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# JMP says GCC initiative is dead

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

SANA'A, May 5 — Political talks over the Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) initiative have not progressed since Sunday.

The GCC initiative offered an agreement to end "the political crises" in Yemen by transferring power from President Ali Abdullah Saleh to a national coalition government 30 days after the president signed the agreement. Members of the coalition government would have been 50 percent from the General People's Congress (GPC), 40 percent from the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), and 10 percent from independent groups. The agreement would also have guaranteed the president immunity from prosecution.

Although a second visit from the Secretary-General of the GCC has been delayed on request from President Saleh, the president has denied reports that said he refused the initiative. The JMP said that the agreement is now dead, although the GCC, the US, the EU and Russia still consider the GCC initiative as the path to end the political deadlock in Yemen.

On Wednesday, the prime minister held a conference explaining the impact of the GCC initiative on Yemen's future. The prime minister called on JMP leaders to take a national position,

and to stop inciting those on the street as the only tool for change.

On the other hand, Mohammed Al-Sabri, one of the leaders of the JMP, told the Yemen Times that the JMP was "forced" to accept the agreement from the beginning. "We grudgingly accepted the terms of the agreement. As a political opposition, we had no alternative," said Al-Sabri.

On Saturday, President Saleh refused to sign the agreement in his capacity as President of the Republic of Yemen, but rather offered to sign as head of the ruling GPC party. The foreign ministers of the GCC countries had planned to hold a meeting in Riyadh on Monday for Saleh and the JMP to sign the agreement, but negotiations ceased when Saleh refused to sign as president.

The JMP said they have no problem with the ruling GPC party. They see the main problem as President Saleh himself, and thus demanded that the agreement be signed by Saleh as the head of the country. Any other suggestion would not be accepted by the JMP.

Abdu Al-Ghani Al-Eryani, a political analyst, told the Yemen Times that both parties should be held responsible for not signing the agreement. He considered the agreement the only way to lift Yemen out of the current political crisis that has been on-going since mid February, and the only way to avoid a

civil war.

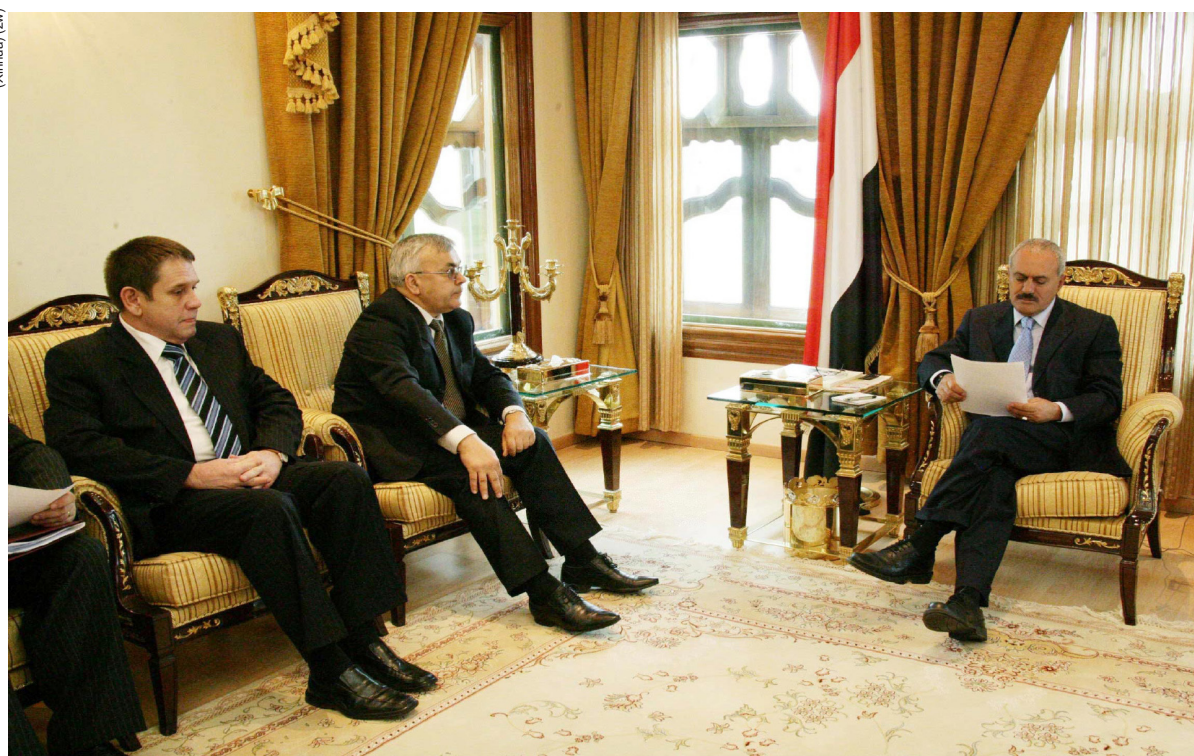
The initiative aimed to end the political tension on the ground by removing military and security vehicles from the streets.

"It's normal for a president not to want to sign his own departure, so it's normal that he wants it to fail," said Al-Eryani. However, he also blamed the opposition parties, who he claimed were "playing with the people's destinies to attain political gains."

Al-Sabri disagreed that the initiative was the only way to end the political deadlock. "The issue isn't in our hands, it's in the people's hands — those who are in the 'Change Squares' — and for us we concedes the agreement dead," said Al-Sabri.

The JMP said that Saleh — who has a history of not abiding by agreements — is trying to shirk from the agreement by signing as the head of the GPC. However El-Eryani thinks that as long as President Saleh signs with his full name, then it doesn't matter whether he signs as the president or as the head of the party.

"We shouldn't care how Saleh signs the agreement. It's not a document that will be used in court. Instead of wasting time the JMP should have told the GCC how they want the agreement to be, and the GCC would put it in mind," said Al-Eryani.



Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh (R) meets with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's envoy Sergei Vershinin who hands over a letter from Medvedev, in Sanaa, Yemen, May 3, 2011. In the letter, Medvedev expressed Russia's support for the GCC initiative to resolve the crisis in Yemen and confidence that the Yemeni people will be able to address their own problems away from any external interference in their affairs.

Protesters in 'Change Squares' all over the country rejected the GCC initiative that provides the president im-

munity from prosecution.

Moreover, the ruling GPC party doesn't accept any agreement that in-

cludes Saleh's departure. They call his stay as president until 2013 as "constitutional legitimacy."

## Outages continue after seven attacks on power lines



By: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

SANA'A, May 4th — The number of power outages in the country has reached a new peak as people from the Al-Damashqa region in Marib governorate continue to attack power lines leading to electricity hubs across northern Yemen.

Two power lines have been repaired by a team of 14 engineers since the attacks began, but while repairs are being made, raids will continue to affect power stations in Marib.

Seven attacks were carried out in a single week, beginning on 24 April 2011. These raids have caused the shutdown

of the one major gas-powered generator in Marib, which has in turn resulted in the rolling blackouts that have inconvenienced thousands of Yemenis.

The repeated power outages have sparked anger amongst the country's shop owners, who say that their work is being negatively affected by the problem.

Many local businesses, such as Internet cafes, have been forced to close during the cuts, even though many of them have separate generators.

"Yes, I have a generator, but it's too expensive to run for an extended period of time," said one Internet café owner, as he sat in front of his closed shop, waiting for power to return.

"I've lost a great deal of money because of these cuts," he continued. "If this dire situation continues, I will have to shut down permanently."

Abdurrahman Saif, engineer and General Manager of the gas-powered genera-

tor in Marib, said that the saboteurs are demanding jobs and money.

"They sometimes steal spare parts from the station. We have repeatedly asked the national security forces to intervene, but so far they haven't responded to any of our requests," said Saif.

Speaking to the Yemen Times, Saif voiced concern regarding threats that have been made against the engineers who are brought to repair the lines.

"We immediately brought engineers from Sana'a to Marib to fix the problem, but they were all threatened," he explained.

Abdulaziz Mohammed Al-Saqqaf, Deputy Director of the Public Electricity Corporation, told the Yemen Times that, "Since its establishment, the [gas-powered generator] station has been attacked repeatedly, by people who demand jobs and bribes."

"The recent attacks were the worst," said Al-Saqqaf. "These are tribesmen who insist on attacking the station without making any concrete demands and without having any reason to do so."

Al-Saqqaf called upon the tribesmen of Marib to allow his engineers to work in safety.



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Female candidates are strongly encouraged to apply

### Continued from Page 1

#### Activists targeted by National Security

Al-Ansi told the Yemen Times that he'd only just seen his mother for the first time in two months, after she made a visit to Change Square. The only time that he and Karman have managed to get out of the square together was to meet with the US ambassador at the American embassy.

"The embassy had to provide us with an armored vehicle when we returned to the square," said Al-Ansi, as National Security agents were waiting for him and Karman outside the embassy.

Al-Ansi also noted that state media has been mobilizing the public against him and Karman.

"They use very angry language, accusing us of inciting the youth to get killed, to march on the Yemen TV tower and other places," he said.

Karman was the first activist to be arrested on 23 January 2011, before Change Square had even been founded. She was arrested for leading unlicensed protests and was released three days later, after hundreds marched in front of the General Prosecutor's office.

Al-Ansi and other activists were also arrested while marching towards the General Prosecutor's office, so as to submit a legal complaint regarding the way Karman was arrested. He and the others were all released within 24 hours.



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# The Yemeni renaissance in Change Square



**One of several art studios that have been built in Change Square in Sana'a**

**By: Shatha Al-Harazi**

A new, unified Yemeni culture has been born at Al-Tagheer (Change) Square, through the sharing of skills amongst pro-democracy protesters and the expression of their different interests.

Before the revolution, there was no functioning cinema in the country. But in many of the bigger tents, news channels are being projected for the masses. Protesters listen carefully to President Ali Abdullah Saleh's speeches, regularly setting aside time in their day so as to hear his words. They will then exchange ideas regarding his possible next steps, on the basis of points highlighted in his statements.

Mutee'a Dammaj is a cultured pro-democracy protester who belongs to a well-known family that has a tradition of supporting Yemeni literature. He told the Yemen Times in February that the longer President Saleh's ouster takes, the better. This will allow the new culture in Change Square to become strong and eventually spread to the rest of the country.

Dammaj regularly coordinates the nomads in some of the square's tents.

"At the beginning," said Dammaj, "it was only one or two tents that held such

CNN, said that she wouldn't call what's happening in Change Square a cultural resistance. Instead, it should be considered a cultural awakening.

“I absolutely think that Yemen is entering a new chapter in its history,” said Nasser. “It’s a brand new experience for all Yemenis, both inside and outside of Yemen. The uprising didn’t only happen in the political sphere – it has also happened in the social and cultural spheres. Today, there are more intellectual people in Yemen than ever. The continuing seminars on politics at the square are the proof.”

"There is also a strong sense of equality between women and men at the square," continued Nasser. "They protest together, they hold rallies and make speeches on stage together. This is the proof of social change. This factor was hard to find before the uprising."

Tents specifically designated for cultural forums, conferences, discussions and seminars have begun hosting specialists in various topics. The cultural misunderstanding that many protesters claim was fomented by the regime has begun to melt as people get together and discuss their problems openly.

For example, Intisar Snan, an activist from Aden, regularly holds discussions

in which the southern separatist issue is explained. She believes that the resolution of this conflict should be one of the top priorities of the revolution after the withdrawal of the regime.

Snan came to the conclusion that people in the north have been misled by official media. As such, they cannot necessarily be blamed for their anti-southern views.

Near the end of one of Snan's discussions, one protester from the north said, "I believe that we are one people, even though Saleh's injustices made some of you seek separation. We will support your choices and go with whatever you want."

Artists at Change Square have also found ways to show off their talents. Many exhibitions are being held in the square, each with its own distinct aims. One, for example, highlights traditional Yemeni handicrafts, while others showcase clothes and other accessories.

"The aim of this exhibition is to help finance single mothers and poor women," said a protester responsible for one of the square's art shows, where simple works are sold for slightly inflated prices so as to serve a charitable purpose.

"We receive the price set by the maker of the piece and then we add around YR 200 to 400," he said.

Some of this money will be directed towards the Sana'a University field hospital: "We are planning to help fund the hospital, but in the meantime, the profits are used to buy more goods."

An art exhibition in yet another tent shows off sculptures and paintings. Although many of the pieces are quite simple and made by children, it's a way for protesters to express their different feelings and opinions. Most of the paintings in this particular exhibition were done in Yemen's national colors: red, white and black. Indeed, one painting showed a map of Yemen illustrated in the colors of the Yemeni flag, so as to express national unity.

Spontaneous football tournaments, which seem to take place whenever a crowd gathers, have been one of Change Square's main leisure activities. Other sports are also practiced and daily chess tournaments have been organized by the protesters.

Younger protesters have shown a

passion for billiards, which they play constantly within the shops surrounding the square.

"We come whenever we have the time to play [billiards]," said Ahmed Monsour. "Some of us didn't even know how to play before the revolution!"

In addition to all this, poems are frequently read in some of the tents – revolutionary poems or love poems that the protesters themselves wrote or that have been plucked from Arabic literature.

One of the most remarkable cultural transformations at Change Square, how-


ever, can be summarized by a sentence that was recently painted in big letters on a piece of pavement: "NO TO QAT". Although the majority of protesters still chew qat, it appears as if even this message is slowly finding its way into their minds.

Lastly, Yemeni tribesmen are also actively participating in the square's cultural renaissance. While many tribesmen have long considered cleaning to be a woman's task, they are now tidying the square by themselves, in addition to the tents and the streets.



**A seminar given by Intisar Sinan on the issue of the Southern Movement and Yemen's revolution at change square in Sana'a**

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# A post-revolution constitution

By: Ammar Al-Sharafi

First I wish to emphasize the significance of making use of others' experiences and learning from historical lessons, because wisdom is the goal of the believer that, if found, is their own. Based on this, I will list some concepts extracted from an in-depth study of the history of some modern democracies. These I shall compare to Yemen's current situation and the crises and congestions resulting from demographic and political structures, and in addition from the ruling party's behavior over the last three decades.

Although the Yemeni revolution is passing through its final phase, and observers expect an imminent breakthrough to occur at any moment, controversy arises as to the nature and shape of a post-revolution regime in Yemen. Some call for a parliamentary system with an honorary president like that in Turkey. Some are in favor of a mixed regime (presidential and parliamentary) as is the case in France, while others promote a pure presidential system like the American one.

But regardless of the type of regime

suitable for a country like Yemen, there is still a real disagreement over the structure of the state as a government (whether this should be central or federal). Such fears are the product of the current totalitarian regime, and we can understand most of these apprehensions when we look at their roots and historical influencing factors.

So what is the best path towards a new regime or constitution that could overcome any fears and provide sound solutions that will meet the expectations of Yemenis after they have staged this revolution and are still making sacrifices?

The best solution for this problem (and this is solely the writer's view) is a non-central presidential system that is based on a complete separation between the executive, legislative and judicial authorities. Over the next few lines I will explain in some detail the concept of a decentralized presidential regime.

The president should be elected directly by the people. That is, provided if Yemen is divided into five constituencies instead of one. This should be done in such a manner that the constituencies contain all Yemeni areas in the north and south in equal repre-

sentation in terms of electoral value, irrespective of the population density of each governorate.

This suggestion per se may be a part of the solution to the obstinate southern dilemma. It has been applied in countries that have suffered similar problems. This method was adopted by the oldest democracy in the modern world: the USA. The founders of the USA designed an electoral system that would force presidential candidates in America to deal with and heed the smaller states in the middle of the country, not just the larger states with higher densities of population such as New York or California. In addition, there was equal representation in the congress (as I will discuss in some detail below).

In a presidential electoral system like this, no candidate should be able to depend merely on certain governorates to guarantee victory because of their large populations, but he/she will need the electors' votes in, say, Abyan as much as they need it in Sana'a or Taiz. I should mention here that the boundaries of the proposed five-constituency system should be agreed upon by political and social elites in all governorates. This proposal should be applied only to presi-

dential elections. The presidential period should not exceed two terms, each term being 4-5 years.

In such a presidential system, there will be no need for a prime minister as the president is the one in charge, the actual leader who would choose his ministers and present them to the parliament for approval. This way the president will be answerable to the people for the success or failure of his government.

The second point of this suggested regime is it being a decentralized system with full powers. This will not pose a threat to Yemen's unity as some have suggested, especially with the presidential system outlined above. What I mean by a decentralized system with full powers is that each executive official at the level of governorates and districts should be elected directly by the people of such areas. The governor, his deputy and the district chief would be elected. This practice should also include security officials, education officials and judges, who should be nominated by, and be answerable to, the people of those governorates and districts.

This means that judges, police chiefs or directors of education centers will not be elected by the gov-

ernor or other officials, but by the district's people according to certain standards that define the conditions for candidacy. By doing this, these officials will be answerable to, and accountable to, the people of the district and not vice versa.

With a system like this, which would enjoy free and fair elections, no conflicts like those in Sa'ada and elsewhere – that were the result of attempts made by the government in Sana'a to impose itself on the people of other governorates – would occur.

As for the legislative authority, which is an integral part of any democratic system, there should be a fair division of constituencies based on census data that should be revised every ten years. This would mean that electoral districts may change every ten years according to observed population change. And I should affirm here that the parliament's mission is only supervisory and legislative, so that it drafts laws and observes their implementation by the government. Its other tasks would include approving or rejecting the ministers proposed by the president, and do the same for the annual budget.

Another important aspect of this system would include establishing

smaller parliaments, elected at the level of governorates, to audit each governorate's executive authorities and draft laws that meet local needs without conflicting with the state's constitution. If Hodeida, for instance, was having more traffic problems and accidents than other governorates, its local parliament could pass stricter laws without reporting to the central government. The same applies if the people of Hadramout wished to have regulations that would limit qat consumption there.

What is worth mentioning here is that this decentralized presidential system is the best guarantee for preserving the country's unity, and solving its chronic problems and meeting its people's expectations through offering equal opportunities for all, and broader liberties for all social classes. It could also provide job opportunities to graduates from all governorates.

As I said above, these are suggestions I present to political and intellectual elites from all social categories as well as youth and party leaders to consider and discuss. They can act as an initial step towards drafting a new Yemeni constitution that would include all Yemenis and be the basis for a modern and a model state.

## Yemen 'transition' deal is a non-starter

By: Brian Whitaker

The Gulf Cooperation Council said on Sunday that it will send its secretary-general, Abdul-Latif al-Zayani, back to Yemen for more talks following the aborted mission on Saturday when he was publicly snubbed by President Saleh.

Saleh has been refusing to sign a "transition" agreement negotiated by the GCC (with American and EU backing) which would involve him stepping down eventually in return for immunity from prosecution.

It is to be hoped that the GCC will not waste much more time over this, because the sooner the agreement is abandoned, the better it will be for everyone.

As it stands, the agreement is virtually unworkable and Saleh is now adding all sorts of conditions which cannot be met – thus providing a pretext for him to stay in power.

Saleh's re-interpretation of the plan, according to the ruling party's newspaper, is that once a national unity government has been appointed, "sit-ins, marches and rebellion" must cease and "elements causing the crisis" must leave the country (plus various other things) before implementation of the agreement can proceed further. These are impossible demands, since basically they require a state of tranquility that Yemen has not seen for years.

All this prevarication is extremely damaging to Yemen. Aside from the issue of Saleh's presidency, the country faces multiple crises needing urgent at-

tention – not least of them the provision of adequate food and water – and the international Friends of Yemen group, set up last year to provide aid, is currently in limbo.

It has reached the stage where none of these other problems can be tackled properly while Saleh remains in power. The US and the GCC countries are understandably worried about what will happen after Saleh goes, but those fears have probably

been exaggerated and the longer the current turmoil continues the more difficult it will be to manage the aftermath.

It's time for the US and others to grasp the nettle and tell Saleh they are not going to work with him any longer and that for the sake of his country he should go – now.

## Beware the heffalump trap

By: Iona Craig

Anyone who has ever vaguely followed Yemen politics – there will be few as it's a thankless task – or has recently been confused by constantly conflicting headlines, will be (or becoming) familiar with its trademarks: backtracking, squabbling, multiple U-turns, contradictory statements, posturing and games usually confined to the school playground.

Even though I've only been here just over six months it's clear that these often farcical political gymnastics are usually instigated by the wily President himself and without fail leave the political opposition – the JMP – flat on their backs on the tarmac before they pick themselves up, march off in a strop and then proceed to go home and throw a tantrum – to continue the play-

ground analogy.

"Does that really make Yemen's politics stand out from anywhere else?" I hear you cry. Well here is a prime example of a quote:

"Both parties approve of the initiative. The only thing to agree upon is the date. We said Sunday. The JMP said Saturday and the host said Monday," said presidential information office Ahmed al-Sofi.

Al-Sofi is of course referring to the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) deal, that may not be a deal, that may not (as I write events in Aden could influence this) even be signed...or not by President Saleh...or not by him as president, as such.

So, if the Gulf-plan, with more pitfalls than a Home Alone movie is signed.

Neither side – the JMP, or the ruling GPC plus Saleh – require any extra opportunities to pick a fight, or in the JMP's case, fall out with themselves. And the GCC plan pro-

vides them with more than enough to squabble over and plenty of scope for the whole initiative to collapse.

Don't forget, the JMP have been boycotting parliament since the end of last year after failing to agree with the GPC on electoral reforms, in discussions that date back to 2009. Plus, the likelihood of them being able to see out the 30 days never mind the logistical impossibility of organizing elections here in 90 days, when the electoral register is years out of date, are both rather remote.

The heffalump trap has been set. Now it just depends who will fall in first. Going on previous form, Saleh's recent rhetoric, and the disunity of the opposition, my bet is on the JMP. But by definition, the creator of the trap should be the one that ends up in it, which means the GCC and its EU and US backers will be the ones left trying to scramble out of the pit.

## SKETCHED OPINION

By: Carlos Latuff



By: Eftetahiat Al-Shark

The persistent attempts made by Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh to maintain his position of authority for the past 33 years should not be seen as awkward or strange, as they come from a man who is an expert at playing Yemen's contradictions off one another.

However, the Yemeni youth revolution has managed to unite the north and the south, and many opposition parties, military leaders and tribes have joined it. It seems as if the man will not be able to prevaricate for very much longer.

The latest development in Yemen saw President Ali Abdullah Saleh refuse to sign the Gulf initiative as the president of the republic. This would have been the last chance for the man to escape the current crisis while incurring the least severe losses.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative faced many challenges in its pursuit of safety and security for Yemen. It was like a lifeline for the president and would have been a good way for him to evade the punishment that people in governorates across the south and the north have been calling for.

The refusal of the president – who continues to cling strongly to his authority – to approve this excellent regionally and internationally approved initiative means that he has lost his last chance to avoid the negative consequences of the protests.

The Yemeni public has said its piece against President Ali Abdullah Saleh's rule. It will not be long until President Saleh and all of his cronies face court. He will pay for his crimes against the public as the head of Yemen's government – for the killing of more than 145 peaceful protesters.

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# National Counterterrorism Center: How a little-known spy agency helped track down Osama bin Laden

By: David Wood  
for the Huffington Post

A little-known spy agency in Washington helped track the hour-by-hour movements of the al Qaeda courier who inadvertently led a Navy SEALs assault team directly to Osama bin Laden on Sunday, where they killed the terrorist mastermind with two precision shots to the head.

For eight months, after analysts tentatively identified a spacious walled compound near Islamabad, Pakistan, as a possible bin Laden hideout, an array of satellites and unmanned drones kept an unblinking, day-night “staring eye” watch, tracking individuals’ movements in and out, and following “individuals of interest” as they traveled across the region.

The data was continuously downloaded to an Air Force ground station housed in a nondescript hangar at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia, where teams of analysts pored over the “take” and streamed it live to intelligence analysis cells at the CIA, the National Security Agency and the National Counterterrorism Center.

The NCTC, housed in an innocuous office building in Rosslyn, Va., just across the Potomac River from Washington proper, operates far from the spotlight that illuminates even the secretive CIA, but it played a pivotal role in the bin Laden manhunt.

Working with the military’s Joint Special Operations Command Targeting and Analysis Center, located at Langley, and with the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency up the river in Bethesda, Md., the NCTC analysts helped develop what the military calls a “common operating picture.” In layman’s terms, that amounted to a detailed four-dimensional “map” of the bin Laden compound and its occupants and their patterns of living and working.

The data enabled JSOC’s commandos to build, in a remote section of the U.S. air base at Bagram, Afghanistan, a full-scale replica of the al Qaeda compound at Abbottabad, an hour’s drive north of Islamabad. In constant rehearsals at the mock-up, they perfected the timing and the tactics used in Sunday’s raid.

NCTC officials declined to comment publicly on the agency’s operations or the work that led to bin Laden’s death

on Sunday.

But a senior intelligence official, who briefed reporters anonymously because much of the information is classified, said the breadth and depth of the information was critical. After the compound was initially discovered last summer, he said, officials “developed good information on how life at the compound was carried out.”

The information was so complete, he added, that “the operators who assaulted the compound felt they had all the intelligence they needed.” Such assessments are unusual because the military, and commandos in particular, rarely acknowledge they have “enough” intelligence.

In a statement, James R. Clapper, the director of national intelligence who presides over all 16 of the country’s intelligence agencies, said that in his nearly 50-year career “never have I seen a more remarkable example of focused integration, seamless collaboration and sheer professional magnificence” as was evident in the final hunt for bin Laden.

As impressive as it is, the elimination of the al Qaeda founder, after nearly a decade of effort, won’t have nearly the impact on global terrorism

that it might have several years ago, counterterrorism officials say. Thanks to the “franchising” of extremist Islamist terror cells to Yemen, Somalia and elsewhere, the danger — and the action — has shifted away from bin Laden’s core al Qaeda group, according to NCTC director Michael Leiter.

None of the recent terrorist operations against the United States, including the 2009 Fort Hood shootings that killed 13 Americans and the drive-by shooting later that year that killed a soldier at a Little Rock, Ark., recruiting station, were directed or inspired by bin Laden. Rather, these two attacks, together with the three failed but potentially deadly attacks — the attempted Times Square bombing, the bungled Christmas 2009 airliner bombing, and the parcel bombs hidden in printer cartridges last fall — all were inspired or directed by a the Yemeni-based cleric, Anwar al-Awlaki, and the al Qaeda offshoot, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, also based in Yemen.

Leiter and other counterterrorism officials say that AQAP and other “franchises” have surpassed the original Pakistan-based al Qaeda in terms of speedy planning and imaginative attacks. They cite a further threat: the

emergence of homegrown Islamist terrorists in the United States, such as the alleged Little Rock shooter, Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad, a 24-year-old Muslim convert formerly known as Carlos Bledsoe.

“Bin Laden personally, al Qaeda’s terrorist tradecraft, all of that is becoming less popular in most places in the world,” Leiter said in a December speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

The affiliates, he added, “no longer simply rely upon their linkages to al Qaeda senior leadership in Pakistan but they have in fact emerged more as self-sustaining, independent movements and organizations.”

Leiter also noted that the affiliates maintain “important tentacles back to al Qaeda senior leadership” but operate with a high degree of independence.

“And, frankly, they operate at a different pace and with a different level of complexity than does al Qaeda senior leadership, and that has complicated our task significantly,” Leiter added.

The NCTC’s role in the killing of bin Laden is payback of sorts for the U.S. intelligence community, which was criticized for its failure to prevent the 9/11 attacks — when a lack of coordination kept intelligence officers from

fitting together known pieces of the al Qaeda plot. In the aftermath of the attacks, a presidential commission urgently recommended the establishment of a new agency to unify “strategic intelligence and operational planning against Islamic terrorists.”

The NCTC was operational by 2004.

This time, by all accounts, the intelligence agencies and the military operational headquarters worked together smoothly and swiftly, justifying the effort put into breaking down institutional walls and separate data bases, said counterterrorism officials who requested anonymity because their operations are classified.

A former Navy pilot who flew EA6B Prowler jamming and attack planes over the Balkans and Iraq, Leiter, 42, is a cum laude graduate of Harvard Law School and clerked for Supreme Court Justice Stephen G. Breyer before starting work in counterterrorism. He was appointed as NCTC director by President George W. Bush — and asked to stay on by President Barack Obama. He was married Saturday evening in Washington; the honeymoon was postponed.

## For many Arabs, bin Laden was a has-been

Al-Qa’ida ideology sidelined following Arab revolutions and domestic terrorism

By David E. Miller  
for the Media Line

Osama Bin Laden may have topped the United States’ most wanted list, but in his birthplace of Saudi Arabia he was regarded Monday as little more than an historic figurehead whose ideological sway has dwindled to near nothingness.

“Bin Laden is history. He died a long time ago when he went into hiding,” Eman Al-Nafjan, an influential Riyadh-based blogger told The Media Line. “Saudis are quite indifferent to the news about his death. There is neither mourning nor excitement.”

Last November, Saudi forces arrested 149 men affiliated with Al-Qa’ida in the kingdom. Al-Nafjan said that significant members of Al-Qa’ida in Saudi Arabia have recently been apprehended or killed. The most significant of these were Saleh Naif Eid Al-Makhlafi, number 35 on Saudi Arabia’s most wanted list of 2009, who was reportedly targeted in Afghanistan last week, and Haila Al-Qusair, a female Al-Qa’ida recruiter arrested in March 2010.

“When we think of Al-Qa’ida, those are the names that come to mind, not Bin Laden’s. He may be related to events far away in Afghanistan or Iraq, but not here in Saudi Arabia,” she said.

Bin Laden, born in Riyadh in 1957 and raised in Saudi Arabia, moved to Afghanistan in 1984 to join the ranks of the Mujahedeen, or Islamic warriors, fighting against Soviet occupation. He founded Al-Qa’ida in 1988 and returned to Saudi Arabia in 1992 only to be expelled from the country and have his nationality revoked for his support of violent acts against American targets.

“Today people are discussing whether Bin Laden was a Shaheed [martyr] or a criminal who deserved to die,” Abdullah Jaber, a political cartoonist for the Saudi daily Al-Jazirah told The Media Line. “The man is dead but his worldview of bloodshed and terror live on.”

Jaber added, however, that since the Al-Qa’ida attack in 9/11, Saudi popular support for Al-Qa’ida has gradually decreased and is today at an all-time low.

“Shortly after the attack many Saudis supported Al-Qa’ida, viewing it as a Robin Hood who takes from the rich and gives to the poor,” he said. “But now they realize that Al-Qa’ida kills indiscriminately: women, children, Muslims, no-Muslims. Al-Qa’ida’s recent attacks have all been in Muslim countries, not against Israel for instance.”

Jaber added that a government crackdown on Al-Qa’ida operatives and ideologues made it impossible to ex-

press extremist Islamist views in Saudi Arabia’s public domain.

“Whoever expresses these views in public will face people’s anger, even before he is dealt with by the authorities,” Jaber said.

Muhammad Al-Masri, a researcher at the Centre for Strategic Studies at the

University of Jordan, said that Bin Laden had ceased to be a central figure in the leadership of Al-Qa’ida.

“Over the past three years it has become obvious that Ayman Al-Zawahiri [Al-Qa’ida’s second in command] is more central than Bin Laden,” Al-Masri told The Media Line. “However his

death does carry symbolic meaning for many Arabs in the struggle against Al-Qa’ida.”

Al-Masri added that Al-Qa’ida ideology has been greatly marginalized by recent revolutions in the Arab world, which have represented values of democracy and human rights which Al-

Qa’ida vehemently opposes.

“Al-Qa’ida rhetoric is not central in the Arab street,” he said. “Most Jordanians are either indifferent or happy about his death, because Bin Laden’s name was tied to an Al-Qa’ida attack in Jordan in 2005.”

A slew of Facebook pages in Arabic

emerged on Monday, following news of Bin Laden’s death. Some, like the page “may we live in peace after the death of Bin Laden” expressed joy, while others, like “the death of Bin Laden is a bold-faced lie” alluded to a Western conspiracy.



### Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Professional Vacancy Announcement N°: 01/2011

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# The harsh winds of Soqotra Island

Photo by Eman Al-Awami



Although Socotra Island is known for its beautiful unique nature, its climate is arid and influenced by the Indian Ocean Monsoon which leaves it dry and dusty during the summer time.

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

Not many people who have heard about the enchanting island of Soqatra in the Indian Ocean realize that life there becomes intolerable for four months every year during the windy season from June to September.

Old people say that in ancient times, an angel passed by a village on Soqatra during the windy season and the wind blew off his cap. The angel pitied those who lived all year in such winds, and prayed for the windy season to be focused over four months instead of lasting all year.

In the summer season, winds coming from the south-west make the archipelago inaccessible by sea due to high waves and strong winds all around the island. It was only in July 1999, when the new airport was opened in Soqatra, that the island's summer isolation was broken. The airstrip was built taking

into account the direction of the wind, and this coupled with the fact that there are no accompanying rains, allows planes to land and take-off safely straight into the wind.

These winds are the base of a large intercontinental system that blows at this time of the year from a high pressure region over Africa, to a low pressure region over the Himalayas, bringing the monsoon to the Indian sub-continent. The tops of the mountains catch these winds and pull them down over the north coast of Soqatra.

Assistant Professor of Renewable Energy and Meteorology, Dr. Mohammed Ahmed Bawadi, at the University of Hadramout for Science and Technology, believes that this disturbing climatic dent in the UNESCO natural world heritage site could be turned into an advantage. "I believe there is a possibility to generate electricity from the wind on Soqatra Island." However, so far the windy season has not been exploited in this way and remains to both

locals and tourists as a time to avoid the island.

Abduljameel Abdullah Ali, a local from Soqatra that runs the Soqatra Eco-tours Agency, explained that during the summer months the southwest monsoon blows at an average of 20-25 knots. Due to the unique topography of the land and mountains, these monsoon winds generate very strong winds on the northern coast and plains, many times averaging 50-60 knots.

"In a couple of particular spots on the north coast, the configuration of the mountains can sometimes create short and savage bursts of wind in excess of 170kph. This is a very locally experienced phenomenon, and many areas of the island such as the south and west coasts just bask in the cooling trade winds," he said.

#### Cultural traditions moulded by the wind

The majority of locals depend on fishing and livestock for their living, but

the windy season makes it almost impossible to work. They are often forced to travel to Hadramout – the nearest place on the mainland – in search of temporary jobs.

During those four months, most of the men abandon the island with the majority of them heading to Hadramout. The women do their best to stay indoors and fend off the dust that is carried by the storms from entering their homes.

"We do feel a little abandoned and slightly jealous of the men who get to travel and escape this horrible weather. But at the same time they are doing this for us, to put food on the table," said Tanna Hadas, a local woman from the island.

Schools close and fishing stops, except for a couple of places such as Deleisha. But all around the island fishing is limited by the strong ocean currents occurring at this time of year. "At this time the temperature drops by about five degrees centigrade, and it is not really a time for normal tourism except for surfing. The weather is calmer in the middle of the island and to the south, so it is possible to make tours on the other [south western] side of the island," says the Soqatra Adventure Tours website.

These days, Soqotrans have started preparing for this dreadful season by packing food and water in their homes, so that the elderly, women and children don't need to leave their homes too much. Those few who have cars are less anxious, since they can use the luxury of their vehicles for transport while still being protected from dust storms.

This environmental phenomenon has been reflected in a local social celebration. After the windy season is over, the women prepare for the return of their men. They wear their best clothes and put on makeup and jewelry. Then they receive their husbands with songs and cheers.

In fact, the end of the windy season is marked by a general celebration across the entire island. People open their doors and windows wide after having been shut inside for months. Everyone rushes to the streets and enjoys this enigmatic island after being deprived of its natural beauty throughout this harsh season.

## HEALTH WATCH

By: Dr. Siva



This weekly column disseminates health information to readers in Yemen and beyond. Dr. Siva currently works at Aden Refinery Company Hospital. Lifestyle, diseases and cancer prevention are his special interests. Complementary medicine and naturopathy are his passions.

### Stop fooling yourself

Many of us could do with losing some weight, but it's often easier to come up with excuses instead of getting to work. While you may have genuine and honest reasons for not being able to shed the kilos, there will always be some who need a reality check for their excuses. Read on to know if you are one of them.

#### Diets don't work for me

You've tried different diets but never managed to keep the weight off.

**The facts:** If you take in fewer calories than you need, you will lose weight. The problem comes when we follow quick-fix diets. They're fine for a few weeks, and then we hit our target, go easy and get back into bad habits.

**Beat it:** For lasting weight loss, make realistic lifestyle and diet changes. And watch your alcohol intake as well.

#### I have wheat intolerance

Pasta makes you bloat and bread is your diet enemy. The minute you give up wheat, the pounds fall off. Surely this means wheat intolerance, right?

**The facts:** Many people find foods like pasta hard to digest. This is often due to the water the pasta absorbs, which makes it swell and leads to bloating. This, however, does not mean you have wheat intolerance (a condition less than 0.1% of us suffer from). Going wheat-free inevitably makes you lose weight as you ditch the fat-loaded pizzas and pastries.

**Beat it:** Other symptoms of wheat intolerance are headaches and joint pain. If you suffer from these, see your general practitioner and keep a food diary. The food diary will help you keep track of what you eat so you can figure out which foods cause you discomfort.



#### It's my hormones

The mysterious world of hormones gets the blame for all manner of things – including your weight gain.

**The facts:** Women with polycystic ovaries may find their weight hard to control. Also, PMS can impact a woman's weight, as rising progesterone and serotonin levels affect mood and food choices.

**Beat it:** Don't overeat in the week before your period; beat the urge to have salty, spicy food. When you feel less hungry afterwards, make sure you go back to eating sensibly.

#### I've got a slow metabolism

Some people seem to eat loads and never gain weight, whereas you pile it on and always feel tired. It must be a case of slow metabolism.

**The facts:** The vast majority of overweight people do not have a dysfunctional metabolism. If you are very active, you will have a high metabolism and burn lots of calories. If you're not, you will have a slow metabolism.

**Beat it:** Being active and eating nutritious foods like lean meat and vegetables boosts metabolism.

#### It's my medication

You can't risk your health by stopping the pills. So what can you do if they make you gain weight?

**The facts:** Many drugs for common complaints, such as depression, diabetes, migraines and high blood pressure, can lead to unintentional weight gain.

**Beat it:** First, ask your doctor if there's an alternative that doesn't cause weight gain. In cases where this isn't possible, ask to see a dietician.

#### It's in my genes

Obesity runs in the family. So, it's not your fault if you are obese too.

**The facts:** While it's possible to inherit obesity, it's not a dominant gene. Your chances of being overweight are affected more significantly by eating habits you adopt when growing up.

**Beat it:** If there's a family tendency to being fat, it's important to learn about healthy eating when young and get regular exercise.

#### I'm big-boned

We'd all love to believe it's large frames that are to blame for our size.

**The facts:** Being big-boned means you will have more muscle, but it shouldn't add more than a few kilos to your weight.

**Beat it:** Try to accept your body type. You can still be slim and look amazing if you learn to eat properly for your size.

#### It's water retention

It's not flab, it's water, and you're forever finding yourself puffed up with it. Or are you?

**The facts:** Many women actually do suffer from cramp-related water retention during the week before their periods.

**Beat it:** Fluid is transported around the body by our lymphatic system, and we rely on muscle movement to keep it flowing. So get lots of exercise and walk instead of driving whenever you get the chance.

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