Southern Yemeni Armed Groups

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The STC is a political organization that backs military forces and seeks to lead an independent southern Yemeni state.

The STC is part of ROYG, but it also competes with ROYG in southern Yemen.

The ROYG Military and Security Committee’s efforts to reform the security sector faces major challenges due to the STC-ROYG competition.
Legacy of Armed Conflicts and Political Allegiances

- Armed conflicts in southern Yemen drive political allegiances today.

- Geography also defines political allegiances and relationships.

- The STC is strongest in Aden, Dhaleh, and Lahij, but it is attempting to expand its role in the east.

- Personal dynamics also play a role.

Formal Structure vs. Informal Allegiances: The Interior Ministry in Southern Yemen

Each Security Department has a Counterterrorism Unit, Emergency Forces, and an unknown number of battalions.

Source: Author’s research.
Formal Structure vs. Informal Allegiances: The Defense Ministry in Southern Yemen

- **Aligned with ROYG**
- **Mixed Support for ROYG**
- **Mixed Support for the STC**
- **Aligned with the STC**
- **Uncertain**

**Defense Ministry**
- **Southern Land Forces Command**
- **4th Military Region**
  - **Southern Resistance Brigades**
    - **Brigades (6)**
  - **Support and Reinforcement Brigades**
    - **Storm Forces**
      - **Storm Battalions (6)**
    - **Thunderbolt Brigades**
      - **Thunderbolt Brigades (15)**
    - **Support and Reinforcement Brigades (6)**
  - **Southern Land Forces Brigades (4)**
  - **Bab al Mandeb Axis**
    - **Brigades (3)**
  - **Abyan Axis**
    - **Brigades (4)**
  - **Tural Baha Axis**
    - **Brigades (6)**
  - **Al Anad Axis**
    - **Brigades (4)**
  - **Dhaleh Axis**
    - **Brigades (6)**
  - **Yafa Axis**
    - **Brigades (2)**

Source: Author's research.

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate quantity of the unit.
• Today’s political allegiances and divides reflect southern Yemeni history.

• Two primary southern factions trace their roots to 1986.

• The 1994 civil war solidified political divisions in southern Yemen.
Factions in STC-Aligned Forces

Commanders denoted by an asterisk are dead as of 2022.

Source: Author’s research.
Friction Within STC-Backed Forces

- The STC is not a unitary actor, and there is friction between different STC-backed commanders.

- This friction is likely based both on geographic divides and personal allegiance.

Source: Author’s research.
Relationships Between STC-Backed and ROYG-Backed Forces

- STC-backed and ROYG-backed units have both cooperated and clashed on the ground.

- Both local and national politics have driven shifts in levels of cooperation and animosity.

Source: Author's research.
• How do allegiances among commanders continue to change after President Hadi’s removal?

• What is the ROYG Military and Security Committee able to accomplish?

• The STC’s agitation in Shabwah, Hadramawt, and Mahra is an effort to expand STC power at the expense of the rest of the PLC. How does this effort impact internal PLC dynamics? Will its effects embolden the Houthis and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula?
Facebook and Map
Defense Ministry Officers in Southern Yemen

• These are all Defense Ministry officers above the Brigade level.****

* These commanders are also commanders within the Interior Ministry.
** This commander is also commander of the 4th Thunderbolt Brigade.
*** These commanders are also governors.
**** Most commanders also command individual brigades. Sayyid, Shaye’a, and Anshly do not.

Source: Author’s research.
**These are all Interior Ministry officers above the brigade level.**

* Jalal al Rubaie is also the deputy al Hizam Security Forces commander.
** These commanders also hold commands in the Defense Ministry.
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