

Testimony of
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Countering Houthi Terrorism: Protecting U.S. Interests and Security in the Red Sea

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Chairman Lawler, Ranking Member Sherman, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the threat posed by the Houthis and what it means for the United States, Yemen, and security in the Red Sea and the region.

A Threat We Underestimated

I lived in Yemen for the first three decades of my life. I watched the Houthis emerge from the mountains of northern Yemen, wage successive rebellions against the Yemeni state, exploit the country's political transition, seize the capital in a coup, drag the country into civil war, and ultimately transform themselves into a regional military actor. I have spent much of my professional career studying that transformation. Today, as a Yemeni American, I am deeply concerned that we are underestimating them again.

Long before the Houthis threatened American forces and international shipping, they threatened Yemenis. Long before their missiles and drones became a problem in the Red Sea, they were a problem for my country of origin.

That history matters because the threat the United States faces today did not emerge overnight. We watched it grow. At nearly every stage of their evolution, the Houthis have been underestimated. We underestimated their ideology. We underestimated their territorial ambitions. We underestimated their relationship with Iran. We underestimated their ability to acquire and master increasingly sophisticated weapons. And we underestimated their ambition to project power beyond Yemen. We should not underestimate them again.

The Houthis became the threat they are today because of two main factors: Iran consistently invested in building their capabilities, and the United States and the international community consistently underestimated what they were becoming.

They Told Us Who They Were—and We Refused to Listen

The Houthis are a radical offshoot of Zaydi Shia Islam, guided by a messianic vision that extends far beyond Yemen. Their stated ambitions include capturing Mecca and Medina, destroying Israel, establishing an Islamic government in Jerusalem, and ultimately spreading their vision of Islam globally.¹ They believe they are on a divine mission, that God is on their side, and that they are destined for victory.

¹ Nadwa Al-Dawsari, "[The Ideological Underpinnings of the Houthis' Red Sea Attacks](#)," Middle East Institute, January 22, 2024.

The Houthis have told us for decades how they see the United States. Their official slogan—“Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse the Jews, Victory to Islam”—is not simply rhetoric. It is a central pillar of their ideological and political project.

And they have institutionalized it. It is taught in schools and summer camps, promoted through state-controlled media and public institutions, and incorporated into military and public platforms. Millions of Yemenis under Houthi control are exposed to a worldview in which the United States is presented not simply as an adversary, but as an enemy.

Since the start of the Red Sea attacks, the Houthis have increasingly presented themselves as leaders of a much broader struggle on behalf of the Muslim world. Their leader, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, increasingly addresses the Muslim *ummah* rather than Yemenis alone, portraying the conflict as a struggle against America, Israel, and what he calls the “infidel West,” and calling on Muslims to embrace jihad.² When an armed group tells us for decades that America is its enemy, builds a society around that message, acquires missiles and drones capable of reaching U.S. forces and U.S. allies, and then begins firing those weapons at American warships and U.S. regional interests, we should take its words seriously.

The Houthis were also deeply influenced by Iran's revolution from their earliest years. Their founder, Husayn al-Houthi, described the Iranian revolution as “the best example to follow” in building the Muslim nation and confronting America and Israel.³

Iran then helped give the Houthis the capabilities to act on that worldview. Its investment began well before the Houthi takeover of Sana'a. Abdolreza Shahlai, a senior IRGC-Quds Force commander and U.S.-designated terrorist with a history of targeting Americans, was already operating in northern Yemen before the 2014 coup, helping oversee Houthi recruitment, training, arming, and military operations.⁴ Over the following decade, Iran provided the Houthis with weapons, technology, training, and expertise, helping transform a small insurgency in the remote mountains of northern Yemen into a disruptive global force.

Iran's investment paid off. Today, the Houthis possess an increasingly sophisticated arsenal of ballistic and cruise missiles, anti-ship ballistic and cruise missiles, surface-to-air missiles, sophisticated drones, unmanned surface vessels, naval mines, and improvised explosive devices. Most of these advanced weapon systems did not exist in Yemen before the war. The scale and range of their arsenal is remarkable. Since 2015, the Houthis have launched more than 1,800 missile and drone attacks. Their missiles can reach targets roughly 2,000 kilometers away, while some of their drones have ranges of approximately 2,600 kilometers.⁵ Houthi weapons can now threaten targets across the Arabian Peninsula, Israel, U.S. forces in the region, and vessels transiting the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab.

Iran also helped the Houthis develop domestic weapons-manufacturing capabilities. They can now assemble, manufacture, and modify some of these systems inside Yemen using components obtained through Iranian and increasingly global supply networks.⁶

The Houthis have demonstrated an extraordinary willingness to use these capabilities recklessly. In 2023, they became the first actor in history to employ anti-ship ballistic missiles in combat. Their first

² Saba News Agency (Houthi-run outlet), “[Leader of the Revolution: The Yemeni People Are at the Forefront of the Islamic Peoples in Commemorating the Prophet's Birthday](#)” [Arabic; author's translation], August 25, 2026.

³ Nadwa Al-Dawsari, “[Houthi Governance: An Examination of Engagement with Tribes](#),” in *The Rule is for None but Allah: Islamist Approaches to Governance* (Oxford University Press, 2023).

⁴ Nadwa Al-Dawsari and Arman Mahmoudian, “[Iran's New Grand Design: The Next Evolution of the Axis of Resistance](#),” Middle East Institute, July 26, 2026.

⁵ Peter Salisbury, Henry Thompson, and Veena Ali-Khan, “[From Smugglers to Supply Chains: How Yemen's Houthi Movement Became a Global Threat](#),” The Century Foundation, February 9, 2026.

⁶ [Ibid](#)

targets were not warships, but commercial vessels transiting one of the world's most important maritime corridors.⁷

Repression at Home, Mobilization for War

Long before the Houthis threatened American forces and international shipping, Yemenis experienced what Houthi rule meant in practice.

After six rounds of war against the Yemeni government between 2004 and 2010, the Houthis participated in the political transition that followed Yemen's 2011 peaceful uprising. But even as they participated in the political process, they continued to expand militarily beyond their stronghold in Saada. In 2014, they seized Sana'a, overthrew the government, and plunged the country into civil war. The seizure of Sana'a fundamentally changed the trajectory of the Houthis. They gained access to state institutions, military arsenals, financial resources, infrastructure, and a much larger population. Over the following decade, they systematically consolidated that control and subordinated state institutions as well as the local population to their rule.

The system they built is deeply repressive. The Houthis operate multiple intelligence and security apparatuses to monitor the population and suppress dissent. They have severely restricted political and civic freedoms and persecuted women, religious minorities, journalists, activists, and perceived opponents. Thousands of Yemenis have passed through Houthi prisons, where torture and ill-treatment are widespread. Houthi repression extended to the international community. The Houthis have detained scores of humanitarian workers, including 73 UN employees,⁸ as well as around 20 Yemeni employees of the U.S. Embassy, on false accusations of espionage.⁹

Repression, however, is only one part of the system the Houthis have built. The other is mass ideological and military mobilization. The Houthi Ministry of Defense operates dedicated structures from the national to the local level to recruit and indoctrinate the population.

Children are central to this project. Under the slogan "Learning and Jihad," the Houthis have rewritten school curricula and used schools and summer camps to systematically indoctrinate children in Houthi ideology and expose them to military training. Children are taught to glorify jihad and martyrdom and to view the United States and its allies as enemies. The United Nations has documented children as young as seven being subjected to ideological indoctrination and older children receiving military training.¹⁰ This is not simply about recruiting fighters for today's wars. It is about shaping a generation of Yemenis around an anti-American worldview that did not exist before in Yemeni society.

How International Policy Enabled Houthi Consolidation

For much of the past decade, U.S. policy toward Yemen became increasingly driven by concerns over the humanitarian consequences of the war. The United States initially supported the Saudi-led coalition backing the Yemeni government, but reduced aspects of that support as concerns over civilian casualties and the humanitarian crisis grew. The desire to reduce civilian suffering was understandable and necessary. But humanitarian considerations were too often treated in isolation from the political and military dynamics driving the conflict—and from the nature of the Houthis themselves.

The United States increasingly prioritized de-escalation and negotiations. But there was a fundamental problem: Washington had significant leverage over the Yemeni government and its regional partners, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, but very little leverage over the Houthis. U.S.

⁷ Patty Nieberg, "[USS Carney Had 'Seconds' to Respond to Anti-Ship Ballistic Missiles](#)," Task & Purpose, May 20, 2024.

⁸ "[UN Chief Calls for Immediate Release of 118 Detained UN Staff](#)," UN News, March 25, 2026.

⁹ "[Houthis Said to Detain Yemeni Staff for UN, US Organizations](#)," Reuters, June 7, 2024.

¹⁰ UN Human Rights Council, "[Situation of Human Rights in Yemen, Including Violations and Abuses Since September 2014: Report of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts](#)," 2019.

pressure was therefore far more effective at restraining its partners than at compelling reciprocal Houthi restraint. A fundamental flaw in this approach was the assumption that concessions to the Houthis would encourage reciprocal concessions and moderation. Time and again, the opposite happened. The Houthis used periods of de-escalation to consolidate territorial control, recruit fighters, and build their capabilities.

The 2018 Stockholm Agreement is perhaps the clearest example. When Yemeni government-backed forces advanced toward Hodeidah, the United States used its leverage with Saudi Arabia and the UAE to help halt the offensive amid legitimate humanitarian concerns. The resulting agreement called for a ceasefire and the redeployment of forces from Hodeidah and its ports. The military pressure stopped. The Houthis failed to implement the agreement. They retained control of Hodeidah and its ports and subsequently made significant military gains elsewhere.

The result was an imbalance the Houthis repeatedly exploited. An agreement intended to facilitate peace preserved one of their most important strategic assets on the Red Sea: the port of Hodeidah. Many Yemenis, myself included, warned at the time that allowing the Houthis to retain control of Hodeidah would eventually enable them to threaten international shipping and regional security. Those warnings were largely dismissed.

Despite the Houthis' failure to implement key provisions of the Stockholm Agreement, international policy continued to prioritize de-escalation. The 2022 UN-brokered truce brought a significant reduction in fighting. But the absence of fighting was misleading. The Houthis continued to strengthen their forces and expand their missile, drone, and maritime capabilities. Rather than move seriously toward a political settlement, they attacked Yemeni government oil-export ports, depriving the government of roughly 70 percent of its revenues and worsening the humanitarian crisis.¹¹ The following year, they turned those growing capabilities against international shipping in the Red Sea. Time did not moderate the Houthis. It allowed them to become stronger.

U.S. Military Pressure Has Imposed Costs, But It Has Not Eliminated the Threat

Beginning in 2024, the United States launched repeated strikes against Houthi military targets. The campaign intensified significantly in 2025 with Operation Rough Rider, which struck more than 1,000 targets, including command-and-control facilities, air defenses, weapons-manufacturing facilities, missiles, drones, and storage sites. CENTCOM reported a 69 percent decline in Houthi ballistic missile launches and a 55 percent decline in one-way drone attacks.¹² These strikes disrupted Houthi operations and degraded their military capabilities. But they did not eliminate the threat. Sustained airstrikes also carry significant costs and risks.

First, military pressure has not fundamentally deterred the Houthis. Operation Rough Rider ended in May 2025 following an Oman-brokered ceasefire between the United States and the Houthis. Two months later, the Houthis sank two commercial vessels, the *Magic Seas* and *Eternity C*, in the Red Sea, killing four seafarers and taking another 11 as hostages.¹³

Second, the cost equation heavily favors the Houthis. Relatively inexpensive Houthi drones and missiles require the United States to maintain costly naval deployments and expend far more expensive munitions and interceptors. Sustaining that exchange risks drawing the United States into a prolonged war of attrition on Houthi terms.

Third, airstrikes carry the risk of civilian casualties. A Pentagon review found that three U.S. strikes during the 2025 campaign killed 153 civilians and wounded 243.¹⁴ Beyond the human cost,

¹¹ "Economy of Yemen," accessed August 28, 2026, [GlobalTenders, "Economy of Yemen"](#)

¹² Chris Gordon, ["US Has Struck Over 1,000 Houthi Targets in Renewed Campaign,"](#) Air & Space Forces Magazine, April 30, 2025.

¹³ Jon Gambrell, ["Yemen's Houthis Release Mariners Held Since July Ship Attack,"](#) Associated Press, December 4, 2025.

¹⁴ ["Pentagon Tells Congress US Military Airstrikes in Yemen Resulted in 153 Civilians Killed,"](#) The Hill, August 11, 2026.

civilian casualties reinforce the Houthi narrative that they are defending Yemen against the United States, helping them mobilize supporters and justify continued confrontation.

The United States has also employed other tools to constrain the Houthis, including the Foreign Terrorist Organization designation and sanctions targeting Houthi leaders, financing, weapons procurement, and smuggling networks. These are important and necessary measures. But the Houthis have learned to adapt to pressure. They shift routes, suppliers, intermediaries, and methods of financing and procurement when individual networks are exposed or disrupted. The result is an increasingly decentralized and resilient system that is difficult to dismantle through sanctions, interdictions, or airstrikes alone.

The Houthis Are Emerging as a Hub for Regional Threat Networks

Even as the United States has sought to constrain the Houthis, the group has continued to expand beyond Yemen. One reason the Houthis have been able to regenerate and expand their capabilities is the extensive smuggling and supply network they have built. They increasingly assemble and manufacture weapons inside Yemen using components and raw materials obtained through diffuse supply chains stretching across the Red Sea, the Horn of Africa, the Indian Ocean, and beyond. These networks are deliberately decentralized, allowing the Houthis to adapt when individual routes or shipments are disrupted and continue replenishing their arsenal.¹⁵

For the past three years, much of my research has focused on Houthi activities in the Horn of Africa. What I have found should concern U.S. policymakers. The Houthis are building more than supply networks. They are building human networks across the Horn of Africa. They are increasingly entrenching themselves across the region, building networks among local communities and actors, often exploiting marginalized populations along major smuggling routes and political fault lines. They have recruited African migrants and local actors as smugglers, facilitators, intelligence assets, and fighters.¹⁶

More concerning is the Houthis' growing collaboration with al-Qaeda affiliates on both sides of the Gulf of Aden: al-Shabaab in Somalia and AQAP in Yemen. Hundreds of al-Shabaab members have received military and ideological training in Houthi-controlled Yemen, and Houthi military engineers regularly travel to al-Shabaab-controlled territory in Somalia to provide technical training, including in drone adaptation and weapon maintenance.¹⁷ The UN Panel of Experts reports that the Houthis have provided both al-Shabaab and AQAP with sophisticated weapons, including drones, as well as technical expertise and training. AQAP's annual use of drones has increased by more than 300 percent since it conducted its first recorded drone attack in 2023.¹⁸ The Houthis have also discussed with both groups cooperation in targeting international shipping.¹⁹ In Yemen, they have agreed with AQAP to share intelligence, provide safe haven to each other's members, and coordinate attacks against Yemeni government forces.²⁰ The relationship is evolving rapidly. A 2025 UN Panel of Experts report described

¹⁵ Peter Salisbury, Henry Thompson, and Veena Ali-Khan, "From Smugglers to Supply Chains: How Yemen's Houthi Movement Became a Global Threat," The Century Foundation, February 9, 2026.

¹⁶ Peter Salisbury, Nadwa Al-Dawsari, and Jay Bahadur, "[From Spoke to Hub: The Houthis in Africa](#)," The Century Foundation, August 24, 2026.

¹⁷ UN Panel of Experts on Yemen, report to the UN Security Council, [S/2025/650, October 15, 2025](#); Ezat Wagdi Ba Awaidhan, "[Houthis Linked to Al-Shabaab Training and Smuggling Network](#)," May 13, 2026.

¹⁸ ACLED, "[Al-Qaeda's 'New Normal' in Yemen: Strategic Continuity Despite a Leadership Change](#)," February 12, 2026.

¹⁹ UN Security Council, [Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2140 \(2014\), S/2024/731, October 11, 2024](#); Anbaa Foundation, "[The Delicate Thread Connecting al-Shabaab and the Houthis](#)," February 27, 2026.

²⁰ UN Security Council, [Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2140 \(2014\), S/2024/731, October 11, 2024](#).

the Houthis as the main suppliers and as exercising control over smuggling activities with al-Shabaab and AQAP.²¹

These networks are also converging at sea. Somali piracy resurged after years of relative inactivity following the start of Houthi Red Sea attacks in late 2023. This is not a coincidence. UN reporting indicates that the Houthis and al-Shabaab discussed using piracy to disrupt international shipping in the Gulf of Aden and off Somalia.²²

This expansion has implications far beyond the Horn of Africa. As the Houthis build networks and transfer capabilities beyond Yemen, they are becoming increasingly valuable to Iran's regional strategy. The recent U.S.-Iran conflict demonstrated why. With Hezbollah significantly weakened, the Assad regime gone, and Iraqi militias under growing military pressure, the Houthis have emerged as Iran's most capable and resilient regional ally. Senior Iranian officials have described an emerging security architecture stretching from the Strait of Hormuz to Bab al-Mandab and from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea. IRGC-Quds Force commander Esmail Qaani recently described it as a new "security belt" for the Axis of Resistance.²³

The Houthis are central to that strategy. Yemen offers Tehran strategic depth beyond Iran's borders and a platform from which to project power into the Red Sea and Horn of Africa. In July, Iran and the Houthis directly challenged the Yemeni government by operating two flights by U.S.-sanctioned Mahan Air into Houthi-controlled Yemen. One of the flights transported IRGC commanders, military advisers, and missile and drone parts.²⁴ A week later, the Houthis announced a naval blockade against Saudi Arabia, a key U.S. ally, threatening to open another front in the U.S.-Iran conflict through the Bab al-Mandab.

Yet, the Houthis should not be understood simply as an extension of Iranian power. Iran has been critical to their rise, and their strategic interests converge. But the Houthis have developed ambitions, capabilities, and regional networks of their own, and they see themselves as a regional power in their own right. Their relationships are also expanding beyond Iran and armed groups.

The Houthis are deepening ties with other U.S. adversaries, particularly Russia and China. Both countries have provided the Houthis with diplomatic cover at the United Nations.²⁵ Russia has also reportedly provided targeting data that helped the Houthis attack Western ships in the Red Sea.²⁶ The relationship is expanding into economic and human networks. Russian petroleum products have been transferred ship-to-ship into a Houthi-controlled tanker off the Hodeidah coast and delivered to the Houthi-controlled port of Ras Isa.²⁷ Hundreds of Yemenis were also recruited through a Houthi-linked company and sent to fight for Russia in Ukraine.²⁸

²¹ UN Panel of Experts on Yemen, [report to the UN Security Council, S/2025/650, October 17, 2025](#).

²² UN Security Council, [Monitoring Team Report on ISIL \(Da'esh\), Al-Qaida and Associated Groups](#), February 6, 2025.

²³ Nadwa Al-Dawsari and Arman Mahmoudian, ["Iran's New Grand Design: The Next Evolution of the Axis of Resistance,"](#) Middle East Institute, July 26, 2026.

²⁴ Maggie Michael and Parisa Hafezi, ["Iran Flew IRGC Commanders, Missile Gear to Yemen's Houthis, Sources Say,"](#) Reuters, July 23, 2026.

²⁵ Ari Heistein and Daniel Rakov, ["Russian Roulette on the Red Sea,"](#) War on the Rocks, October 24, 2024; Mohammad Salami, ["China Sends Houthis Dual-Use Technology to Boost Influence and Undercut the US,"](#) Stimson Center, August 12, 2025.

²⁶ Benoit Faucon and Thomas Grove, ["Russia Provided Targeting Data for Houthi Assault on Global Shipping,"](#) The Wall Street Journal, October 24, 2024.

²⁷ Tomar Raanan and Richard Meade, ["Exclusive: How a UN-Purchased Tanker Became a Houthi Floating Storage Facility for Russian Oil,"](#) Lloyd's List, July 7, 2025.

²⁸ Charles Clover, Andrew England, and Christopher Miller, ["Russia Recruits Yemeni Mercenaries to Fight in Ukraine,"](#) Financial Times, November 24, 2024.

The Houthis' connections to China are also expanding. In March 2024, the Houthis reportedly promised Chinese and Russian vessels safe passage through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.²⁹ According to U.S. officials, a Chinese satellite company with ties to the Chinese military has provided satellite imagery to support Houthi attacks against U.S. warships and international shipping in the Red Sea. The company continued providing this support even after the United States raised the issue with Beijing.³⁰

U.S. Treasury sanctions further demonstrate the scale of these networks, documenting Houthi procurement of weapons and sensitive goods from Russia and China.³¹ The Qasef-2K drone illustrates the extent of these supply chains: interdiction data show that 60 percent of the components and materials used to build it come from China, compared with around 15 percent from Iran.³²

These relationships demonstrate how the Houthis are increasingly positioning themselves within a much broader network of actors seeking to challenge U.S. interests and influence in the region.

The strategic significance of these developments extends beyond Yemen itself. Through their expanding presence across the Red Sea and Horn of Africa, the Houthis are extending their reach into some of the world's most strategically important waterways. More importantly, they are evolving into a hub where networks that were once largely separate are beginning to converge—from Iran and the Axis of Resistance to al-Qaeda affiliates, smugglers and criminal networks, and other U.S. adversaries. Through these connections, weapons, expertise, personnel, and resources can move across networks that increasingly reinforce one another.

What brings many of these actors together is a desire to drive the United States out of the region, undermine U.S. allies, weaken existing nation-states, and exploit the illicit economies that flourish in conflict and instability. As these networks become more interconnected, they create an increasingly dangerous ecosystem of armed groups, terrorist organizations, smugglers, and criminal networks operating around some of the world's most strategically important waterways. Over time, the convergence of these actors could pose a broader challenge not only to U.S. personnel and interests, but to the rules-based international order itself.

This distinction matters for U.S. policy. The Houthi threat cannot be addressed simply through negotiations with Iran, nor can it be contained indefinitely through diplomacy and airstrikes. The Houthis have become a threat in their own right, rooted in their territorial control of Yemen and increasingly connected to networks far beyond it. This is the threat we should be preparing for—not simply the Houthis we are confronting today.

The Way Forward: Empower the Yemeni Government

The experience of the past decade points to a basic conclusion: the United States cannot bomb its way out of the Houthi problem, and diplomacy without leverage will not solve it either. Airstrikes, sanctions, interdictions, and diplomacy all have important roles to play. But none can substitute for a legitimate Yemeni state capable of exercising authority over its own territory.

The United States needs to build meaningful leverage over the Houthis. The most important source of that leverage is territory. The Houthis have been able to consolidate their power and build increasingly sophisticated military capabilities because they control significant territory, a large population, ports, infrastructure, and resources. That territorial base allows them to recruit, generate

²⁹ Sam Dagher and Mohammed Hatem, [“China, Russia Reach Agreement With Yemen’s Houthis on Red Sea Ships,”](#) *Bloomberg*, March 21, 2024.

³⁰ [“US Says Chinese Satellite Firm Is Supporting Houthi Attacks on US Interests,”](#) Reuters, April 17, 2025.

³¹ See for example U.S. Department of the Treasury, [“Treasury Sanctions Houthi Illicit Revenue and Procurement Networks,”](#) September 11, 2025; U.S. Department of the Treasury, [“Treasury Targets Houthi Leaders Involved in Smuggling and Procuring Weapons,”](#) March 5, 2025.

³² Peter Salisbury, [“Beyond the Axis,”](#) The Century Foundation, June 21, 2026.

revenue, manufacture and store weapons, control smuggling routes, and regenerate capabilities degraded by airstrikes and sanctions.

The only sustainable way to address the Houthi threat is therefore to empower Yemenis to retake territory from the Houthis. This does not require U.S. boots on the ground. Direct U.S. ground involvement would be unnecessary and counterproductive. It does, however, require U.S. leadership in coordination with its regional allies, particularly Saudi Arabia. The United States should provide the Yemeni government with the political backing, military capabilities, intelligence, training, and institutional support necessary to restore state authority and progressively reduce the Houthis' ability to operate.

U.S. and regional support should focus on capabilities the Yemeni government needs to regain and hold territory: intelligence and surveillance, command and control, counter-drone and air defense capabilities, maritime security and counter-smuggling operations, training and equipment for Yemeni forces. Assistance should be tied to continued improvements in unified command, accountability, and governance.

This should complement—not replace—the tools the United States is already using. The United States should maintain the Houthi FTO designation and financial sanctions, intensify efforts to disrupt Houthi financing and procurement networks, interdict weapons and dual-use components, and continue using U.S. air and naval power to protect international shipping and degrade Houthi military capabilities. But these tools should serve a broader strategy aimed at weakening the Houthis' territorial and economic base and strengthening the Yemeni state.

As long as the Houthis control significant territory and millions of Yemenis, they will retain the ability to regenerate capabilities destroyed by airstrikes or disrupted by sanctions and interdictions. The objective cannot simply be to destroy the next missile or intercept the next drone. It must be to reduce the territorial, economic, and military base that allows the Houthis to keep producing them.

Any renewed military confrontation would carry serious humanitarian risks, and those risks must be mitigated. But the alternative is not peace. The humanitarian situation in Yemen has continued to deteriorate under a status quo in which the Houthis divert resources toward military mobilization and weapons development, attack the Yemeni government's economic infrastructure, obstruct humanitarian operations, and expand illicit networks across the region.

A policy designed only to prevent renewed fighting can therefore preserve the very conditions that perpetuate Yemen's humanitarian crisis. Pressure on the Houthis must be accompanied by measures to protect civilians, preserve humanitarian access, and strengthen governance and services in government-controlled areas. Humanitarian considerations cannot be separated from the political and security conditions producing the humanitarian crisis. Ultimately, a more secure Yemen governed by a legitimate state is essential to diminishing the Houthi threat to Yemen, the region, and the United States.

Thank you, Chairman Lawler, Ranking Member Sherman, and Members of the Subcommittee, for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.