

Southern Yemeni Armed Groups

Brian Carter

Salafi-Jihadism Deputy Team Lead and Analyst

Critical Threats Project | American Enterprise Institute

October 26, 2022

Republic of Yemen Government (ROYG) and the Southern Transitional Council (STC)

- **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.**



STC President Aydarus al Zubaidi



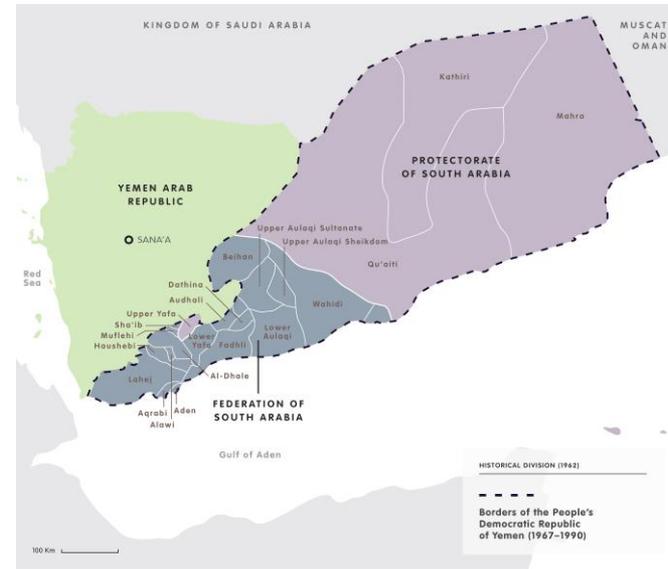
Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) President Rashad al Alimi



**Former ROYG President
Abdurabbuh Mansour Hadi**

Legacy of Armed Conflicts and Political Allegiances

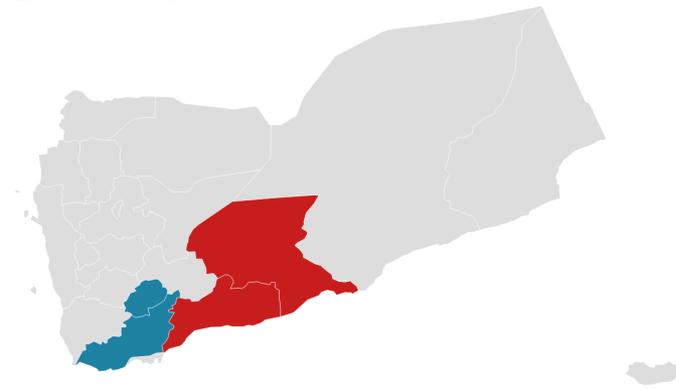
- Armed conflicts in southern Yemen drive political allegiances today.
- Geography also defines political allegiances and relationships.
- The STC is strongest in Aden, Dhaleh, and Lahij, but it is attempting to expand its role in the east.
- Personal dynamics also play a role.



Source: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2015.

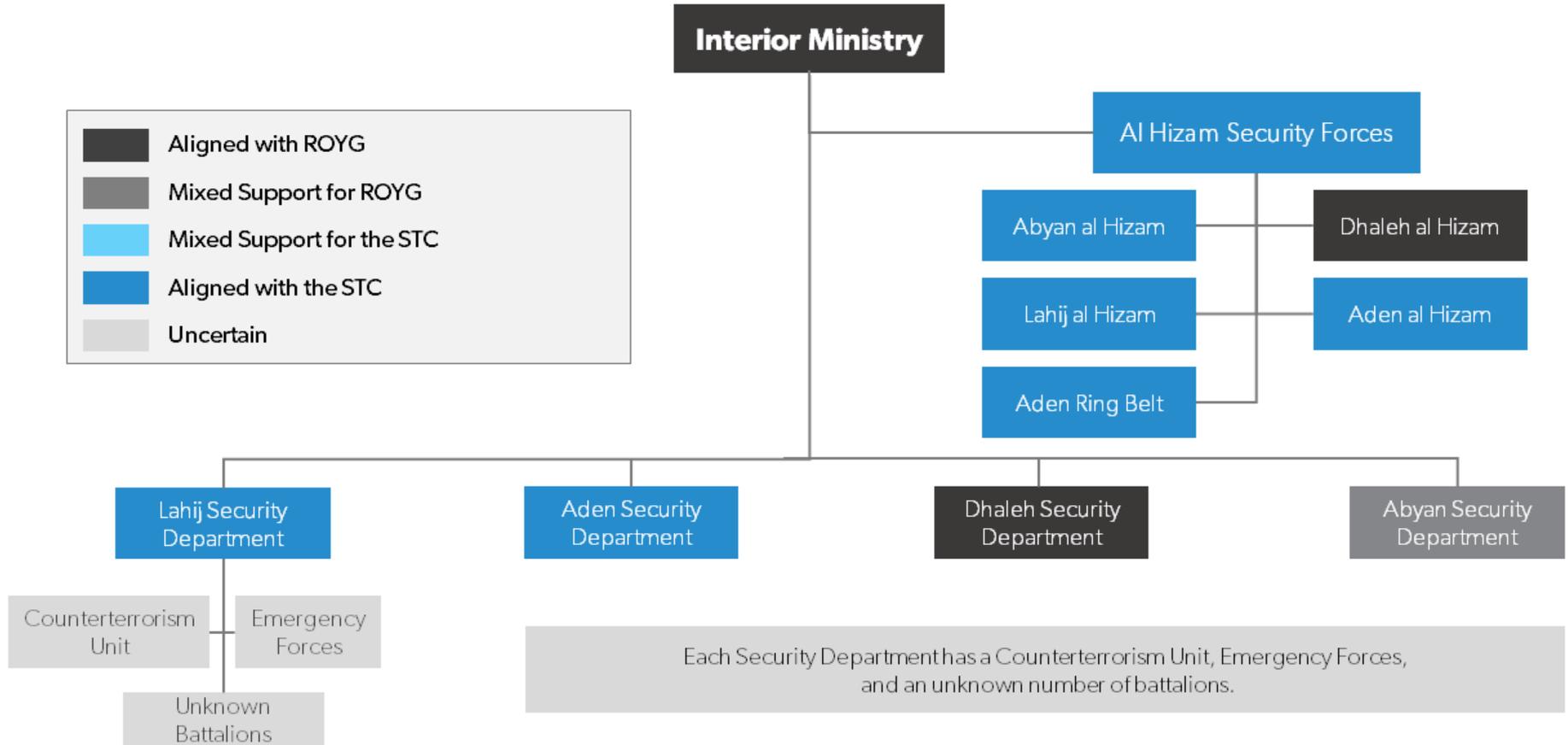
Geographic Divides in South Yemen

■ Abyan and Shabwah ■ Dhaleh and Lahij



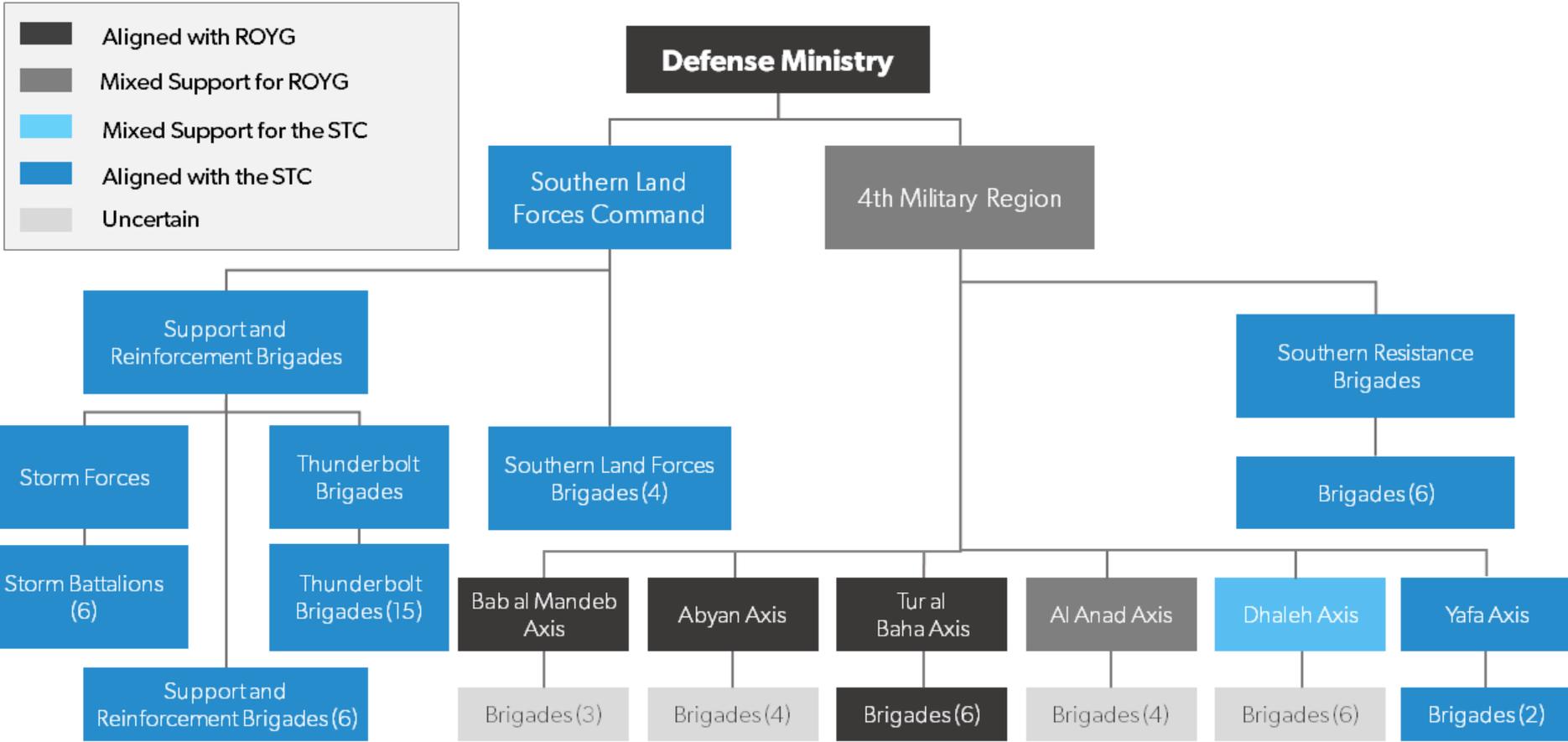
Map: Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute • Source: Author's Research • Map data: © OSM • Created with Datawrapper

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



Source: Author's research.

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



Source: Author's research.

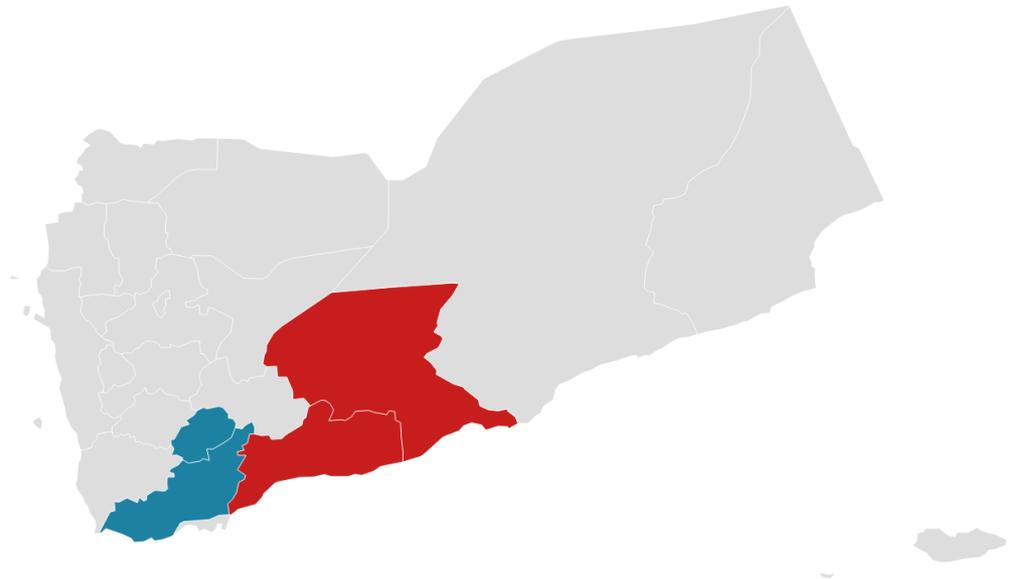
Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate quantity of the unit.

Political Division in South Yemen

- 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.

Geographic Divides in South Yemen

■ Abyan and Shabwah ■ Dhaleh and Lahij

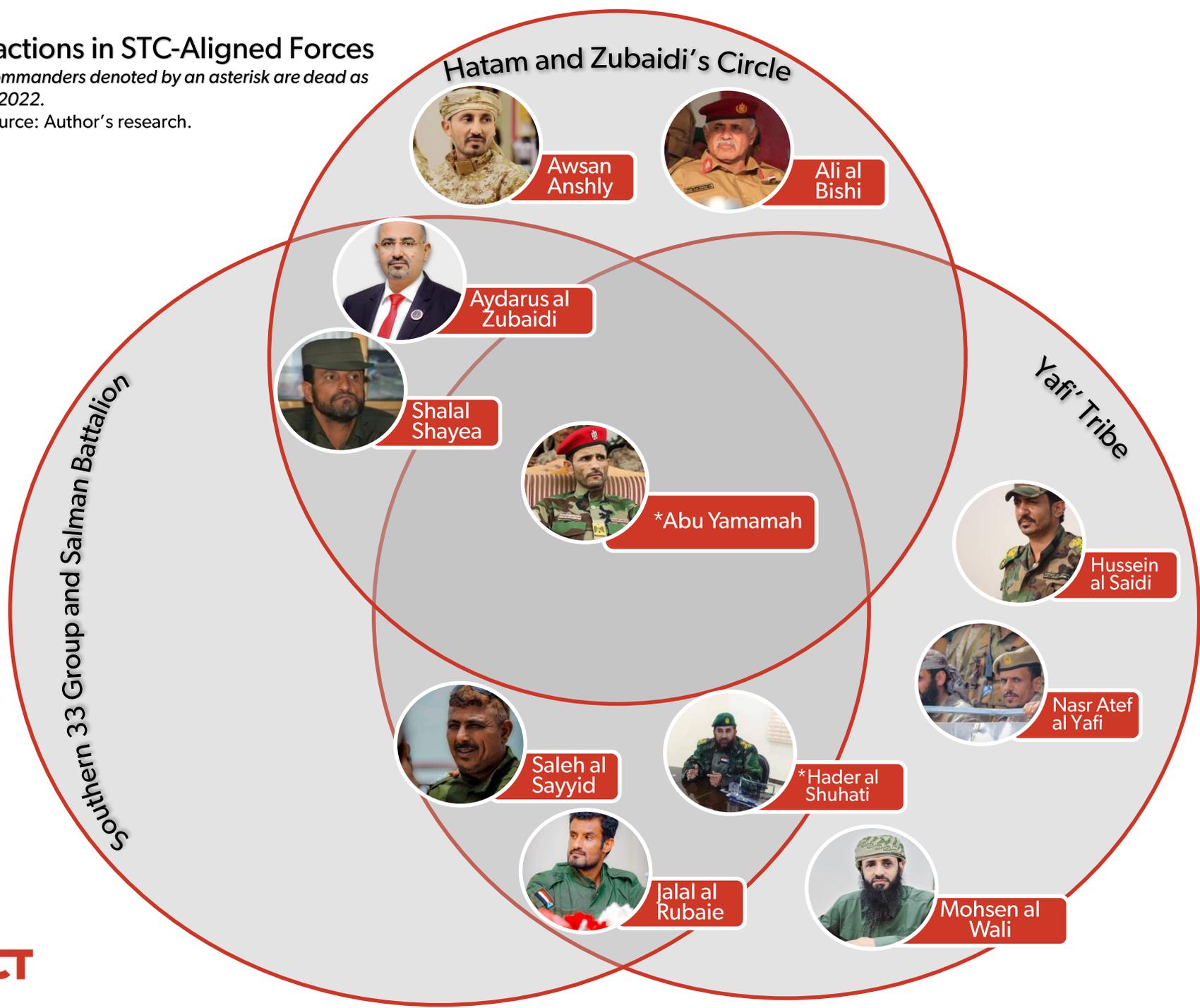


Map: Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute • Source: Author's Research • Map data: © OSM • Created with Datawrapper

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.



Al Hizam Commander and
Former Support and
Reinforcement Brigades (SRB)
Commander Mohsen al Wali



Aden al Hizam
Commander and al Hizam
Deputy, Jalal al Rubaie



3rd SRB Commander
Nabil al Mashoushi



4th Military Region
Commander, Fadl
Hassan al Omari



Abyan Front Commander
and 5th SRB Commander,
Mukhtar al Nubi

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.



Tur al Baha Axis
Commander Abu Bakr
al Jaboli



Facilities Protection
Forces Commander
Ahmed bin Afif



9th Thunderbolt
Commander Farouk al
Kalouli



Abyan Security Chief Ali
Nasser Bouzid Baazab

Looking Ahead

- 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

Critical Threats Project | American Enterprise Institute

Defense Ministry Officers in Southern Yemen

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



Support and Reinforcement
Brigades Commander Saleh
al Sayyid*



Southern Resistance
Brigades Commander
Shalal Shaye'a*



Storm Forces
Commander Awsan
Anshly



Southern Land Forces and
Thunderbolt Brigades
Commander Ali al Bishi



4th Military Region
Commander Fadl
Hassan al Omari



Yafa Axis Commander
Abdulaziz al
Mansoori**



Bab al Mandeb Axis
Commander Abdul Ghani
Ali Mohi al Din al Subayhi



Abyan Axis
Commander Abu Bakr
Hussein***



Tur al Baha Axis
Commander Abu Bakr
al Jaboli



Al Anad Axis last known
Commander Thabet
Jawas



Dhaleh Axis
Commander Ali
Muqbel Saleh***

* 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.

Interior Ministry Officers in Southern Yemen

- These are all Interior Ministry officers above the brigade level.



Al Hizam Commander
Mohsen al Wali



Aden Security Chief
Mutahar al Shuaibi



Dhaleh Security Chief and
Dhaleh al Hizam Commander
Ahmed Qaid al Qubba



Lahij Security Chief
Saleh al Sayyid*



Abyan Security Chief
Ali Nasser Bouzid
Baazab



Abyan al Hizam
Commander Abdullatif
al Sayyid



Lahij al Hizam
Commander Hussein al
Saidi



Aden Ring Belt
Commander Naji al
Yahri



Aden al Hizam
Commander Jalal al
Rubaie*



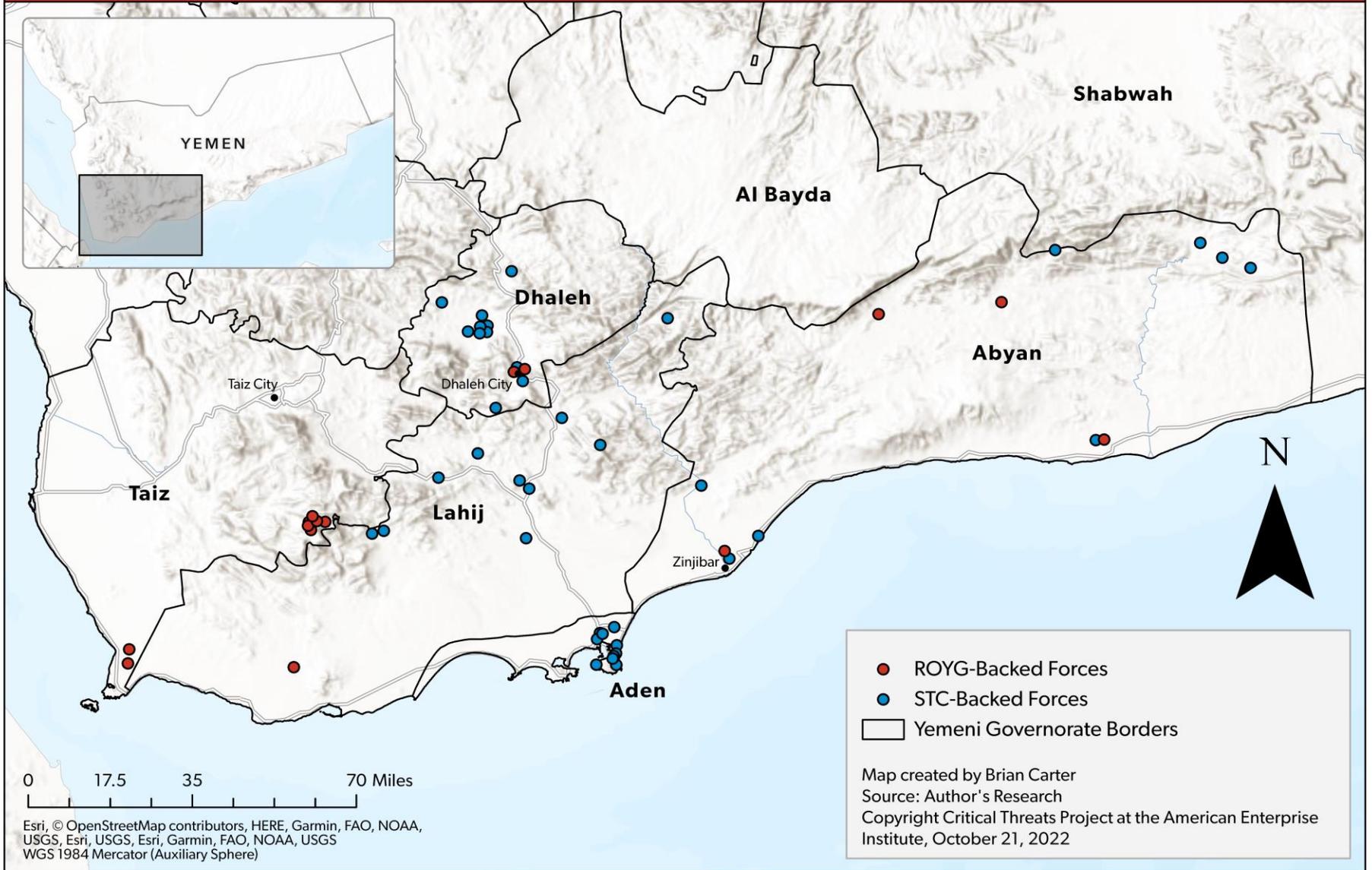
Counterterrorism
Forces Commander
Shalal Shaye'a*

* Jalal al Rubaie is also the deputy al Hizam Security Forces commander.

** These commanders also hold commands in the Defense Ministry.

Approximate Locations of Armed Groups in Southern Yemen

As of October 21, 2022





CRITICAL THREATS

Brian Carter

Salafi-Jihadism Deputy Team Lead and Analyst, Critical Threats Project