

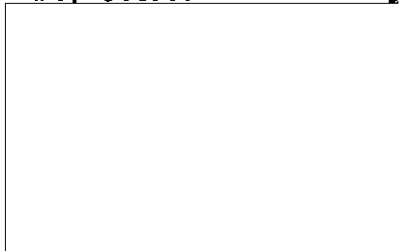


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NORTH YEMEN - USSR: Soviet Gains

[redacted]

North Yemeni President Salih's attempts to maneuver among conflicting pressures have led to increased Soviet influence in North Yemen. Frustrated with Saudi Arabia's control over the supply of US weapons, Salih last summer signed a major arms deal with the USSR. In addition, more Soviet military personnel apparently have arrived in North Yemen, and a substantial number of North Yemenis recently have gone to the USSR for military training. Although Salih is now trying to balance these moves with new overtures to Saudi Arabia--his primary source of financial support--the USSR's gains are still intact. [redacted]

Soviet equipment continues to arrive in North Yemen. Last month the Soviets delivered 10 SU-7, SU-20, or SU-22 fighter-bombers, 20 T-55 tanks, 10 BRDM-2 armored reconnaissance vehicles, some antiaircraft artillery, and approximately 50 metric tons of small arms ammunition. [redacted]

The fighter-bombers and the armored vehicles are new items for the North Yemenis. [redacted] Salih was on hand to watch part of the unloading of the first shipment of fighter-bombers on 24 February. [redacted]

The arrival of the equipment reportedly has already resulted in an increase of Soviet technicians in North Yemen. [redacted]

The latest aircraft deliveries probably will require additional technicians. Even if Salih does not agree to accept them, he is not likely to reduce significantly the number of those already present. [redacted]

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Since last November, the Saudis have tried to limit Soviet gains by proposing to Salih that they provide non-Communist technicians and advisers for the Soviet arms. They threatened to suspend their financial support [redacted]

The Saudi move, combined with Salih's own desire not to close irrevocably any option, has led him to accept provisionally the Saudi proposal. The two governments continue to view one another with deep mistrust, however, and any agreement between them probably will be tentative. [redacted]

Growing Leftist Influence

The Soviets also have benefited indirectly over the past year by the fact that leftists have replaced pro-Saudi officials and advisers in the government. [redacted]

As a result of his maneuvering, Salih risks losing control over events. While the President may be sincere in asserting that he has had to negotiate over unity with Marxist South Yemen to gain time while rebuilding his military, he probably will be faced with an agreed draft joint constitution in the next few months. [redacted]

Prospects

The Yemens take on greater importance for both super-powers following the invasion of Afghanistan and the resulting environment, with its increased potential for

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US-Soviet military confrontation in the Red Sea - Persian Gulf area. The USSR is likely to exploit and encourage Sana's leftward shift, hoping in the process to counter efforts by the US to obtain bases in the region and to promote the general erosion of Western influence on the Arabian peninsula. [redacted]

Although, in the past, Moscow has sought to discourage South Yemen from military aggression, there remains the danger that the USSR will encourage increasing subversion and limited military action by South Yemen--and the National Democratic Front it sponsors--if the negotiations between North and South Yemen fail to achieve the results Aden and Moscow want. [redacted]

A unified and Soviet-backed Yemen would be larger in population than Saudi Arabia and a potential military challenger. Riyadh would almost certainly look upon the 500,000 Yemeni workers now in Saudi Arabia as a security problem. This would heighten Saudi concern for the growing Soviet role in the region and reinforce Riyadh's sense of vulnerability and encirclement. [redacted]

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