



By: TA | AP Brief

UK to offer Saudi Arabia limited military support to counter Houthi attacks



Prime Minister Andy Burnham said Monday that Britain has agreed to provide limited military support to Saudi Arabia to repeal attacks by **Iran-backed Houthi rebels** in Yemen.

Burnham told reporters as he flew to the United Nations General Assembly in New York that he had agreed the Royal Air Force will provide air-to-air refueling of Saudi planes.

The agreement is for a matter of weeks, but Burnham said it will be kept under review.

The conflict between the Houthis and Yemen's Saudi-backed government has reignited, with Houthis aiming missile and drone strikes on Saudi Arabia, including one that targeted Riyadh on Saturday before being intercepted.

The Houthis also declared a blockade on Saudi shipping in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Red Sea, attacking Saudi-linked vessels and oil facilities inside the kingdom, the world's top oil exporter.

The Houthis advanced inside Yemen earlier this month, seizing the crucial port city of Mokha and key Red Sea islands allowing them to better monitor shipping traffic through the Bab el-Mandeb, through which some 12% of world trade normally passes.

Close defense partnership

Burnham said he was "acting to secure the interests of Britain and the wider region, because of course Saudi Arabia has been experiencing attack, is looking at potential further disruption, and we need to keep those pathways (for oil) open."

Britain has condemned the Houthi attacks and said the U.K. will "work with partners to support regional stability, protect civilians and support humanitarian access."

U.K. officials had previously declined to comment on "operational matters" but noted that Britain and Saudi Arabia have a close defense partnership.

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The U.S., which bombed the Houthis under the Biden and Trump administrations, has shown no interest in getting involved militarily this time around.

U.K. officials say the agreement will start in the coming days, and involve one RAF Voyager refueling Saudi planes on "defensive" missions.

The Associated Press reported last week that **Saudi Arabia** has asked its allies, including France, Britain, Pakistan and Egypt to deploy air-defense support to the region to help defend against missiles and drones fired by Houthis and other Iran-backed groups on the kingdom.