

Saudi-led coalition launches air raids on Yemen's Sanaa

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Smoke and dust rise after air strikes launched by the Saudi-led coalition on Sanaa. (Photo: Khaled Abdullah/Reuters)

Sanaa, March 8 (RHC)-- The Saudi-led military coalition battling Yemen's Houthi movement has said it conducted air raids on Houthi military targets in Sanaa and other regions after the group launched armed drones towards Saudi Arabia.

"The military operation targets Houthi military capabilities in Sanaa and a number of other provinces," the coalition said in a statement carried by Saudi state media on Sunday. The coalition, which said it had destroyed 10 armed drones, said "civilians and civilian objects in the kingdom are a red line".

It did not specify locations that were targeted by drones. The United States consulate in the Saudi Red Sea city of Jeddah issued an advisory, citing reports of suspected attacks and explosions near Jeddah and the southern town of Khamis Mushait. The Houthis did not immediately claim responsibility for the attacks.

Sources told Al Jazeera the coalition air raids "targeted Houthi military sites in the capital, Sanaa", including the al-Seyana base. A witness told the Reuters news agency of several air raids. Plumes of black smoke were visible in the vicinity of a military compound near Sanaa University. The Houthi-run Al Masirah TV said coalition warplanes launched "a series of air raids" on the al-Nahda and Attan districts.

The Houthis, who have been battling the coalition since it intervened in Yemen's civil war in March 2015, recently stepped up cross-border missile and drone attacks on Saudi Arabia as they escalate an offensive to seize the government's last northern stronghold of Marib. Fighting has also intensified on the ground in the Taiz region.

The escalation comes as the US and the United Nations increase diplomatic efforts for a ceasefire to pave the way for a resumption of UN-sponsored political talks to end the conflict. Saudi state media on Sunday cited the coalition as saying the Houthis were emboldened after the new US administration revoked Washington's designation of the Houthis as a "terrorist" organisation in February.

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