



Armed Conflict

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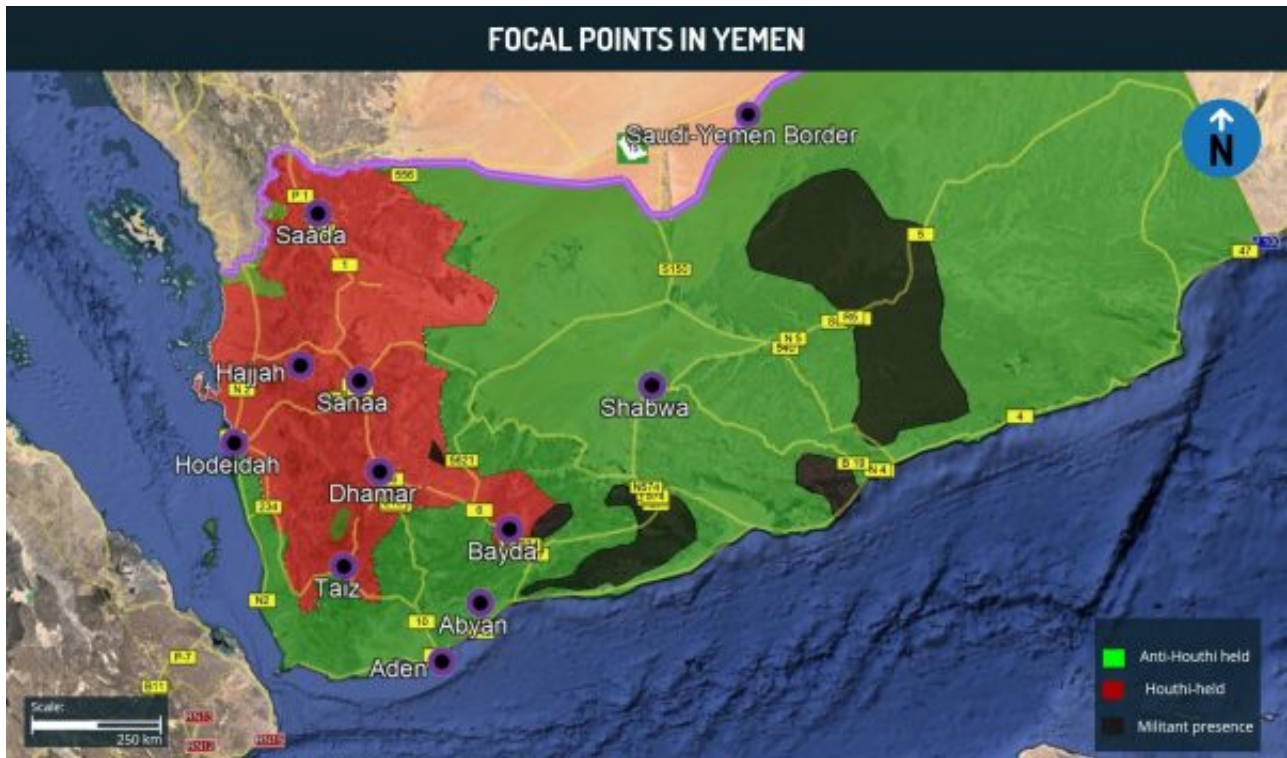
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Yemen SITUATION UPDATE: On January 25, US approves transactions involving Houthis for one-month period until February 26; effort to alleviate concerns regarding humanitarian aid

Executive Summary

- On January 25, the US approved “all transactions and activities” involving the Houthis until February 26. This is likely intended to temporarily alleviate concerns from the international community regarding the negative impact of the designation on the delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians in Yemen.
- Between January 19-25, anti-US protests were recorded across Houthi-held territories to denounce the US’s designation of the Shiite group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). Anti-US and anti-Western sentiments are likely to remain high among the pro-Houthi population over the coming weeks.
- An increase in security incidents, which have materialized in IED explosions, shootings, and armed clashes, has been recorded in Aden since the beginning of 2021. Overall, this highlights a destabilized security environment in the pro-Hadi government’s de facto capital.
- Overall, given that the new Joe Biden-led US administration has reportedly started reviewing the designation of the Houthis as an FTO, a reversal of the measure cannot be completely ruled out over the coming months.

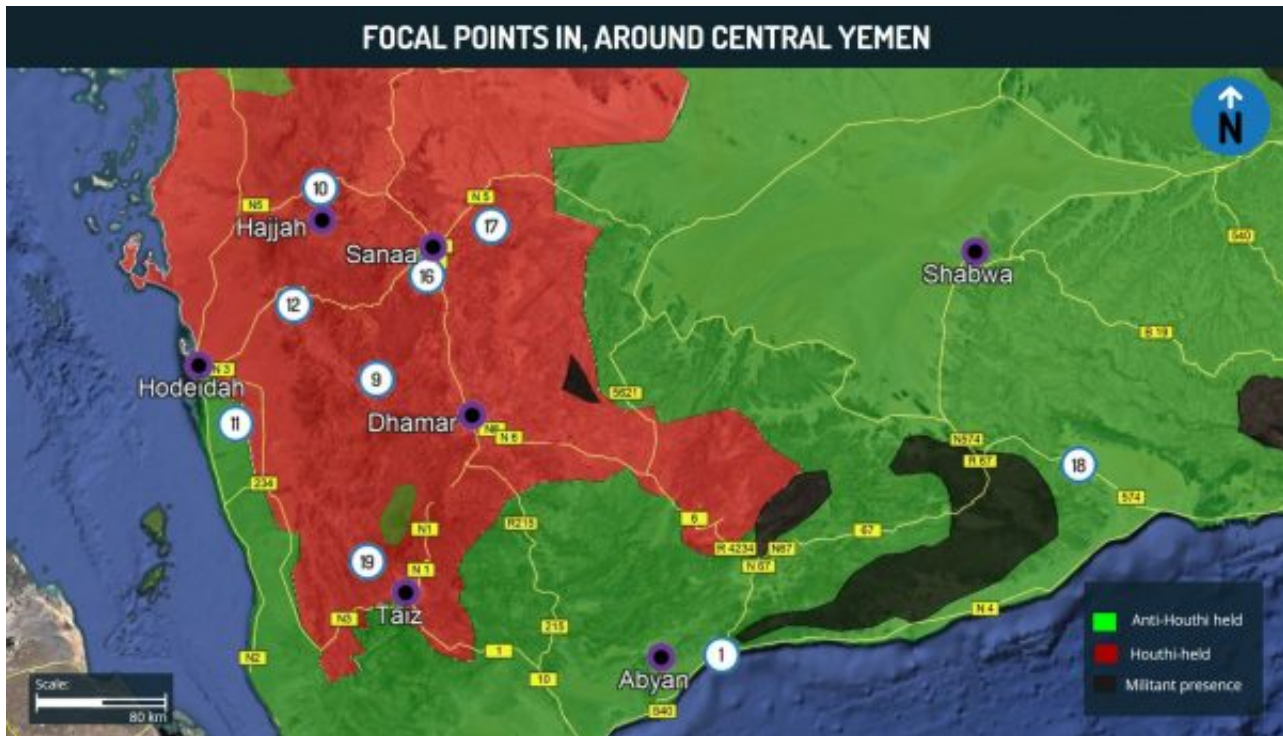


Current Situation

Across the country, the following incidents have been reported:

Abyan Governorate

| Map # | Date | District/City | Brief Description |
|-------|------------|---------------|--|
| 1 | January 17 | Shoqra | Unidentified individuals reportedly threw a stun grenade at the military headquarters of pro-Hadi forces. Additional conflicting reports indicate that the headquarters was targeted using a mortar shell. |



Aden Governorate

| Map # | Date | District/City | Brief Description |
|-------|------------|--|---|
| 2 | January 15 | Presidential Palace | A suspected explosive-laden unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) that targeted the Presidential Palace was reportedly downed. |
| 3 | January 19 | Aden's Sky Hotel, Mansoura District | According to reports, heavy clashes were recorded between two armed factions. An unconfirmed source stated that both groups were linked to the Southern Transitional Council (STC) and that the clashes emanated due to a land dispute. |
| 4 | January 21 | Abdul Aziz neighborhood, Mansoura District | An IED explosion reportedly targeted a Security Belt Forces (SBF) official's vehicle in the district's Abdul Aziz neighborhood. No casualties were recorded. |
| 5 | January 25 | Inmaa, Mansoura District | A stun grenade was reportedly detonated near a popular market. |
| 6 | January 25 | Sheikh Othman | An explosion and gunfire |

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|---|------------|-----------------------|--|
| 7 | January 25 | Central Bank of Yemen | were reported near a municipality building. Dozens of military personnel gathered in front of the Central Bank of Yemen building to demand the resignation of the bank governor and his deputy, in light of delayed payment of salaries for employees of the ministries of defense and interior. |
| 8 | January 27 | Buraiqah District | The Director of the Political Security Organization in Hodeidah Governorate was reportedly kidnapped in front of his house in Buraiqahh District. His body was later discovered on an unspecified street with “brutal signs of torture”. |



Bayda Governorate

| Date | District/City | Brief Description |
|------------|---------------|--|
| January 19 | Unspecified | The official Houthi news agency reported that a protest was conducted to denounce the US's |

designation of the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO).

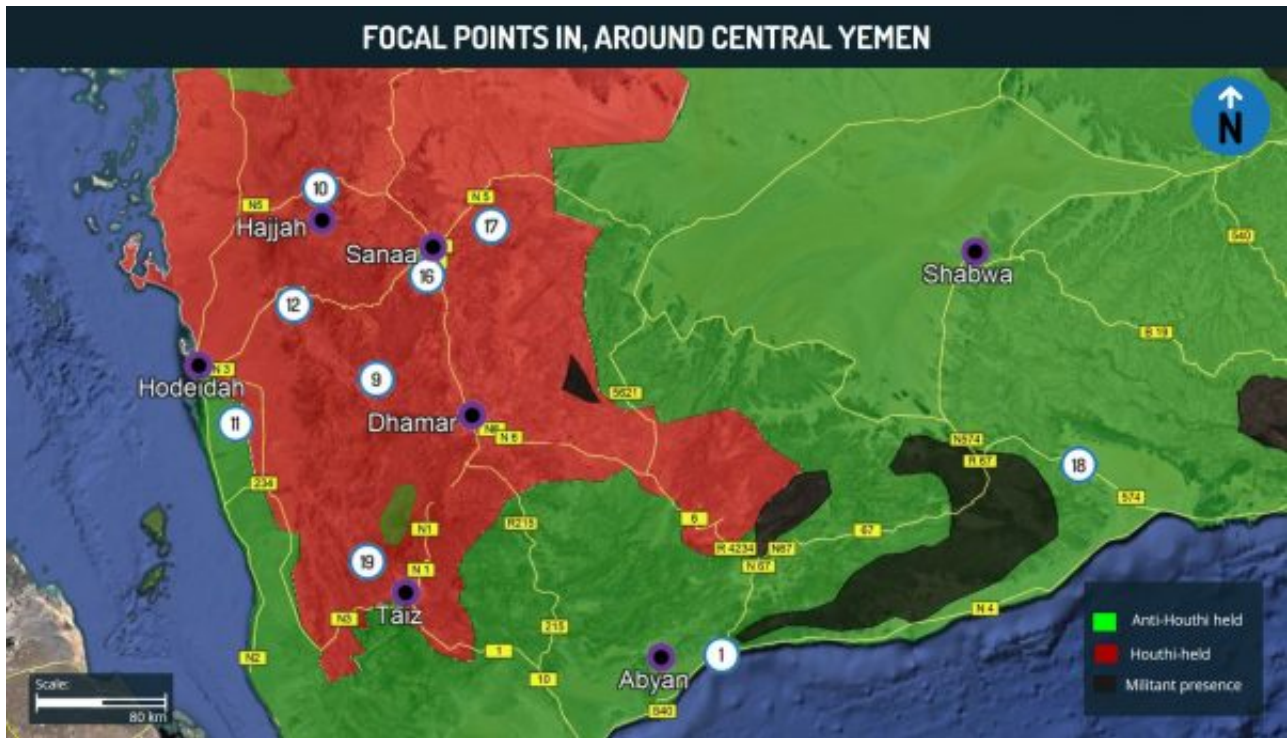
Dhamar Governorate

| Map # | Date | District/City | Brief Description |
|-------|------------|--------------------------|--|
| 9 | January 19 | Jabal Ash Sharq District | The official Houthi news agency reported that a protest was conducted to denounce the US's designation of the Houthis as an FTO. |



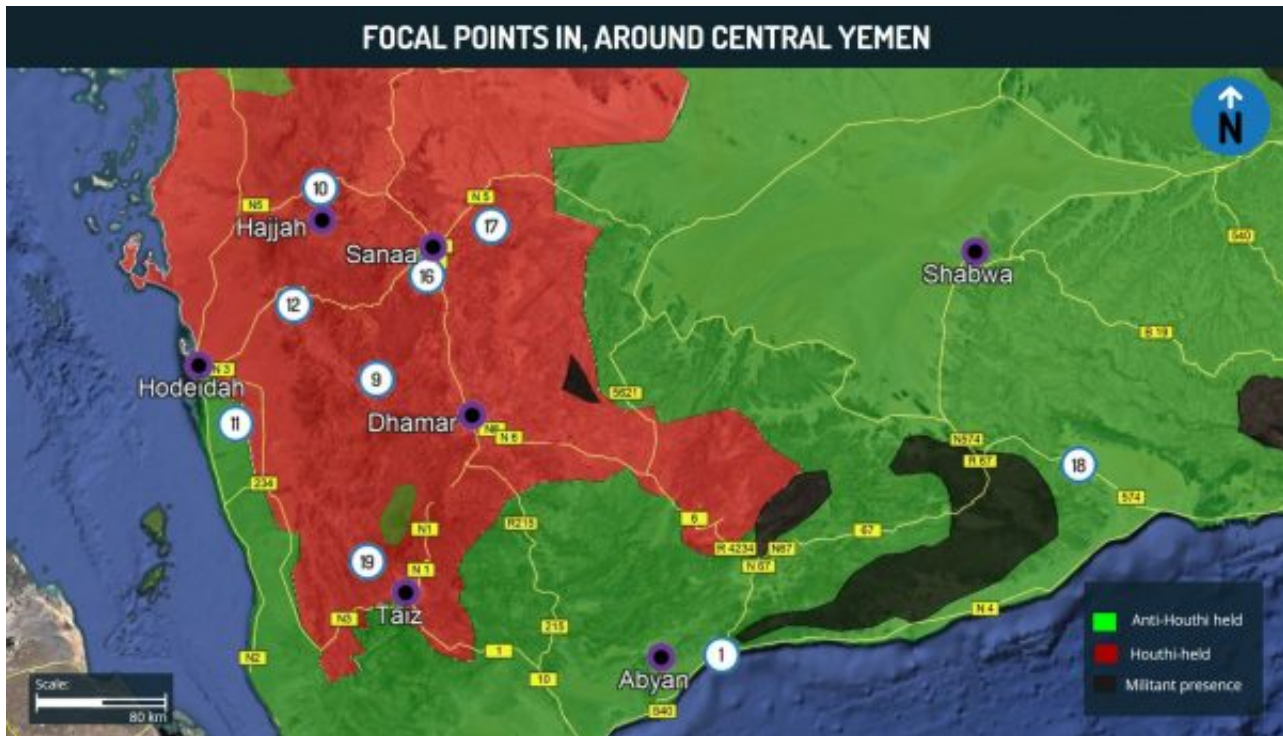
Hajjah Governorate

| Map # | Date | District/City | Brief Description |
|-------|------------|---------------|--|
| 10 | January 19 | Hajjah city | The official Houthi news agency reported that a protest was conducted to denounce the US's designation of the Houthis as an FTO. |



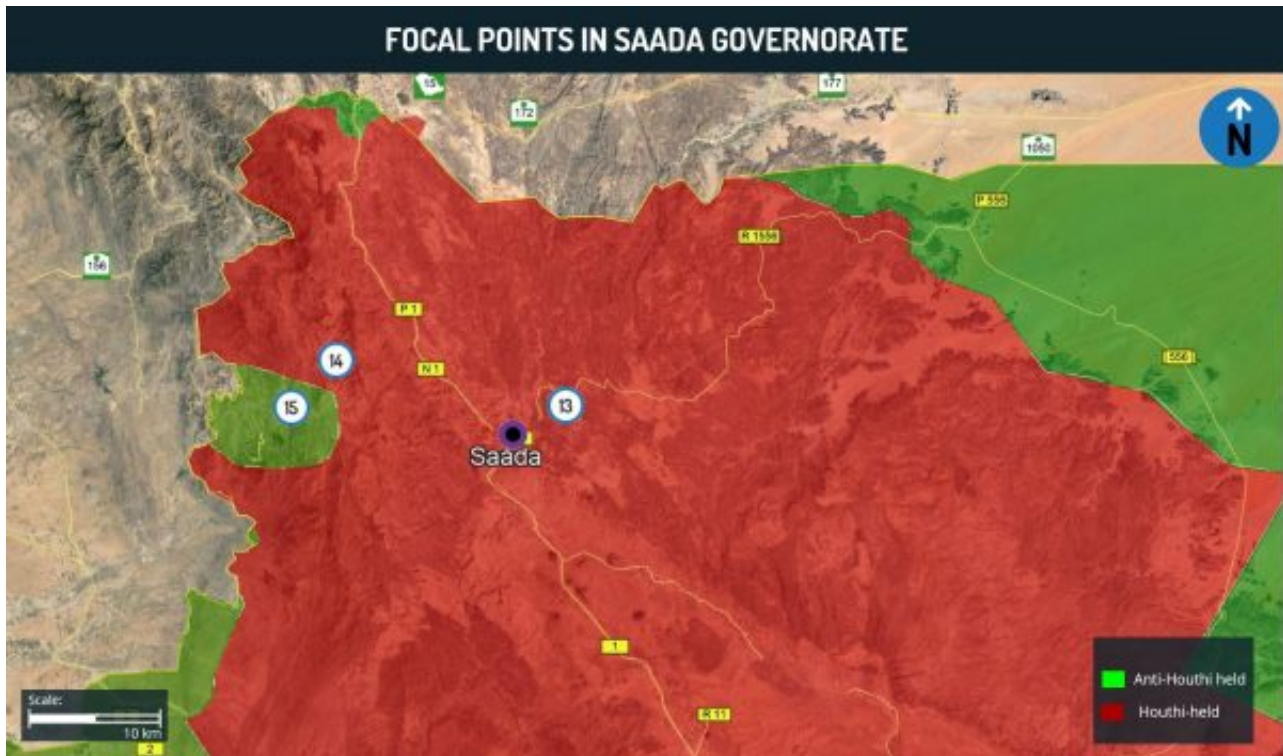
Hodeidah Governorate

| Map # | Date | District/City | Brief Description |
|-------|------------|----------------------------|--|
| 11 | January 16 | Durayhimi district | Seven anti-Houthi personnel and a number of Houthi forces were killed and wounded during clashes between the two parties. |
| 11,12 | January 19 | Durayhimi, Bajil districts | The official Houthi news agency reported that a protest was conducted to denounce the US's designation of the Houthis as an FTO. |



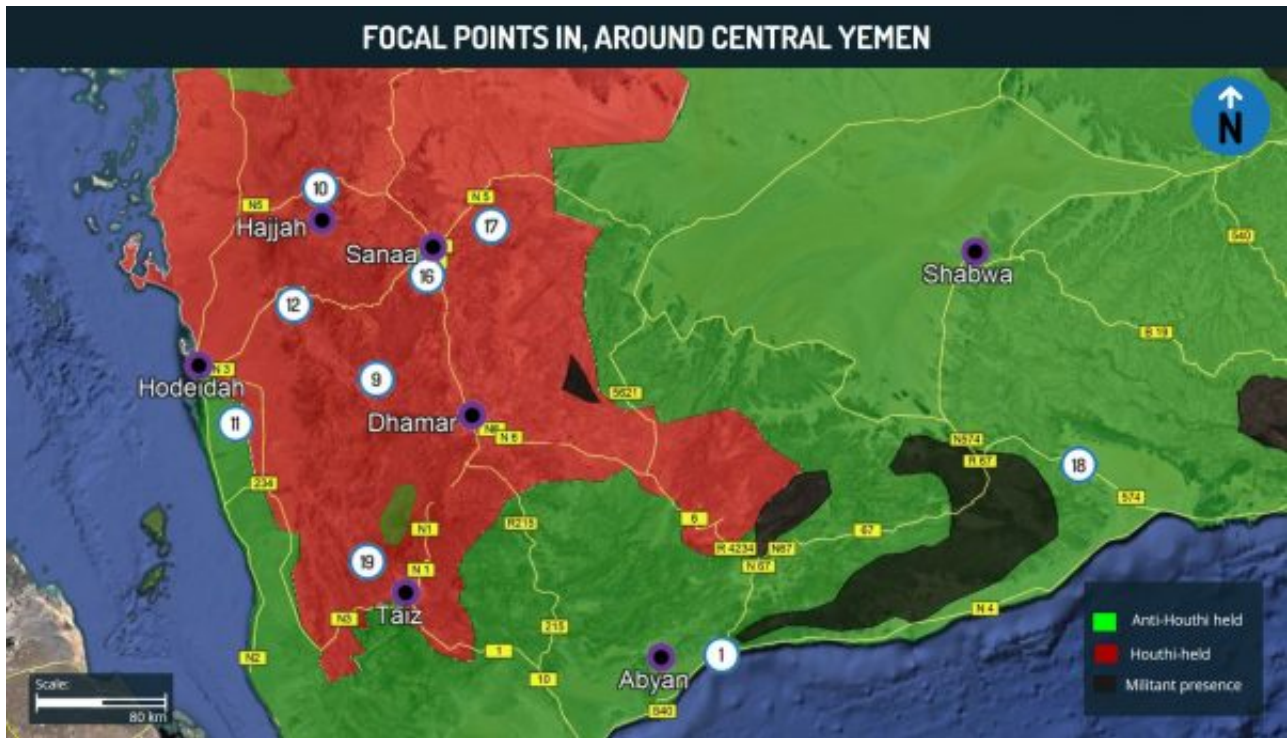
Saada Governorate

| Map # | Date | District/City | Brief Description |
|-------|------------|----------------|---|
| 13 | January 17 | Safra | According to the official Hadi news agency, anti-Houthi forces intercepted a Houthi-launched UAV. |
| | January 25 | Unspecified | Anti-US protests were reportedly held in Houthi-held territories. |
| 14 | January 26 | Monabbih | According to Houthi-linked sources, two civilians were killed by Saudi border guards' gunshots. |
| 15 | January 26 | Shada District | Houthis and the Saudi-led Coalition reportedly exchanged artillery shelling. |



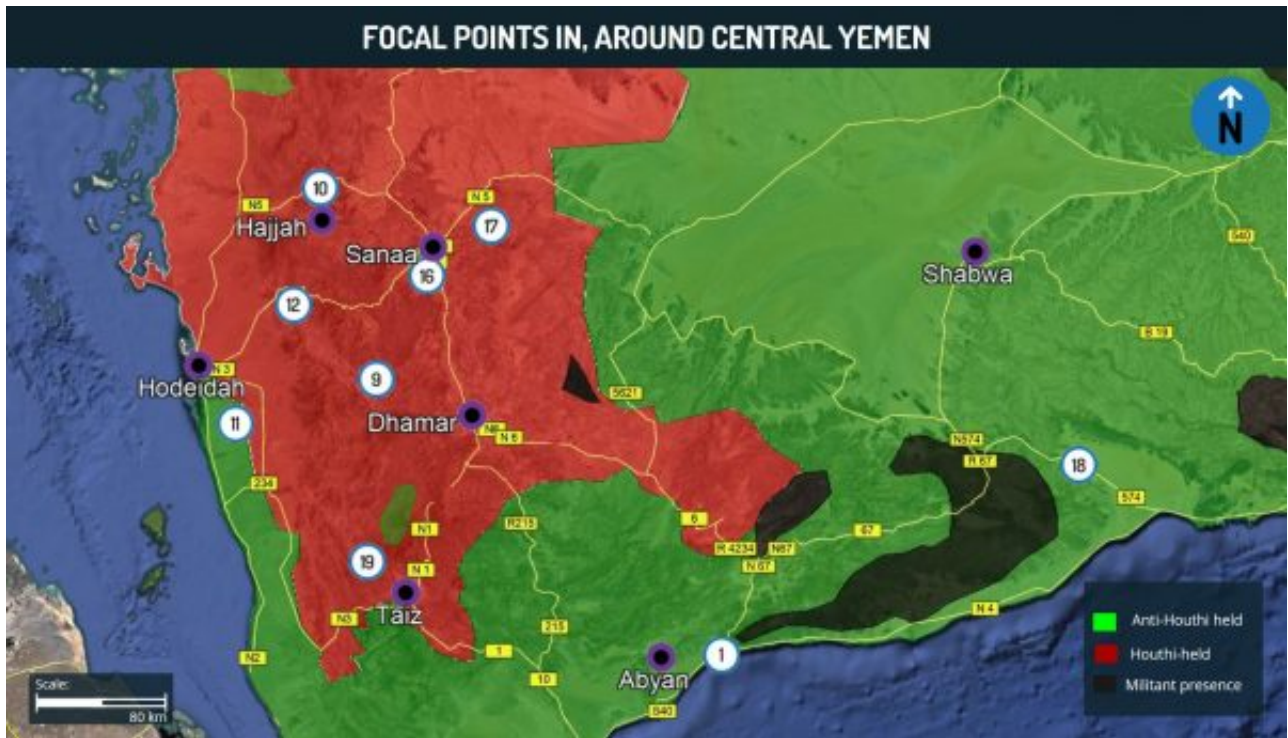
Sanaa Governorate

| Map # | Date | District/City | Brief Description |
|--------|------------|---|--|
| | January 15 | Unspecified | Local residents reportedly gathered after evening prayers to denounce the US's designation of Houthis as an FTO. |
| 16, 17 | January 19 | Sanhan, Bani Hushaysh District District | The official Houthi news agency reported that a protest was conducted to denounce the US's designation of the Houthis as an FTO. |



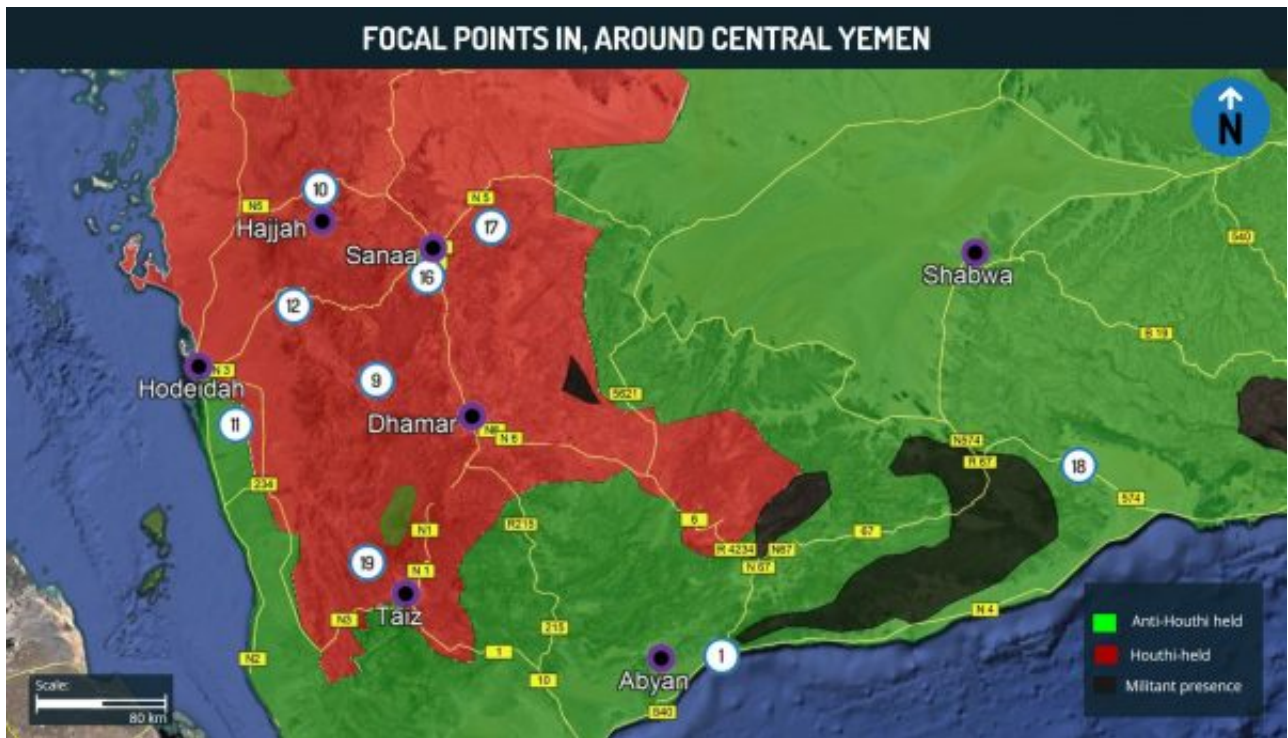
Shabwa Governorate

| Map # | Date | District/City | Brief Description |
|-------|------------|----------------|--|
| 18 | January 21 | Jules al-Raida | Unidentified gunmen on a motorcycle reportedly assassinated a Shabwani Elite Forces (SEF) soldier in a local market. |
| | January 24 | Unspecified | al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)-linked media claimed that jihadists allegedly launched rockets towards a military base hosting UAE-backed forces. |



Taiz Governorate

| Map # | Date | District/City | Brief Description |
|-------|------------|---------------------------|--|
| 19 | January 19 | Shar'ab as-Salam District | The official Houthi news agency reported that a protest was conducted to denounce the US's designation of the Houthis as an FTO. |



Riyadh; Saudi Arabia

| Date | District/City | Brief Description |
|-------------|----------------------|---|
| January 22 | Unspecified | The Saudi-led Coalition reportedly intercepted an explosive-laden unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) launched by the Houthis. |
| January 23 | Riyadh | Reports quoting the Saudi authorities indicate that the Royal Saudi Air Defense (RSAD) intercepted an aerial attack launched targeting Riyadh. The Houthi spokesperson stated that the group had “not carried out any offensive operations against the countries of aggression during the past 24 hours”. Subsequently, an Iraqi group called “al-Waad al-Haq Brigade” claimed responsibility for the attack. |
| January 26 | Riyadh | A missile was reportedly intercepted over Riyadh. No group has claimed responsibility for the incident. |

General Developments

| Date | District/City | Brief Description |
|-------------|----------------------|--|
| January 16 | | The STC denounced “unilateral decisions” taken by President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, namely the appointment of new members of the Shura Council, and an Attorney General on January 15. The STC condemned an “unacceptable departure from what has been agreed upon.” |
| January 19 | | The US has reportedly provided exemptions for “aid groups”, the UN, the Red Cross, and the export of agricultural commodities, medicines, and medical supplies from its designation of the Houthis as an FTO. |
| January 22 | Red Sea | The Saudi-led Coalition reportedly intercepted an explosive-laden boat. |
| January 25 | | The US Department of the Treasury approved “all transactions and activities” |

involving the Houthis until February 26.

Assessments & Forecast

1. The US Treasury Department's January 25 decision to "approve all transactions and activities involving the Houthis" until February 26 comes amid heightened international criticism surrounding the former US administration's designation of the Houthis as an FTO on January 19. This is because several prominent humanitarian organizations have warned that the designation is liable to impede the transfer of humanitarian and medical supplies to civilians in Houthi-held territories, which is liable to further deteriorate the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Yemen. In this context, the US's one month approval of activities involving the Houthis is likely intended to placate the concerns of the international community as well as temporarily reduce the humanitarian impact of the FTO designation, while the new administration under President Joe Biden reviews the policy and its implications, the process of which has been initiated, per January 22 reports. **FORECAST:** Overall, the US's temporary approval of transactions with the Houthis will alleviate concerns and ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid over the coming weeks. Going forward, given that the new US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, has officially expressed his "deep concern" about the designation, which "seems to achieve nothing particularly practical in advancing the efforts against the Houthis and to bring them to the negotiating table", a revision of the designation by the new Joe Biden-led administration over the coming months remains possible.
2. Anti-US protests were recorded across several Houthi-held territories between January 19-25, following the former US administration's designation of the Houthis as an FTO on January 19. These were likely organized by the Houthis to showcase the rejection of the measure by vast segments of the local Yemeni population. Nevertheless, the designation, which led to the recent protests, indicate the elevated levels of anti-US sentiments, particularly among the pro-Houthi population in Yemen. Such heightened sentiments may also be extended towards Western-linked elements who may be perceived as associated with the US, including foreign humanitarian organizations operating in the country. **FORECAST:** Given that anti-US and anti-Western sentiments are likely to remain high, additional such protests across Houthi-held territories are likely over the coming days and weeks. Although less likely, this may also manifest in the form of attacks targeting buildings and personnel linked to foreign organizations.
3. There has been a relative increase in security incidents in Aden, which has manifested in the form of IED attacks, shootings, and clashes between armed groups since the start of 2021. This is bolstered by confrontations over a possible land dispute in Mansoura on January 19, an IED explosion targeting an SBF official's vehicle in Mansoura's Abdul Aziz neighborhood in Mansoura's Abdul Aziz neighborhood on January 21, and the reported kidnapping and assassination of the Director of the Political Security Organization of Hodeidah Governorate in Aden's Buraiqah District on January 27 in Aden's Buraiqah District. While the motivations for these incidents may vary, they nonetheless highlight the volatility of the security environment of the designated capital, which is currently controlled by STC-linked forces.
4. Broadly, there are two groups of perpetrators that may be behind some of these incidents. The Muslim Brotherhood-linked al-Islah Party's share of power in the current joint STC-Hadi government remains diminished with the removal of two of their key ministers in the Hadi government. Former Interior Minister, Ahmad al-Maysari, and former Transport Minister, Saleh al-Jabwani, who are representatives of the al-Islah Party in the Hadi government, were not reappointed in the new cabinet, which was formed in December 2020. Therefore, the group's increased political isolation at the current juncture may potentially be a factor that has contributed to some of the recent incidents in Aden. Alternatively, other southern separatist groups and fringe elements whose secessionist aspirations have been overshadowed by the formation of the unity government in Aden may also be involved in some of the latest attacks. There is a higher likelihood for the involvement of such actors given that the recent attacks and explosions in Aden are similar to previous incidents attributed to southerners in the region. That said, not all events should be generalised and the involvement of other assailants, such as militants and pro-Hadi-

linked elements that reject the STC's control in the area, cannot be ruled out. **FORECAST:** Given the increased challenges facing STC-linked forces in securing Aden, further violent incidents are likely in the governorate over the coming days and weeks.

Recommendations

1. It is advised to avoid all travel to Sanaa and Aden.
2. In the event of air strikes, it is advised to take shelter in a basement or on the second story level of a concrete building away from windows and the entrance. If no such areas are available, it is advised to take cover under a sturdy object in the center of the home away from windows; lay on the ground while covering your head with your hands.
3. We advise against all travel to outlying areas and overland travel, due to the limited government and security presence, ongoing clashes and airstrikes, as well as the heightened threat of attacks and kidnappings.
4. For those operating in or conducting business with oil facilities, it is advised to consult with us for itinerary and contingency support plans.
5. Foreigners, particularly Westerners, continuing to operate in Yemen are additionally advised to maintain a low profile, exercise heightened vigilance, and avoid locales frequented by foreign, particularly Western nationals. To mitigate the risk of attacks or abductions, ensure that places of stay are equipped with sufficient perimeter security details, alter travel routes, and avoid disclosing sensitive itinerary information to unknown individuals.