.