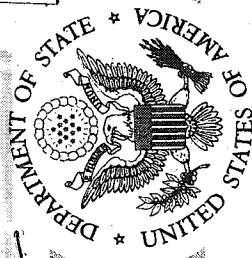


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RNAN-10



# INTELLIGENCE NOTE

BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

**Saudi**

March 17, 1972

**1972-3-17, Iyani, ~~Saudi~~, War**

YEMEN-SOUTH YEMEN: WAR CLOUDS GATHERING OVER SOUTHERN ARABIA

RNAN-10

What the Saudis heretofore have not been able to do -- promote a sustained military campaign from the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) against the radical National Front regime in Aden -- now appears close to fruition as the result of the assassination of an important Yemeni tribal leader by the South Yemenis. Neither Yemen nor South Yemen (the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen) seems eager to engage in major hostilities at this time, but Yemen's Prime Minister, Muhsin al Ayni, appears to have given in to pressure from Yemeni tribes and Saudi Arabia to support what is essentially a tribal thirst for revenge.

Tribal Blood Is Up. In late February 1972, Shaykh Ali bin Najj al Ghadir, paramount shaykh of the strong and independent-minded Khawlan tribe in the southern part of the YAR, and 65 of his tribesmen were killed in South Yemen territory. He was allegedly bargaining with the South Yemenis for aid in return for continued Khawlani opposition to the Sanaa government. The Khawlan, who have always resisted central authority, previously had sided with the Yemeni Royalists and did not fully submit to the YAR regime. South Yemeni interest in lining up the Khawlan stemmed from Aden's desire to counter the YAR-based and Saudi-funded insurgents who occasionally have forayed into South Yemen territory.

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*Pol 5 Yemen - Yemen*

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Details of Shaykh Ali's death are lacking, but the reaction of his fellow tribesmen is very clear. The Khawlian held meetings with notables of the other leading Yemeni tribes, and agreement was reached on March 10 whereby the tribes would join in an attack on South Yemen.

YAR Government Under Pressure. Prime Minister al Ayni is under heavy pressure to support the tribal campaign. In addition to pressure from the tribal leaders and South Yemeni exiles in Sanaa, Saudi Arabia has weighed in strongly in favor of the attack. During the Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference in Saudi Arabia, February 27-March 2, King Faysal apparently criticized al Ayni's hesitation and promised full Saudi support. The Saudi commitment was reaffirmed in subsequent meetings with a Yemeni military mission.

Al Ayni, in principle, does not oppose exploiting tribal feelings against South Yemen, but he does not want to involve YAR military forces in a war that might well lead to a Yemeni defeat. Moreover, if the hostilities were prolonged, the control of the central government over the Yemeni tribes, especially the Khawlian, would become even more tenuous than it is now. Also, as money and supplies poured in from Saudi Arabia, the tribes would become increasingly less inclined to cut off the flow by ending the fighting. Finally, a YAR-supported war with South Yemen would be almost certain to evoke Soviet ire, and nearly all the YAR army's equipment is of Soviet origin.

Al Ayni Caves in to War Hawks. Each side has sent emissaries to the other's capital in an attempt to avoid war. South Yemen has become noticeably more conciliatory in its public statements, blaming the tension on

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Saudi-US "i st the South Yemen regime. In a less emotional atmosphere, a compromise solution might have been found. With the tribes calling for vengeance, however, and the Saudi subsidies to spur them on, war fever in Sanaa has spread. On March 11, al Ayni agreed to support the tribal campaign and travelled to major Arab capitals to explain the YAR's dilemma and seek support for whatever actions he may eventually feel compelled to take. South Yemen has also sent delegations to Arab capitals to present its position.

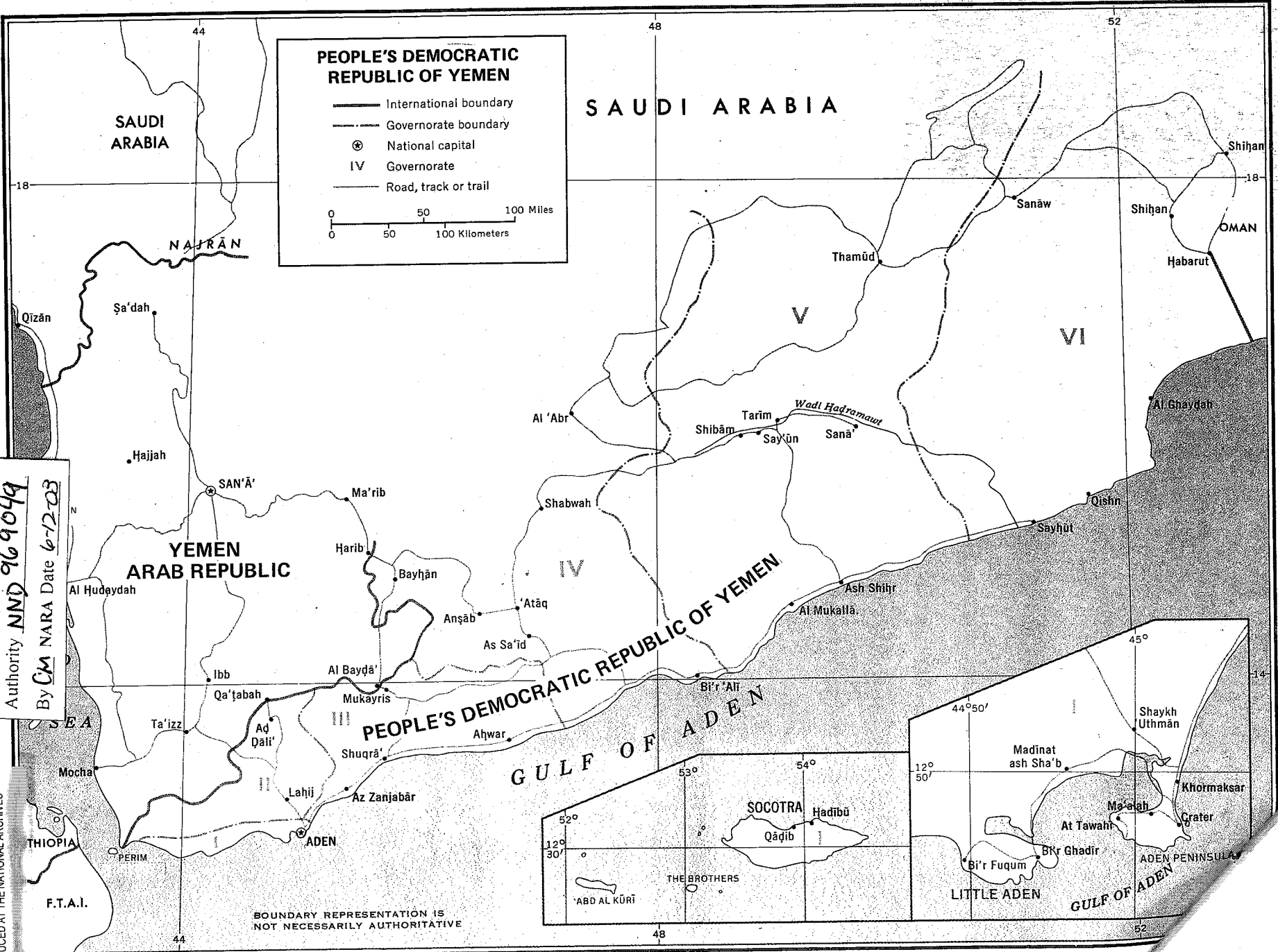
Next Move up to the Tribes. Because the killing of a tribal leader is involved, the tribes, in the tradition of Arab blood feuds, have a strong incentive for war and may achieve some initial successes. However, it is very questionable whether the tribal forces alone would have the staying power for a prolonged campaign, except perhaps in terms of guerrilla warfare and hit-and-run raids. Thus, government troops may have to join the action, particularly if regular South Yemen forces should strike into Yemeni territory in the course of their warfare with the tribes. There is little doubt that al-Ayni would wish to avoid such a trial of strength between his forces and those of South Yemen. However, under present circumstances the initiative is with the tribes and the Yemen government may be drawn into a military confrontation with South Yemen whether it wants it or not.

INR/Near East and South Asia

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