

Deadly fighting erupts again in Yemen's Hodeida

Author:

Sat, 2018-12-01 19:31

DUBAI, ADEN: Renewed violence in Yemen's vital port city of Hodeida has left 10 fighters dead, despite a UN push for peace talks, an official and medical sources told AFP on Saturday.

An official with pro-government forces said fighting erupted in the east and south of the Red Sea city on Friday.

Intermittent clashes continued on Saturday, Hodeida residents told AFP by phone.

The violence follows a visit to the city last month by UN envoy Martin Griffiths to press for talks aimed at ending the war.

The Hodeida port is held by the Houthis and serves as the entry point for nearly all of the country's imports and humanitarian aid.

UN aid chief Mark Lowcock warned on Saturday that the country was "on the brink of a major catastrophe." His comments came after deadly clashes in the Red Sea port city of Hodeida, vital for the flow of humanitarian aid.

Yemen's internationally recognized government forces launched an assault to take Hodeida in June, but its forces had largely suspended the offensive amid intense diplomatic efforts.

Sporadic clashes have however continued since a fragile truce began on Nov. 13.

Medical sources on Saturday confirmed the bodies of eight militants had been transferred to hospitals. Two fighters with pro-government forces were also killed, according to a medical source at a hospital in an area held by the loyalists.

In a further sign of renewed tensions, Saudi Arabia said the Houthis launched a "military projectile" which hit a house in the Kingdom.

Two people were injured in the strike in Samtah governorate, Saudi state news agency SPA reported. It is the first confirmation by Riyadh of such a rocket attack since September.

The escalation comes just days ahead of proposed peace talks hosted by Sweden, which have been backed by both the coalition and militants.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, however, has played down the early December schedule and said he hoped talks would start "this year."

“But, as you know, there have been some setbacks,” he said on Thursday. Riyadh has expressed concern over Houthi rocket attacks on Saudi territory, while the militants are seeking assurances their delegation will be able to safely leave and return to Yemen.

Previous talks planned for September in Geneva failed to get underway as the Houthi delegation never left the Yemeni capital Sanaa, arguing that the UN could not guarantee their safe return.

If conditions are met, all sides have in principle agreed to attend the talks in Sweden, including the government of Yemen’s internationally recognized President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi.



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Houthis to discuss ‘handing over Hodeidah’ to the UNUN ready to play role in Yemen’s Hodeidah port

[1991 Gulf War looms large over Bush’s](#)

Mideast legacy

Author:

By HUSSAIN AL-QATARI and JON GAMBRELL | AP

ID:

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Sat, 2018-12-01 (All day)

AL-JAHRA, Kuwait: On the outskirts of Kuwait City, the love Kuwaitis have for former US President George H.W. Bush could be seen in 2016 on a billboard one Bedouin family put up to announce their son's wedding.

That son being Bush Al-Widhan, born in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War that saw US-led forces expel the occupying Iraqi troops of dictator Saddam Hussein.

"He was a real man, a lion," said Mubarak Al-Widhan, the father of the Kuwaiti Bush, of the American president. "He stood for our right for freedom, and he gave us back our country."

With Bush's death, his legacy across the Middle East takes root in that 100-hour ground war that routed Iraqi forces. That war gave birth to the network of military bases America now operates across the Arabian Gulf supporting troops in Afghanistan and forces fighting against Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

However, Bush ultimately would leave the Shiite and Kurdish insurgents he urged to rise up against Saddam in 1991 to face the dictator's wrath alone, leading to thousands of deaths. That mixed picture only extends to the presidency of his son, George W. Bush, who ordered the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq that overthrew Saddam, whom he once famously described as "the guy who tried to kill my dad one time."

"I feel tension in the stomach and in the neck ... but I also feel a certain calmness when we talk about these matters," the elder Bush once said about the 1991 Gulf War, according to biographer Jon Meacham. "I know I am doing the right thing."

Iraq invaded Kuwait on Aug. 2, 1990, angry that the tiny neighbor and the United Arab Emirates had ignored OPEC quotas, which Saddam claimed cost his nation \$14 billion. Saddam also accused Kuwait of stealing \$2.4 billion by pumping crude from a disputed oil field and demanded that Kuwait write off an estimated \$15 billion of debt that Iraq had accumulated during its 1980s war with Iran.

A World War II fighter pilot shot down fighting against the Japanese, Bush came to view Saddam as similar to Adolf Hitler, a madman who seized neighboring Kuwait and could plunge the world into conflict if he continued into Saudi Arabia. With Vietnam still a potent memory, Bush rallied together a coalition of nations to back the US as it deployed troops to the region and began bombing runs. He talked Israel out of retaliating for Iraqi Scud missiles attacks for fear of alienating Arab allies.

"This will not stand. This will not stand, this aggression against Kuwait," Bush famously warned.

And it didn't.

On Feb. 24, 1991, US troops and their allies stormed into Kuwait. It ended

100 hours later. America suffered only 148 combat deaths during the whole campaign, while over 20,000 Iraqi soldiers were killed.

In the aftermath of the campaign, some called for Bush to continue into Iraq and topple Saddam. Bush in speeches encouraged Iraqis to rise up against the dictator, while privately hoping someone within his own military would depose him.

"To occupy Iraq would shatter our coalition, turning the whole Arab world against us, and make a broken tyrant into a latter-day Arab hero," Bush later said. "It would have taken us way beyond the imprimatur of international law, ... assigning young soldiers to a fruitless hunt for a securely entrenched dictator and condemning them to fight in what would be an unwinnable urban guerrilla war."

That hesitation allowed Saddam to regain the upper hand against insurgents and caused a refugee crisis in Iraq's northern Kurdish region. The dictator tauntingly installed a tile mosaic of a scowling likeness of the president at the door of Baghdad's Al-Rashid Hotel, which forced entering foreign dignitaries to often step on his face just above its "Bush is criminal" caption.

Even Iran, which hated Saddam for starting their 1980s war, remained suspicious of Bush despite his pledge of "good will begets good will." Iran leaned on Lebanon's Shiite militants to help win the release American hostages like Terry Anderson of The Associated Press, but relations went no further. One of Bush's last acts as president, pardoning former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and others for their role in the Iran-Contra scandal, an offshoot of that hostage crisis.

Still, Bush's decisions in the 1991 war and its aftermath echo even now. The Kurdish crisis gave birth to the US-imposed no-fly zone in northern Iraq that allowed the Kurds to flourish into the semi-autonomous region now demanding independence. Defense agreements with Gulf nations grew into a series of major military installations across the region.

His son would launch the 2003 invasion of Iraq after 9/11 and become so hated in the Arab world an Iraq journalist would even throw a shoe at him during a news conference. But the elder Bush remained beloved, perhaps nowhere more than Kuwait, where Americans even today can get hugged while walking down the street. A group of Kuwaiti officials including the country's National Assembly speaker met with the former president in October 2017 to wish him well.

The former president's Kuwaiti namesake Bush Al-Widhan ended up working in the country's National Guard. His name fascinated others.

"I went with my father to Cleveland, Ohio ... and the passport control clerk asked me about the name," Al-Widhan recounted. "I couldn't tell him the story. My English is bad. I said: 'George Bush, George Bush. Kuwait war.' Everyone thought it was a great name."



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Gulf states offer condolences over death of former US President George H.W. Bush
Former US President George H. W. Bush dies at age 94

[Gulf states offer condolences over death of former US President George H.W. Bush](#)

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Sat, 2018-12-01 14:29

LONDON: Gulf Arab states have offered their condolences over the death of former President George H.W. Bush.

Bush's death at the age of 94 takes on greater importance in the region over his actions in the 1991 Gulf War that saw Iraq expelled from Kuwait.

Leaders in the United Arab Emirates on Saturday offered condolences to both President Donald Trump and former President George W. Bush for the elder Bush's death.

Dubai's ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who also is the UAE's prime minister and vice president, tweeted that Emiratis remember Bush as "a firm ally and friend."

Our condolences to the Bush family and to the American people on the passing of George H.W. Bush, who we remember as a firm ally and friend..

– HH Sheikh Mohammed (@HHSkhMohd) [December 1, 2018](#)

Oman's Sultan Qaboos bin Said similarly offered condolences.

Kuwait's ruling Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said that Bush tried to "create a new international order based on justice and equality among nations," and that his support "will remain in Kuwait's collective memory and will not be forgotten."

Memorable Quotes

George H. W. Bush



In a letter to US President Donald Trump, Al Sabah praised Bush's "historic and courageous stance... and his rejection of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait from the early hours".

"On behalf of the Kuwaiti government and people, I express my deepest condolences and utmost sympathy."

Former US president George H.W. Bush, who guided America through the end of the Cold War and launched the international campaign to drive Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein's forces from Kuwait, died Friday at his home in Houston.

Tributes quickly poured in for the 41st US president – a decorated World War II pilot, skilled diplomat and onetime CIA chief who also saw his son George follow in his footsteps to the Oval Office.

Bush's passing comes just months after the death in April of his wife Barbara – his "most beloved woman in the world" – to whom he was married for 73 years.

"Jeb, Neil, Marvin, Doro and I are saddened to announce that after 94 remarkable years, our dear Dad has died," former president George W. Bush said in a statement.

Bush is survived by his five living children -a sixth child, daughter Robin, died of leukemia before her fourth birthday – and 17 grandchildren.

He died "at home in Houston surrounded by family and close friends," family spokesman Jim McGrath told AFP.

Bush suffered from Parkinson's disease and had used a wheelchair for several years. He had been in and out of hospital in recent months.

Funeral arrangements will be announced in due course, McGrath said.

The former president, a Republican, is expected to lie in state in the US Capitol and then be buried at his presidential library in Texas, where students held a candlelight vigil early Saturday, local media reported.



Memorable Quotes

George H. W. Bush



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Former US President George H. W. Bush dies at age 94 George W. Bush to receive award from Lincoln foundation

[Family says Egypt arrested Brit for military chopper video](#)

Author:

By MENNA ZAKI | AP

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Fri, 2018-11-30 (All day)

CAIRO: Egyptian authorities arrested a 19-year-old British tourist over a video he filmed on his cellphone that showed a military helicopter in the background, his family said on Friday.

Libyan-British Muhammed Fathi AbulKasem's arrest took place shortly after he arrived in Egypt's coastal city of Alexandria on Nov. 21 from neighboring Libya, his cousin Shareen Nawaz said. Egypt's Foreign Ministry couldn't immediately be reached for comment. The UK's Foreign Office confirmed the arrest of a Briton in Alexandria, but didn't elaborate.

"We didn't hear from him until 12 hours later," Nawaz said. "He basically told us he is held on suspicion of collecting information against the military." He filmed the video while his flight was landing, capturing a military helicopter flying by, she added.

Speaking from Manchester in the UK, Nawaz told The Associated Press that authorities checked her cousin's phone at the airport after being cautioned by his hotel's staff that his booking appeared "suspicious," without elaborating.

According to Nawaz, Abulkasem faced a court three times over the past week and that a lawyer was assigned to his case but later quit. His mother, Amaal Rafiq, confirmed his arrest in a Facebook post.

Taking unauthorized photographs or footage of or near military facilities, equipment or personnel is strictly prohibited in Egypt.

"We all have one of those landing videos on our phones," Nawaz said. "They shouldn't have military helicopters in public spaces if this is what will happen."



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[US-backed forces: Daesh security leader seized in Syria](#)

Author:

AFP

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Fri, 2018-11-30 20:31

BEIRUT: US-backed forces said Friday they had captured a leader of Daesh in eastern Syria where the Kurdish-led fighters have been battling the extremists.

A statement by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) identified the suspect as Osama Oweid Saleh and described him as "one of the most dangerous terrorists

of the Daesh group.”

But Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor, disputed the claim.

Abdel Rahman said Saleh was merely “a former local security official” in the eastern Deir Ezzor province.

In its statement the SDF said that Saleh “was a security official for the terrorists in Deir Ezzor and took an active part in planning and implementing more than 40 terrorist operations” for the extremist group.

It also said that he was “a security official” in other parts of Syria for Daesh, including in the former extremist bastion of Raqqa.

Saleh, it said, was ambushed by SDF fighters and captured on November 22 in the Deir Ezzor countryside.

Abdel Rahman told AFP that Saleh “could be a member of an Daesh sleeper cell.”

The SDF, an alliance of Kurdish and Arab fighters, is seeking to expel Daesh from a pocket of land in the Deir Ezzor province near the Iraq border.

The Kurdish-led forces have spearheaded the US-backed fight against Daesh in Syria.

On Monday the Observatory reported that the SDF suffered record fatalities in an assault by Daesh as holdout extremists kept up a fierce defense of their last Syrian redoubt.

It said a total of more than 200 people have been killed since around 500 Daesh fighters burst out of the fog shrouding the area in eastern Syria near the border with Iraq to launch their deadly assault last Friday.

Ninety-two of the dead were SDF fighters while at least 61 extremists and 51 civilians, mostly their relatives, also died in the violence, it said.



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Tunisia arrests 12 suspected Daesh members, dismantles cells: ministry
Daesh attacks kills 47 US-backed fighters in east Syria: monitor