

BATTLE

BRIEF



The Battle of Jabara Valley 2019

Joseph Mathers and Daniel Wilkofsky

Published: July 28, 2026

**BATTLE
RESEARCH
GROUP**

battleresearchgroup.org
info@battleresearchgroup.org

Battle Research Group Foundation, Inc. 501(c)(3) nonprofit



BATTLE BRIEF

FOREWORD

THIS account of the Battle of Jabara Valley 2019, fought between Ansar Allah and the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, is the second instalment in the Battle Research Group's *Battle Brief* series. Designed as a supplement to the existing *Battle Studies* series, each *Battle Brief* offers compact, open-source driven reporting on historical and ongoing battles. These reports focus on areas where field research opportunities for a deeper battle study are limited. Each *Brief* is anchored in the same four descriptive factors central to all Battle Research Group studies: (1) order of battle; (2) geometry of forces; (3) timeline; and (4) narrative.

Our *Battle Brief* series presents original but concise summaries of primarily 21st century skirmishes or battles involving at least a platoon, multi-ship or multi-aircraft engagement employing more than one type of fires, e.g. combined arms for ground units. Each *Battle Brief* is a stand-alone product that may later be integrated into longer narratives. Our intended audiences are military professionals, historians, regional experts and interested members of the public.

Limitations and benefits of this series. Exclusive use of desk-research allows only for a first draft of history; this is by necessity a limited analysis that will benefit from extensive follow-on research. Weaving together contradictory and often sparse sources while preserving the narrative flow of battle leaves room for errors, any of which appearing in this *Brief* are our own. Nevertheless, this account and those that follow offer value by providing details and analysis of battles where they may now be absent. The study of even little-known engagements can reveal complex, combined arms operations involving advanced military technology as salient as drones and ballistic missiles. And all skirmishes and battles, regardless of scale or notoriety, remind us of the enduring importance of war's human factors.



Battle Research Group conducts objective analyses without implying or inferring preference or sympathies for any involved party or for their actions.



Picture: Ansar Allah

BATTLE OF JABARA VALLEY 2019

WAR: Yemen Civil War, 2014-

COMBATANTS: Yemeni National Army (under Saudi control) and Ansar Allah

LOCATION: Saudi-Yemen border

SCALE: Brigade versus brigade

PERIOD OF FOCUS: 25-27/28 August

CONFLICT CONTEXT

Yemen has been in a nearly continuous state of turmoil at least since the 1960s, first riven by post-colonial revolt, then by Cold War proxy conflict, and then in the 21st century by a multifaceted ethno-sectarian civil war that has dragged in both regional and international powers.¹ This particular battle between Ansar Allah and the Saudi-led coalition at Jabara Valley, or Wadi Jabara, provides a microcosm of the wider factors that have allowed Ansar Allah to consistently blunt the coalition's efforts. It was fought within the context of what one observer called three "separate yet overlapping conflicts" – all ongoing in Yemen at least through 2019.²

Foremost of these was the long running, oft-morphing civil war that erupted in 2004. This war pitted the Ansar Allah rebel movement (popularly known as the Houthis) against successive Yemeni administrations, including the current internationally-recognized government (IRG, here: government) of the Republic of Yemen.³

Regional competition overlapped and was closely intertwined with this running civil war. While Saudi Arabia had been directly engaged in Yemen's many conflicts for decades, the Saudis began a new large-scale intervention on behalf of the Yemeni government in 2015 after Ansar Allah nearly overran the country. Initially codenamed Operation Decisive Storm and then Operation Restoring Hope, the intervention saw Saudi Arabia lead a coalition of nine Middle Eastern and African states (referred to henceforth

as the coalition) against Ansar Allah. Its ultimate objective was to return the government to power in the constitutional capital of Sana'a and depose Ansar Allah, which was considered a proxy of Iran.

And at the same time the United States was fighting a long running counter-terror war against al-Qa'ida in Yemen as part of the Global War on Terrorism. While this campaign was mostly isolated and ancillary to the fight at Jabara along the Yemen-Saudi border, the active involvement of U.S. air power

and ground advisors shifted the broader balance of power across Yemen and at least tangentially linked U.S. and Saudi interests in the country. Like the Saudis, American policymakers had a keen interest in reducing Iranian influence in Yemen and across the Middle East.

As these overlapping conflicts unfolded, international media attention focused on the dire humanitarian costs of the fighting and just a few of the most high-profile

military developments. These include Ansar Allah's capture of Sana'a and its southern offensive in 2015; the government's march towards al-Hudaydah and subsequent local ceasefire in 2018; Ansar Allah's offensive on the government stronghold of Marib beginning in 2021; and the nationwide truce that went into effect in 2022. Other consequential developments and fronts have received less international attention despite exerting considerable influence on the war's strategic direction.

This battle provides a microcosm of the wider factors that have allowed Ansar Allah to consistently blunt the [Saudi-led] coalition's efforts.

¹Pre-unification history was also quite violent. See, Ahmed Alwadeai, "The 'Yemeni Threat' to Saudi Arabia: Mirage in the Desert or Quicksand Beneath the Throne?," *Middle East Critique*, 2025, pp. 4–6.

²Gregory D. Johnson, "[Yemen's Three Wars](#)," *Lawfare*, September 23, 2018.

³One could trace the timeline of this most recent civil war back to 2000, but observed heavy fighting started in about 2004. Ansar Allah seized control of Yemen's capital, Sana'a, in 2015, forcing the government into a complex internal-external exile. We refer to Ansar Allah as it officially refers to itself, instead of the informal but commonly used term 'the Houthis'. This is in line with BRG policy and should not be misconstrued as an expression of support for Ansar Allah. See Bruce Riedel, "[Who are the Houthis, and why are we at war with them?](#)," *Brookings Institute*, December 18, 2017.



CAMPAIGN CONTEXT

This *Battle Brief* zooms in on one of these overlooked fronts: the Saudi-Yemen border. Fighting between Ansar Allah and coalition forces in this area was routine and sometimes occurred at scale.⁴ Ansar Allah mounted numerous raids into the southern Saudi provinces of Jazan, Asir and Najran. They also launched drones and missiles targeting Saudi energy infrastructure and airports in the kingdom. In turn, Saudi aircraft concentrated many of their strikes on the border province of Saada, Ansar Allah's traditional stronghold. These were intended to suppress Ansar Allah ground forces and long-range strike teams but had mixed impact at best.

Driven in part by its failure to achieve strategic results through airstrikes alone, Saudi Arabia also armed and trained thousands of Yemeni fighters in the border area.⁵ In October 2016, the coalition began a concerted offensive operation in Saada, with locally-recruited Yemeni soldiers and their Saudi partners pushing across the border and into Ansar Allah's mountainous heartland.⁶ Ultimately, the campaign met with limited success. Coalition forces captured the al-Buqa border crossing in October, followed by the Alab crossing two months later, but failed to make a decisive breakthrough.⁷

In January 2018, coalition ground elements launched a new push into western Saada, and then southwestern Saada in April, taking



Picture: Steve Lynes, CC BY 2.0

Coalition forces could count upon significant air support from the Royal Saudi Air Force's fleet of fighter-bombers, which included the Tornado IDS (photographed prior to the battle in 2012).

the town of al-Malahidh. This successful thrust compromised Ansar Allah supply lines running from Haradh City to Saada. Coalition forces proceeded to capture additional sections of road and exert control over a strategic mountain range.⁸

However, many of these gains were reversed in a few weeks of fierce fighting in the late summer of 2019. Operational reversal hinged on the blow Ansar Allah delivered against the coalition at Jabara Valley that August, opening the offensive codenamed Operation Victory From God.⁹ In the following weeks, Ansar

⁴"[The Saudi-Yemeni Border Conflict](#)," *Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED)* cited by *ReliefWeb*, July 13, 2018; "[Beyond Riyadh](#)," *ACLED*, January 17, 2023.

⁵Ghamdan al-Yusufi, "[The Yemeni War: What has the recruitment of Yemenis left along the Saudi Border?](#)," *Daraj*, March 9, 2019; "[SAM Organization sheds light on the issue of Yemeni soldiers in southern Saudi Arabia](#)," *SAM for Rights and Liberties*, September 1, 2019.

⁶Wiam Abdel Malek, "[After the surprise operation in al-Baqaa...has the legitimate \[government\] and the Coalition begun the battle to liberate Saada, the Houthi heartland?](#)," *Al Mawqea Post*, October 12, 2016.

⁷"[Learn about the areas that the legitimate \[government\] forces captured in Saada](#)," *Al Mawqea Post*, January 14, 2017.

⁸"[Starvation, Diplomacy and Ruthless Friends: The Yemen Annual Review 2018](#)," *Sana'aa Center for Strategic Studies*, January 22, 2019.

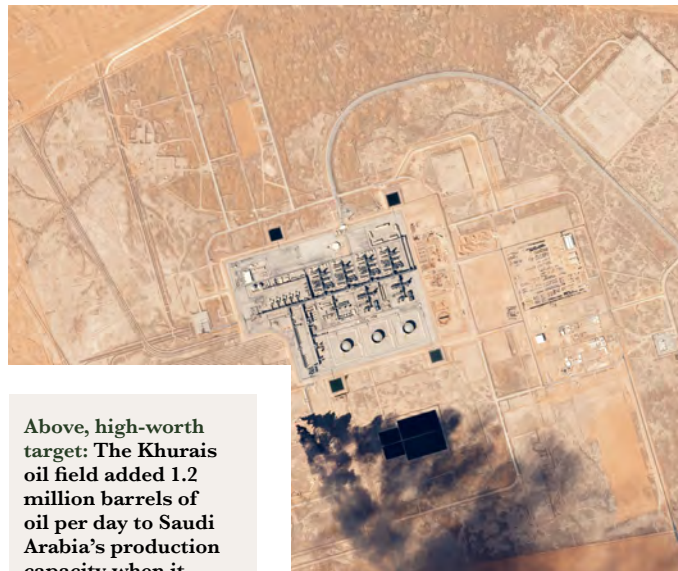
⁹This battle is coded in the *Ground Combat Database* as *Wadi Jabara-Al-Fra'a Yemen 2019*. For the sake of simplicity and readability, we refer to it in the present report as the *Battle for Jabara Valley*. *Wadi* in Arabic means valley, and *al-Fra'a* refers to a town situated near the fighting. For confirmation of name of operation see: *Al-Lahza Satellite Channel*, [Telegram](#), September 29, 2019.

Cruise missiles and drones struck refineries at Abqaiq and Khurais, temporarily halving Saudi Arabia's oil output.

Allah forces recaptured much of the territory in Saada previously secured by the coalition.¹⁰ Ansar Allah paired its ground operations with drone and missile strikes inside Saudi Arabia, creating a broader strategic pressure on the kingdom.¹¹

These strikes culminated abruptly on 14 September when cruise missiles and drones struck the Saudi oil refineries at Abqaiq and Khurais, temporarily halving Saudi Arabia's oil output. Ansar Allah claimed responsibility, though Iran was the real culprit.¹² Meanwhile, the second key player in the coalition, the United Arab Emirates, found itself at crossed purposes with Saudi Arabia and began withdrawing its forces. Worse still, Saudi Arabia's aerial bombing campaign had failed to significantly degrade Ansar Allah's ground-combat capabilities nor alter its strategic calculus.

After defeat at Jabara Valley, Saudi opportunities to change the strategic situation in the north through renewed ground offensives looked remote. Instead, Saudi Arabia entered into negotiations with Ansar Allah in October 2019.¹³ Fighting along the Yemeni-Saudi border subsequently ebbed, though both sides have routinely exchanged fire and executed cross-border incursions through at least mid-2026.



Above, high-worth target: The Khurais oil field added 1.2 million barrels of oil per day to Saudi Arabia's production capacity when it came on-line in 2009 (photographed in 2017). The smoke seen is not as a result of a strike – it is the product of operational processes.



Right: Traditional tower houses in Saada, a medieval city on Ansar Allah's supply route.

¹⁰*“War’s Elusive End - The Yemen Annual Review 2019,” Sana’a Center for Strategic Studies, January 30, 2020.*

¹¹*In September 2019, Ansar Allah claimed responsibility for the Abqaiq–Khurais attack on Saudi Aramco oil refineries which temporarily halved Saudi Arabia’s oil output. “Beyond Riyadh: Houthi Cross-Border Aerial Warfare (2015-2022),” ACLED, January 17, 2023.*

¹²*Uzi Rubin, “Saudi Arabia’s Black September,” The Jerusalem Institute for Security and Strategy, October 15, 2019.*

¹³*“Beyond Riyadh,” ACLED, January 17, 2023; “Riyadh holds talks with Houthis in effort to break Yemen deadlock,” Financial Times, October 11, 2019; Thomas Juneau, “Where is Saudi Arabia Headed in Yemen?,” Sana’a Center for Strategic Studies, March 6, 2020; Ibrahim Jalal, “Saudi Arabia eyes the exit in Yemen, but Saudi-Houthi talks alone won’t resolve the conflict,” Middle East Institute, April 15, 2020.*

BATTLE CONTEXT

Reset now to late August 2019. Having secured their foothold across the Saudi-Yemeni border and halted at the extent of their logistics lines, Saudi-backed Yemeni motorized infantry encamped in a series of loosely interconnected outposts along the barren ridgelines of the Jabara Valley. From these vantage points they could look back along the R1556 highway snaking away to the north along the valley floor. This two-lane asphalt road was their sole lifeline to Saudi Arabia, carrying the daily supplies of food, water and fuel to their mostly remote mountain fighting positions.

Ansar Allah had recognized the tactical importance of this ground tether and repeatedly planted improvised explosive devices (IEDs) along it through mid-2019, killing several soldiers.¹⁴ A graveyard of wrecked coalition vehicles from these attacks steadily accumulated in the village of al-Fara in the neighboring al-Fara Valley.¹⁵ As we shall see, questionable leadership, poor tactical decisions, inadequate training, lax tactical discipline and a failure to appreciate either the adversary or the terrain badly weakened this already tenuous position.

Coalition leadership and dispositions for the Battle of Jabara Valley

The Yemeni forces encamped in the valley formed part of a wider front known as the Kitaf Axis, led by Major General Sheikh Raddad al-Hashimi. Al-Hashimi had risen to prominence fighting



Major General Sheikh Raddad al-Hashimi flanked by coalition officers, as seen in March 2024.

Picture: The Media Center of the Kitaf Axis

in pro-government militias against Ansar Allah from perhaps 2009.¹⁶ Prior to the war and into its first years al-Hashimi was a honey merchant and had advanced as a prominent Salafi cleric educated in the Dar al-Hadith religious school in the town of Dammaj.¹⁷ When Saudi Arabia intervened in Yemen in 2015, Salafi forces recruited from areas like Dammaj were its preferred allies in the struggle against Ansar Allah, with Salafi clerics often leading the Yemeni units it sponsored.¹⁸

Al-Hashimi's Kitaf Axis was purportedly set up by the Saudis to exert control across the Kitaf wa al-Buqa district of the Saada province.¹⁹ Reflecting this origin, the axis' command and administrative elements appear to have been based over the border inside the Saudi city of Najran.²⁰ Keeping in mind the relatively small on-paper size of a Yemeni brigade compared to

¹⁴Hassan Mohammed, *"Accounts from the heart of the setback...how the Liwa al-Fateh brigade fell easy prey to the Houthis,"* Belqees, October 3, 2019.

¹⁵This vehicle graveyard is visible on satellite imagery dated July 21, 2019 at 17°17'32.52"N 44°11'42.69"E. It was also photographed following the battle, see: *"ID 21232 Streit Group Spartan,"* LostArmour.Info, accessed March 5, 2026.

¹⁶Hussein Al-Saghir, *"To Sheikh Raddad Al-Hashimi, the commander of the Kataf axis and the stops, a thousand greetings,"* Adngad.net, July 31, 2025.

¹⁷*"Who is Major General Raddad Al Hashimi, Biography,"* The Ocean, January 3, 2026; Hesham Alghanman, *"Influence Abroad: Saudi Arabia Replaces Salafism in its Soft Power Outreach,"* Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, December 23, 2024. Salafism is a revivalist movement within Sunni Islam. Its modern form in Yemen has been specifically sponsored by Saudi Arabia, which saw it as a useful buttress against rival Shi'a and Arab-nationalist ideologies. See: Laurent Bonnefoy, "Chapter 14: How Transnational is Salafism in Yemen," in Roel Meijer, ed., *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 333-334.

¹⁸Ahmed Nagi, *"Saudi Arabia's Split-Image Approach to Salafism,"* Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, September 13, 2022.

Western standards – roughly 1,200-1,500 soldiers versus 3,000-5,000 – the Kitaf Axis ostensibly fielded a number of brigades. At least three were deployed to Jabara.²¹

- 84th Infantry Brigade dubbed ‘al-Fateh’, the main striking force of the Axis, which al-Hashimi appears to have led directly;
- 151st Infantry Brigade, dubbed ‘al-Tawhid’;
- Al-Farouq Brigade, a smaller formation with a supporting or reserve role.²²

There are also mentions of a 122nd Infantry Brigade, but its existence is unclear. Reportedly, it had been dissolved and its forces integrated into the 84th Brigade after a battlefield collapse a year earlier.²³ In total, the Kitaf Axis’s forces in the Jabara Valley

consisted of three brigades fielding more than 4,000 soldiers.²⁴ On-hand numbers may have been fewer.

Whilst the Kitaf Axis was nominally considered part of the regular Yemeni National Army (YNA), in practice it was a proxy force under Saudi control and administration.²⁵ Many of the commanders were Salafi clerics, while the rank and file were generally composed of Yemenis from the south of the country, lured by the promise of salaries up to tenfold greater than those of their regular YNA counterparts.²⁶ Even Yemeni government officials described them as mercenaries.²⁷ For Saudi Arabia, ever conscious of sustaining casualties among its own personnel, these Yemeni proxies were a useful tool for conducting operations along the border.²⁸

^{19a}*Who is Major General Raddad Al Hashimi, Biography,* The Ocean, January 3, 2026.

²⁰Kitaf Axis recruits and commanders were based inside Najran, see: *“No one knows the truth but God”: Parents of missing Yemeni fighters search for their sons,* Middle East Eye, September 24, 2019.

²¹While noting there may have been other brigades in the Kitaf Axis, we refer to these three brigades as the axis in this brief.

²²Multiple sources refer to Al-Hashimi leading both the Kitaf Axis and ‘Al Fateh’. For example, see Hassan Mohammed, “Accounts from the heart of the setback,” 2019; and “Details of the setback of ‘Kataf’ and its repercussions on the Saudi war in Yemen? (Special Report),” Yemen Shabab Net, October 7, 2019. POWs from all three brigades were taken during the battle according to an Ansar Allah testimony, see: “Operation “Victory from God” in the eyes of one of its heroes,” Ansarollah.com, October 21, 2019 [caution potentially hazardous URL: <https://www.ansarollah.com.ye/archives/286724>].

²³Ashraf al-Falahi, *“Yemeni sources reveal to Arabi21 the entire story of the Ketaf massacre,”* Arabi21, September 30, 2019 [accessed at webarchive.org].

²⁴Ashraf al-Falahi, September 30, 2019. Authors’ conversations with a local expert puts the actual number at likely below 3,000.

²⁵Hans Lammerant, Daniel Sidoli, Laura Silvia Battaglia, et al., “Belgian Arms in Yemen: The Battle of the Jabara Valley,” Vredesactie, 2020 [caution website listed as unsecure, <https://jabara.istopthearmstrade.eu/>]; Ashraf al-Falahi, September 30, 2019.

²⁶For example, one serviceman described receiving a monthly salary of \$933 per month, in comparison to the average YNA soldier’s wage of \$100 per month. See: *“Drawn by Saudi cash, Yemeni mercenaries are left high and dry,”* Middle East Eye, February 12, 2019; *“Yemeni mercenaries fight and die to protect Saudi border,”* Middle East Eye, August 31, 2017.

²⁷“Yemeni mercenaries are left high and dry,” Middle East Eye. It is worth noting that journalists from the Middle East Eye often speak to Yemenis in the Muslim Brotherhood who oppose the Salafis, which may explain the candid harshness of the interior ministry source.

²⁸Omar Munassar, “Rethinking GCC Security: Lessons From the Saudi-Led Coalition’s Intervention in Yemen,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 2025, pp. 8–11.

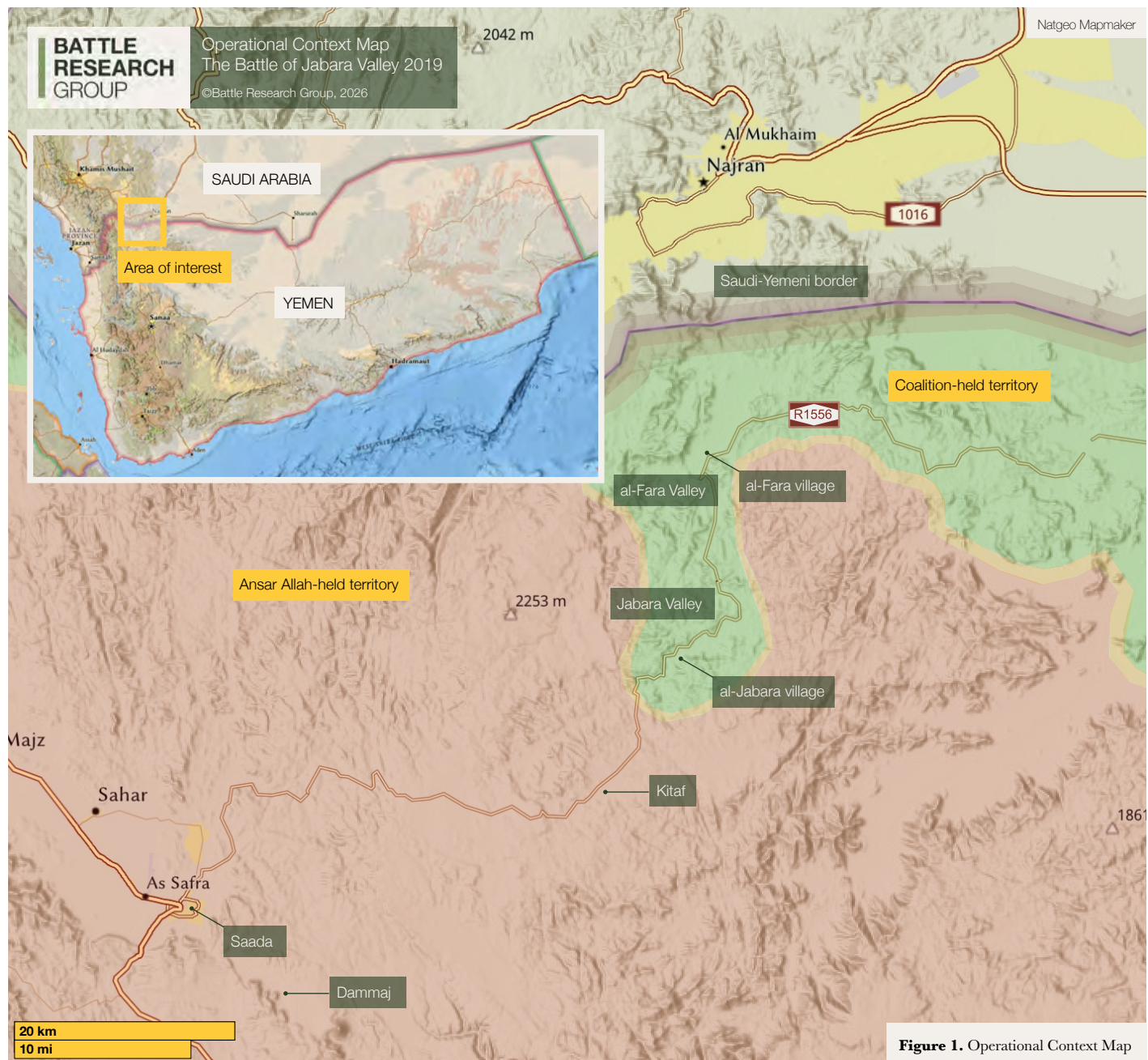


Figure 1. Operational Context Map

Formation and probable objectives of the Jabara Valley salient

In the months prior to August 2019, al-Hashimi had led these forces from their positions on the border in a steady advance south down the R1556 highway, pushing into Ansar Allah-held territory.²⁹ The operational rationale for this advance remains murky, with its direction suggesting the district capital of Kitaf town as an ultimate objective.³⁰ Kitaf was a major Ansar Allah supply hub and it shielded Saada from direct attack. Taking Kitaf would have allowed the coalition to invest Saada and perhaps threaten further advances. Clearly the Saudis were aware of Kitaf's value. At least one coalition unit had already advanced within 20 kilometers of the town in 2018.³¹

Success at Kitaf would also have allowed the coalition to put Dammaj at risk, and by extent bring the Dar al-Hadith religious school within reach. Once the cradle of Salafism in Yemen, Dar al-Hadith had been under Ansar Allah occupation since the Salafi

defeat in the 2011-14 Dammaj War. Its loss was a major source of grievance for the Salafis and its recapture was one of their main objectives.³² Al-Hashimi himself had been part of the force that had defended the school. Given this catastrophic experience and his clerical bona fides, Dar al-Hadith had personal value for al-Hashimi.³³ As he led his forces along the R1556 in 2019, the allure of re-taking the school and avenging the Dammaj War may have affected his judgment.³⁴

After the Jabara Valley Battle, a survivor from the 84th Brigade said that al-Hashimi's fixation on Dar al-Hadith might explain some of the brigade's tactical carelessness.³⁵ Though advancing down a single highway into enemy-controlled ground, al-Hashimi reportedly made little effort to secure his flanks.³⁶ Subsequent interviews with 84th Brigade soldiers describe the brigade clearing only the terrain immediately flanking the R1556. Commanders left the surrounding terrain inadequately reconnoitered, despite it being mostly under Ansar Allah control.³⁷

²⁹Offensive operations were ongoing in the Jabara direction as early as February 2019. See, [*"Liberating a mountain range from the Houthi militias and reaching its supply lines in the shoulders of Saada,"*](#) December 2 News Agency, 2019.

³⁰Hans Lammerant et al., 2019.

³¹[*"Yemen: Legitimacy liberates strategic locations in Saada and 20 Houthis killed in Al-Jawf,"*](#) 24.ae, June 12, 2018.

³²Ahmed Nagi, 2022; Laurent Bonnefoy, [*"Yemen: Salafis and the war,"*](#) Policy Report No.18, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2020; [*"Yemen's Taiz sinks into the abyss as Salafis fight war of revenge,"*](#) Middle East Eye, March 29, 2022.

³³Hassan Mohammed, [*"Accounts from the heart of the setback,"*](#) 2019.

³⁴This is supposition that is at least loosely supported by the cited references. The authors' conversations with a local expert indicate that al-Hashimi might have actually been pushing for the Salafi religious school in Kitaf (a much more realistic objective), but Hassan Mohammed's original reporting specifically mentions Dammaj.

³⁵Hassan Mohammed, [*"Accounts from the heart of the setback,"*](#) 2019.

³⁶Hassan Mohammed, [*"Accounts from the heart of the setback,"*](#) 2019; and [*"The Holocaust Of The Abu Jabara Valley... Saudi Arabia's Involvement In The Killing of Hundreds of Yemenis Defending Its Borders Revealed,"*](#) Motabaat, September 30, 2019.

³⁷Hassan Mohammed, [*"Accounts from the heart of the setback,"*](#) 2019; and Ahmed Al-Barti, [*"What caught a military brigade in Kataf in the Houthis' trap?,"*](#) AlMushahid.net, September 2, 2019.

Therefore, as the Kitaf Axis's forces descended deeper into the Jabara Valley they formed a dangerously exposed salient some 20 kilometers deep but only a few kilometers wide.³⁸ When concerned subordinates came to al-Hashimi to warn him of the danger caused by their exposed flanks he reportedly dismissed them. He is also said to have dismissed the reports of the Axis' scouts that warned of unusual enemy movements and an impending Ansar Allah attack.³⁹

Coalition final dispositions before the battle

Accordingly, on the eve of the battle, the forces of the Kitaf Axis were strung out along the R1556 highway in a series of camps and outposts (see Figure 2). One major camp in mountains south of the village of al-Jabara anchored the southern end of the salient. Other detachments held defensive cantonments and larger sites in and around the village itself. Continuing up the highway to the north from al-Jabara to al-Fara village, individual positions crested the surrounding peaks. Al-Fara appears to have served as the base of the Axis' operations.

Terrain along the entire salient was so rough that most units probably operated out of line of sight from one another. Steep and irregular changes in elevation of hundreds of meters created room for hidden movement between the valley floors and the peaks. Volcanic boulder fields and other rock formations offered further cover and concealment in the mountains and hills, while patchy scrubs broke up the low ground. Military analyst Tom Cooper described the terrain of the Saudi-Yemeni border area as "ideal

ground for guerrilla warfare". Writing specifically on the Saada area, he argued that modern military forces tied to vehicles and heavy logistics trains would find it "nearly impossible" to operate successfully there.⁴⁰

Coalition order of battle and will to fight

On paper, the Kitaf Axis represented a fairly robust fighting force. Saudi advisors had motorized each brigade with organic wheeled vehicles. Specifically, the Yemeni units fielded Toyota Land Cruiser pick-up trucks with mounted ZU-23-2 23mm anti-aircraft guns and machineguns, and some Streit Group Spartan mine-resistant ambush protected vehicles (MRAPs) suitable for counter-IED operations.⁴¹ Mounted and dismounted heavy machineguns included Soviet-Russian DshKs, NSVs (all 12.7mm) and KPVs (14.5mm), and American M2 Browning (12.7mm) and Mk-19 40mm automatic grenade launchers. Organic indirect fires were provided by ~81/82mm and ~120mm mortars and at least one Type 63 107mm towed multiple rocket launcher.⁴²

While the brigades of the Kitaf Axis could also count on some additional light armor and fire support from the Saudis – see Figure 3 – this technical order of battle gave the Yemeni units just a slight materiel advantage over the Ansar Allah attackers. In all likelihood though, even a far more robust table of equipment would not have made up for the lack of will amongst the Axis' soldiers.

While al-Hashimi and the other Salafi leaders probably had strong ideological and personal motivations to fight, the men of the

³⁸See operational map provided in: [Mohammed al-Sherjebi al-Mesoori] "[May Allah curse him until the day](#)," Facebook, September 1, 2019.

³⁹Hassan Mohammed, 2019. Other survivors also hint that their concerns were dismissed in: "[I curse myself: Yemeni mercenaries say their Saudi fighting days are over](#)," Middle East Eye, September 3, 2019; and "[The Holocaust Of The Abu Jabara Valley](#)'...", Motabaat, 2019.

⁴⁰Tom Cooper, *Hot Skies Over Yemen Volume 2: Aerial Warfare over the Southern Arabian Peninsula, 1994-2017*, Warwick, UK: Helion & Company, 2018, pp. 19 and 50.

⁴¹As visible in this propaganda video: [facebook.com/reel/190320218209666](https://www.facebook.com/reel/190320218209666), Facebook reel, undated.

⁴²This equipment list is tallied up from Ansar Allah footage. Contact authors for full references.

84th, 151st and Farouk brigades seem to have been motivated primarily by financial desperation. Many hailed from the southern city of Taiz, where recruiting brokers lured desperate young men into the ranks with the promise of good salaries.⁴³ According to one account, recruits would arrive at the Axis' brigades only to find they would be sent to the front with limited or no training. Promised salaries were reportedly skimmed by senior officers or withheld altogether.⁴⁴ Therefore, the likely primary motivation for service – money – was weakened or nullified.

Tensions resulting from this situation had ostensibly boiled over only shortly before the battle when the troops of the 84th Brigade discovered that they would receive just two of the four months' pay due to them. A riot broke out during which civilian stores in the local settlements – presumably al-Fara and al-Jabara – were looted, reportedly including ones owned by al-Hashimi himself. Eventually the brigade restored order. But the pay-riot incident is indicative of the poor relations between the Axis' commanders and its personnel.⁴⁵

Saudi advisors and partnered forces

Two companies of Saudi advisors were embedded across the three brigades of the Kitaf Axis.⁴⁶ It is unclear how much they were able to smooth tensions between the Yemeni leaders and soldiers, if at all. Based on previous coalition practice, these



Salaries were reportedly skimmed or withheld altogether. Therefore, the likely primary motivation for [Axis] service – money – was weakened or nullified.

advisors were likely organized into platoon-sized Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLTs, drawing on NATO practice from Afghanistan) attached to each brigade.⁴⁷ Teams worked out of Oshkosh M-ATV MRAPs with mounted machineguns. These vehicles were also designed for counter-IED and counter-ambush operations, though they proved vulnerable to both threats.⁴⁸

⁴³"I curse myself!" Middle East Eye, 2019; "Drawn by Saudi cash," Middle East Eye, 2019.

⁴⁴Abd al-Rab al-Fatahi, "The border fronts...a profitable business for the middlemen of war, whose goods are young men," al-Ayyam, 20 December 2018. This source indicates that grievances between the personnel of the Kitaf Axis and their commanders pre-dated the 84th Brigade's riot.

⁴⁵Hassan Mohammed, "Accounts from the heart of the setback," 2019.

⁴⁶Hassan Mohammed, "Details of the setback," 2019; and "Head of Mashat's office reveals for the first time details of the great operation and what happened in Wadi Al Abu Jabara," Motabaat, September 30, 2019.

⁴⁷NATO = North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

⁴⁸For details of the Coalition's previous usage of OMLTs, see Michael Knights, *The Race for Mukalla: Arabian Elite Forces and the War Against Al-Qaeda*, Profile Editions, 2024, 101-104, Kindle. The Kitaf Axis's OMLTs specific use of M-ATVs is not directly evidenced but can be surmised based on footage of the subsequent fighting.

During the war's previous battles, Saudi and Emirati advisors had been able to stiffen otherwise skittish Yemeni units. They also brought joint terminal attack controllers (JTACs) and joint-fires controllers close enough to the fighting to leverage the coalition's close-air support and – range dependent – artillery.⁴⁹ However, the OMLTs also created a stark dependence. Without them, Yemeni brigades had only minimal fire support and little hope of tactical reinforcement or rescue.

A much larger concentration of Saudi ground elements from the Royal Saudi Land Forces and the Saudi Army National Guard (SANG) was positioned in Najran, 50 kilometers north of the Kitaf Axis troops and across the international border. Units from both branches were rotated in and out of Najran to act as rapid-response forces to defend the border and to serve as an emergency reserve for coalition operations inside Yemen.⁵⁰ In late August 2019, responsibility for defending Najran fell to the SANG's King Abdulaziz Mechanized Brigade, which had begun its deployment in January of that year.⁵¹

This brigade boasted significant materiel resources, consisting of three mechanized infantry battalions mounted on wheeled LAV infantry fighting vehicles. Among these, the LAV-25 was the most common variant, equipped with a 25mm autocannon and 7.62mm co-axial machinegun, but LAV-PCs equipped with pintle-mounted M2 Brownings were also fielded. On paper, each battalion also possessed LAV-AT tank destroyers and LAV-M self-propelled 120mm mortars, though only the former were seen

at Jabara. Brigade fires were provided by an artillery battalion equipped with CAESAR self-propelled 155mm howitzers.⁵²

While they were well equipped, SANG units were known to suffer from lackluster training and leadership. One American general, commenting on his experience mentoring guard mechanized brigades in 2017, noted that the first brigade rotated to the border suffered a very high ratio of killed to wounded due to a lack of even basic first-aid skills.⁵³ Though the situation had improved somewhat in the ensuing two years, the King Abdulaziz Brigade's experience at Jabara would also be harrowing.

Picture: Sgt. 1st Class Mikki Sprengle, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



The King Abdulaziz Mechanized Brigade of the Saudi Army National Guard was equipped with CAESAR howitzers – such as the one pictured being used by French troops to fire into the Middle Euphrates River Valley, Syria, in December 2018.

⁴⁹Knights, *The Race for Mukalla*, 2024, pp. 101, 107, 113, 217.

⁵⁰Tom Cooper, *Hot Skies*, 2018, pp. 51–54.

⁵¹Ministry of National Guard, [“Additional National Guard forces arrive at the southern border of Najran coming from Al-Ahsa,”](#) YouTube, January 20, 2019; Mohamed Momani, [“Why did Saudi Arabia deploy new armored forces on its border with Yemen?,”](#) Erem News, January 7, 2019.

⁵²International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2020*, Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2020, p. 375.

⁵³Frank Muth, [“FMS: OPM SANG - The blueprint for success,”](#) speech at Association of the United States Army Annual Meeting & Exposition, Washington DC, October 9, 2017.

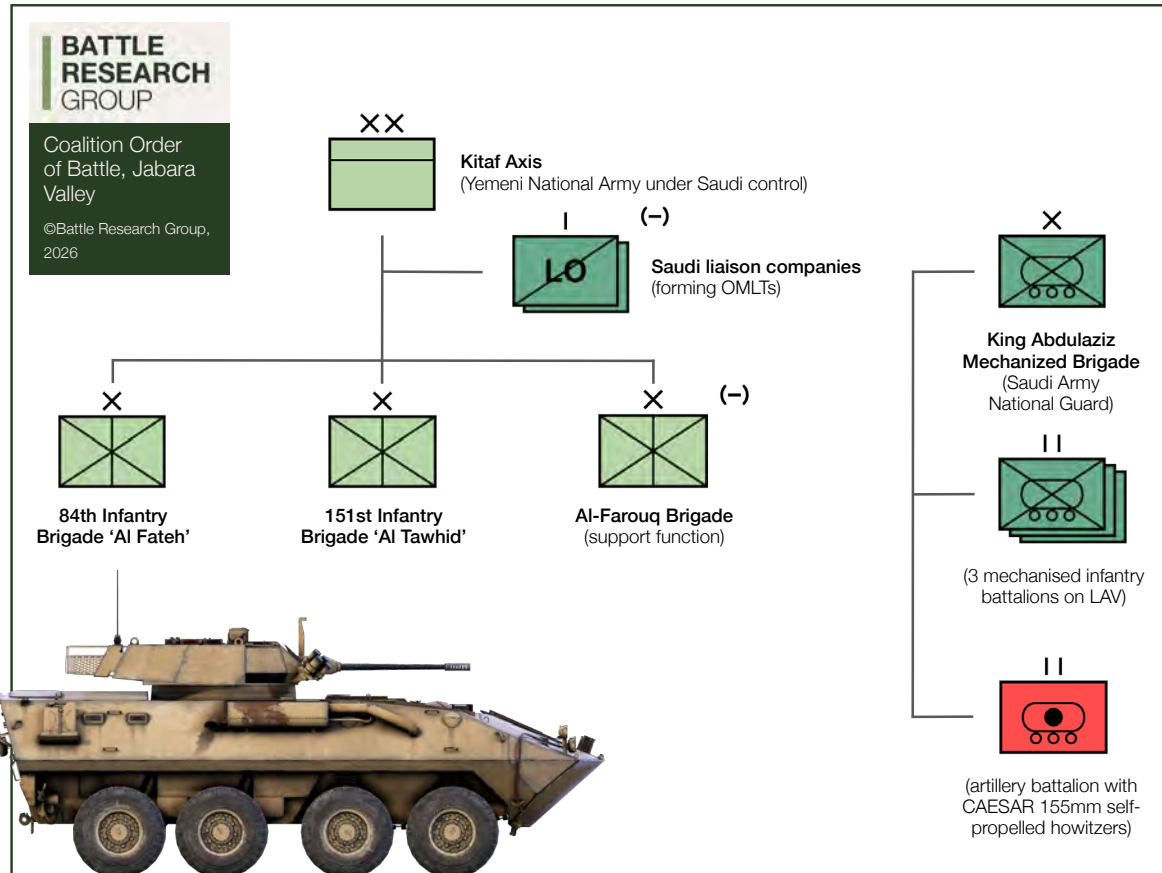


Figure 3. The diagram reconstructs the order of battle for coalition forces during the Battle of Jabara Valley. The Kitaf Axis has been depicted as a divisional unit, befitting its status controlling multiple brigades, although it would not become a division officially until years later. Indeed, at the time of Jabara, there is little evidence to suggest it possessed organic support units. The Kitaf Axis' brigades were also smaller than NATO equivalents (~5,000 personnel), with the 84th Brigade and 151st Brigade numbering 1,100 and 1,200-strong respectively in 2018. It is uncertain if the King Abdulaziz Mechanised Brigade deployed in its entirety. Judging by open-source footage, it is more likely that only elements of one of its infantry battalions were present. POWs were taken specifically from the brigade's 23rd Infantry Battalion.

Ansar Allah forces

Units of Ansar Allah's Najran Axis faced off against the coalition in the Jabara Valley.⁵⁴ This formation's exact composition is difficult to establish. While the coalition's Kitaf Axis was a distinct formation with a clear structure and constituent brigades, Ansar Allah's Najran Axis was likely more akin to a well-organized guerrilla force.⁵⁵ Instead of aligning in easily detected linear formations – companies, battalions, brigades – Ansar Allah's ground forces adapted to the threat of coalition airstrikes by employing a very low force-to-space ratio and a highly dispersed force structure.

Individual cells of fighters fought semi-autonomously with overall direction provided by a local operations room.⁵⁶ These cells were typically comprised of dismounted fighters wielding light weapons, while supporting weapons teams operated heavier equipment like B-10 82mm recoilless rifles, medium mortars and Dehlahieh anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs; these were Iranian copies of the Russian AT-14).⁵⁷ Al-Hashimi would later identify what he described as Ansar Allah brigades participating in the battle – the al-Samad Brigade and 156th Brigade – but the presence of these or any other similar large formations remains unconfirmed.⁵⁸

Ansar Allah's irregular organization should not be mistaken for primitiveness. While its units were decentralized at a tactical level, it also employed a sophisticated and highly centralized operational-strategic command structure. Overall control of the imminent offensive in the Jabara Valley was held by the chief of Ansar Allah's general staff, Major General Muhammad Abd-al-Karim al-Ghamari, indicating that the highest echelons of the group's military apparatus were involved in the operation's planning.⁵⁹ This is also evidenced by Ansar Allah's use of long-range fires in support of the offensive, which were historically tightly controlled by its governing Jihad Council.⁶⁰ These included one-way attack drones capable of striking targets at a range of over 1,200 kilometers and a variety of surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems.⁶¹

Ansar Allah ballistic missiles had proven a particular thorn in

the coalition's side through at least mid-2019, causing several mass-casualty incidents.⁶² For the offensive in the Jabara Valley – subsequently codenamed Operation Victory from God – the group's drone and missile forces were tasked with conducting joint operations to support the Najran Axis's ground assaults. This allowed Major General al-Ghamari and his subordinates to prosecute targets well beyond the immediate area of the Jabara Valley.⁶³

Ansar Allah's will to fight was, reportedly, solid. Morale, or observable sentiment, on the eve of battle was high.⁶⁴ Earlier battles had already proven Ansar Allah fighters to be tough and even fanatical opponents willing to hold hopeless defensive positions to the bitter end.⁶⁵ Now on the front foot, with the course of the wider war turning in their favor, the forces of the Najran Axis represented a serious threat to the Jabara salient.

⁵⁴The term *Najran Axis* is specifically used by Ansar Allah spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree. See: *Al-Lahza Satellite Channel*, September 29, 2019.

⁵⁵Based on Michael Knights' description of Ansar Allah tactical organization in "The Houthi War Machine: From Guerrilla War to State Capture," *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 11, No. 8, 2018, p. 19.

⁵⁶Michael Knights, "The Houthi War Machine," 2018, p. 19.

⁵⁷All of these weapon systems were filmed in action in subsequent Ansar Allah footage of the battle, see Dehlaiveh ATGMs at 00:47 of "Full Scenes of the First Stage of Operation Victory From God – Part One," Ansar Allah Media, accessed February 20, 2026 [caution potentially hazardous URL, <https://www.ansarallah.com/ye/17240/>] and medium mortars and B-10s at 01:27 and 06:05 of Ansar Allah, "Full Scenes."

⁵⁸Media Centre of the 4th Division - [Yemeni Emergency Forces](https://www.facebook.com/yemeniemergencyforces/), Facebook, August 30, 2019.

⁵⁹"'Martyr Al-Ghamari' Victory Corner: Details of the Military Operations He Led Against the US-Saudi Aggression," Ansar Allah Media, accessed June 20, 2026 [caution potentially hazardous URL, [ansarallah.com/ye/archives/817771](https://www.ansarallah.com/ye/archives/817771)].

⁶⁰Michael Knights, Adnan al-Gabarni, and Casey Coombs, "The Houthi Jihad Council: Command and Control in 'the Other Hezbollah,'" *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 15, No. 10, 2022, p. 8.

⁶¹It is debatable whether a one-way, inertially guided, winged tube with a warhead should be called a drone, but we apply common usage here. See Ian Williams and Shaan Shaikh, *The Missile War in Yemen*, Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2020.

⁶²Williams and Shaikh, 2020, 10–14.

⁶³*Al-Lahza Satellite Channel*, September 29, 2019.

THE BATTLE OF JABARA VALLEY 2019: 25-27/28 AUGUST

This narrative was constructed using a synthesis of video recorded of the battle, open-source vehicle loss reporting and contemporary news reports. Most of the video footage comes from a series of montages released by Ansar Allah's media wing and arranged in parts one through four. Unfortunately, these videos do not appear to follow any chronological order. Instead, the flow of events had to be reconstructed by geolocating scenes from the footage and cross-referencing them with descriptions and maps in contemporary reporting. Accordingly, the specific chronology of the following narrative should be treated with caution, even though we are relatively confident in its overall course.

Pre-attack probing and shaping operations

The unusual movements the Kitaf Axis' scouts had detected in the days leading up to the battle were the preparations for one of the largest offensive operations Ansar Allah had undertaken so far in the war. According to subsequent Ansar Allah press releases, the planning for what became known as Operation Victory from God began months earlier. The key intent was to lure coalition forces into the Jabara Valley in order to destroy them. It is unclear if al-Hashimi was enticed to extend his forces down the R1556 highway or if Ansar Allah forces simply backed off enough to allow the Yemenis to push on an open door. They did maintain deliberate control over the flanking terrain.

After the battle, Ansar Allah spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree stated that their forces had conducted an extensive reconnaissance of the Kitaf Axis' positions for three months prior to the attack.⁶⁶ As part of this effort, several raids were launched across the R1556 highway to "feel the pulse" of al-Hashimi's forces and to lay IEDs.⁶⁷ Throughout this probing period, disaffected Yemeni soldiers also reportedly provided their adversaries with insight into goings-on inside the Axis.⁶⁸ While reconnaissance and probing attacks shaped the contours of the salient, additional Ansar Allah units began to concentrate for the offensive. They infiltrated the valley in dispersed groups of no more than ten soldiers each, exploiting natural terrain features and active camouflage to conceal themselves from prowling coalition aircraft and drones.⁶⁹



25 August: Op Victory from God begins

Operation Victory from God began in earnest in the early hours of 25 August with operational fires striking coalition forces in depth and across the border into Saudi Arabia.⁷⁰ One Ansar Allah missile force detachment operating a Badr-1 multiple rocket launch system fired a salvo of ten artillery rockets at King Abdullah bin

⁶⁴"Operation 'Victory from God,'" *Ansarollah.com*, 2019.

⁶⁵Michael Knights, *The Race for Mukalla*, 2024, 165–166, 181–183.

⁶⁶"*The Armed Forces reveal details of the first phase of Operation Victory from God.*" *al-Thawra*, September 30, 2019.

⁶⁷Hassan Mohammed, "Accounts from the heart of the setback," 2019.

⁶⁸"*The Armed Forces reveal details.*" 2019.

⁶⁹Luqman Abdullah, "*Secrets of the Najran Operation: Yemeni geography cursed the Saudi regime.*" *Al-Akhbar*, October 1, 2019.

⁷⁰"*The Armed Forces reveal details.*" 2019.

⁷¹Though described as ballistic missiles in Ansar Allah sources, the Badr-1's munitions are actually unguided artillery rockets, see Williams and Shaikh, *The Missile War in Yemen*, 2020, p. 40.

Abdulaziz International Airport, located in the city of Jizan on Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast.⁷¹ The airport made for a natural target as a forward base for Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) aircraft operating in the border area.⁷² Meanwhile, Samad-2 one-way attack drones attacked the control towers of Abha International Airport and King Khalid Air Base, both located in the Saudi city of Khamis Mushayt.

Ansar Allah claimed the strikes were successful, while coalition statements reported the downing of one drone and the interception of six of the ten artillery rockets.⁷³ Initial strikes appear to have been intended to suppress the coalition's air power. Brigadier General Saree later claimed that this objective was achieved within the first 24 hours of the operation.⁷⁴ However, subsequent footage showed coalition fighter-bombers continued to operate in numbers over the Jabara battlefield.

Najran Axis units synchronized their assault against the coalition positions in Jabara Valley with the supporting deep-strike salvoes. It is not clear from the available evidence when the first fighters left their attack positions. One Yemeni soldier later described the Ansar Allah attack continuing as of 0300 on 25 August, indicating that the Ansar Allah ground advances began under the cover of darkness.⁷⁵ Their attack appears to have followed three axes of advance (see Figure 4). Cited reports suggest the first axis was

diversionary. Dismounted infantry attacked loosely defended mountaintop positions immediately south of the Jabara Valley.⁷⁶ Video recorded by Ansar Allah – though unfortunately posted without clear indication of date or time – shows initial preparatory fire with medium mortars during pre-dawn darkness. Then during daylight, a B-10 recoilless rifle is shown firing upon a ridgeline south of Jabara Valley.⁷⁷ Subsequent and intervening footage shows Ansar Allah cells advancing through coalition positions amongst the rocky heights, presumably in this southern area. Fighters methodically cleared these positions with AK-variant rifles and PKM machineguns while occasional incoming rounds cracked overhead.⁷⁸

Ansar Allah's main effort appears to have been put towards the other two axes of advance. These aimed to cut off the R1556 at the northern neck of the Jabara Valley in a pincer movement, simultaneously interdicting the main supply route and encircling al-Hashimi's forces. Advancing from the east, Ansar Allah infantry teams crept up the side of a peak dominating the valley before beginning their assault on the coalition positions located there. Coalition defenders had built ersatz above-ground bunkers from piled stones. These afforded only limited cover and provided no effective concealment from observation. Figure 5 (page 22) depicts the resulting engagement.

⁷²Coalition statements later said six of the projectiles were successfully intercepted but they made no mention of the other four. Ansar Allah claimed in turn that the strike had killed and wounded dozens, but no corroborating evidence exists to our knowledge. *"Full details of Operation 'Victory from God' (Report + Video + Photos)," Alyemenione.com, September 29, 2019; "Coalition destroys missiles fired by Houthis at Saudi Arabia: spokesman," Reuters, August 26, 2019.*

⁷³*"The Houthis announce the targeting of Abja airport and King Khalid base. Al-Maliki: We intercepted a drone," CNN Arabic, August 25, 2019.*

⁷⁴*Al-Lahza Satellite Channel, September 29, 2019.*

⁷⁵*Ashraf al-Falahi, September 30, 2019; Ahmed Al-Barti, September 2, 2019.*

⁷⁶*The following sources show this southern axis of advance: Ahmed Al-Barti, September 2, 2019; Mohammed al-Sherjebi al-Mesoori, September 1, 2019.*

⁷⁷*B-10 engagement at 06:05 and mortar engagements at 0:01-01:27 in Ansar Allah, "Full Scenes."*

⁷⁸*01:51-07:54 in Ansar Allah, "Full Scenes."*



Judging from the videos, assault elements closed to within hand-grenade range of each fighting position while supporting elements pinned the defenders with machineguns and aimed rifle fire; it is unclear if they also used indirect fires in these specific assaults. Once this uphill attack culminated on the peak, a long-range skirmish began with another coalition position located on the next ridgeline ~1,000 meters to the north. In the footage, tracer rounds from the Ansar Allah riflemen are seen clearly falling on target. Figure 6 (page 23) depicts this phase of the engagement.

Sometime shortly after this first attack reached the peak – so probably mid-morning of 25 August – a platoon of Oshkosh M-ATVs ostensibly manned by Saudi advisors or partnered troops appeared from behind an intervening height. These M-ATVs sped down onto the highway along the valley floor while under heavy Ansar Allah small-arms fire. One of the tailing vehicles carried several Yemenis clinging onto its hood and roof, apparently desperate to escape the Ansar Allah advance.

This column of fleeing M-ATVs and hangers-on retreated in the direction of al-Fara, leaving the Ansar Allah fighters free to secure the abandoned coalition positions. This included a mortar firebase from which a Saudi Arabian flag was produced.⁷⁹ Subsequent engagements with probably Dehlavieh ATGMs knocked out at least one separated M-ATV in the valley floor.⁸⁰

Given the presence of the flag and the M-ATVs, it is likely that this assault overran the positions of a Saudi OMLT. It is possible that

Ansar Allah's pincer maneuver may have deliberately targeted the advisors attached to the Kitaf Axis as a secondary objective, as the third axis of advance – marching on the R1556 from the west – also overran a position apparently containing Saudi troops. Ansar Allah video of the assault showed cells of fighters advancing onto a ridgeline overlooking the highway and, beyond that, a small coalition camp in a dried-out riverbed (see Figure 4).

Long-range small-arms fire flushed two M-ATVs from this camp, leaving the position empty for the taking.⁸¹ Fleeing Saudis abandoned an M163 Vulcan Air Defense System (VAD) equipped with a 20mm rotary cannon, along with a pair of 120mm mortars. These were captured by the attackers and may have been re-employed. Ansar Allah infantry also fired on at least two more (probably misdirected) coalition vehicles driving southward, including at least a Land Cruiser and another M-ATV.⁸²

Footage of this action indicates it took place at dusk, but it is unclear if this was the evening of 25 August or one of the subsequent days of the operation. In any event, by the end of the first day of Operation Victory from God, the noose was closing tightly around the three brigades of the Kitaf Axis. One Yemeni survivor reported that supplies of food and water were already running out by this early stage.⁸³

Also during daylight on 25 August, an Ansar Allah missile force detachment reportedly fired a Nakkal ballistic missile at coalition forces assembling inside Najran and preparing to move south

⁷⁹Reconstruction of events documented from 00:56–08:12 in Ansar Allah Media, “The complete footage of the first stage of Operation Victory From God – Part Four,” 2019, accessed April 3, 2026, mmy.ye/17403 [caution potentially hazardous URL].

⁸⁰11:30–12:05 in Ansar Allah Media, “The complete footage...Part Four,” 2019.

⁸¹Based on map analysts using Google Earth Pro we estimate the range from the supporting fire position to the target to be ~1,000 meters.

⁸²Engagement documented from 01:15–02:50, capture of the Coalition camp from 04:24 in Ansar Allah Media, “The complete footage...Part Four” 2019.

⁸³Ashraf al-Falahi, September 30, 2019.

Figure 5. The initial course of the Ansar Allah assault on the coalition positions east of the R1556.



Graphic by Fernando J. Sanchez Menendez

across the border.⁸⁴ Brigadier General Saree subsequently claimed a direct hit on the Saudi assembly area.⁸⁵ Coalition sources did not rebut the Ansar Allah claims. If the strike was accurate then its disruptive effects may explain the relatively long time it took for Saudi regular forces to react to the unfolding disaster across the border to their south.⁸⁶



26 August 2019: Tightening the encirclement

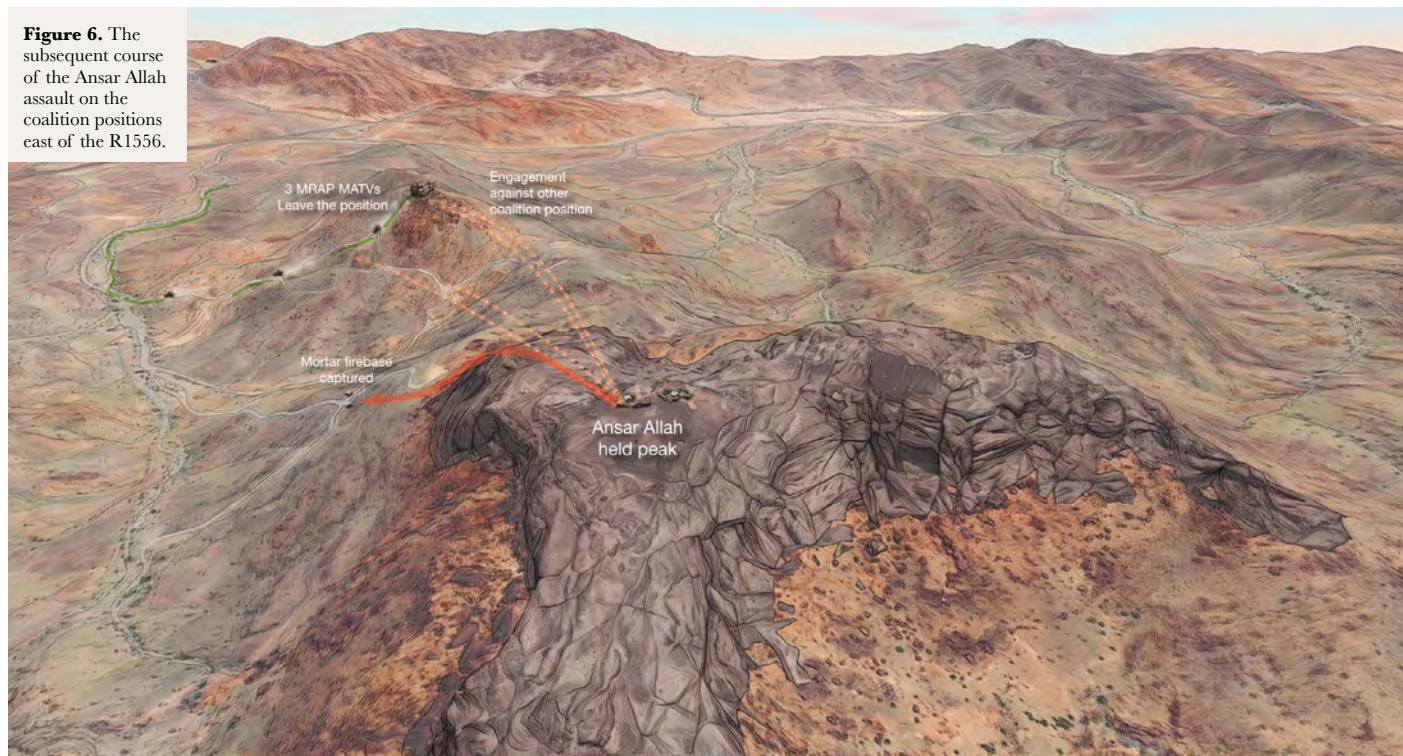
On the second day of fighting, Ansar Allah's long-range fires

⁸⁴"The specifications of the Nakal missile and the secret of not revealing its specifications," Sana'a-Al-Masaa Press, August 19, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/27pz4v9n>.

⁸⁵Little is known about the Nakkal, but Ansar Allah officer Brigadier General Aziz Rashid described it as a medium-range ballistic missile similar to the Soviet Tochka-U (SS-21 Scarab B), equipped with a high-explosive fragmentation warhead. "The Houthis announce the targeting of Saudi army gatherings in Najran," Anadolu Agency, August 25, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/2jncu448>.

⁸⁶"The Houthis announce the targeting of Saudi army gatherings in Najran," Anadolu Agency.

Figure 6. The subsequent course of the Ansar Allah assault on the coalition positions east of the R1556.



Graphic by Fernando J. Sanchez Menendez

campaign continued and expanded to hit more strategic targets. Samad-3 one-way attack drones reportedly struck a military target in the Saudi capital of Riyadh, though the coalition denied this claim.⁸⁷ Meanwhile, the situation of the Kitaf Axis continued to deteriorate.⁸⁸ With Ansar Allah forces in control of the R1556 highway, al-Hashimi's brigades were effectively encircled. Some coalition vehicles did attempt to run the gauntlet. In one incident, several MRAPs heading southward drove straight into an Ansar

Allah ambush established mid-way down the valley. The ambush was well positioned in a location where the road snaked through a series of mountain passes, leaving a sheer drop on one side and a mountain face on the other (see Figure 4).

First a Streit Group Spartan raced successfully through the ambush under a hail of gunfire. However, the next vehicle, an al-Wahsh MRAP, was less fortunate. Entering the ambush's kill zone,

⁸⁶"The Houthis announce the targeting of Saudi army gatherings in Najran," Anadolu Agency.

⁸⁷"Houthi: We carried out a drone attack on an important military target in Riyadh," Al Jazeera, August 26, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/257m9vmd>.

⁸⁸Ashraf al-Falahi, September 30, 2019.

it was struck by a series of IED blasts and rolled to a halt. Shortly afterwards, another al-Wahsh was disabled in the same manner; it stopped beside the first. Finally, a third al-Wahsh arrived to find the other two vehicles already set ablaze by Ansar Allah fighters. It attempted to maneuver around their wrecks using the highway verge but became stuck in the process. At least four Yemenis from this last vehicle were taken prisoner.⁸⁹

Saudi air support: Intensive but ineffective

Footage of the ambush also reveals the intensity with which coalition aircraft were operating in support of the encircled coalition troops. In the time it took to record this ambush, at least three probable airstrikes and the overflight of a RSAF Denel 400 drone and an F-15 fighter-bomber were all recorded within visual distance.⁹⁰ Other Ansar Allah footage taken throughout the course of the battle shows Denel 400 drones, F-15s and Tornado fighter-bombers operating with some frequency.⁹¹ Brigadier General Saree claimed that coalition aircraft had conducted more than 100 strikes by the end of 26 August.⁹² However, accounts of survivors from the Kitaf Axis widely complain that coalition air support was lackluster.⁹³

Explanation for this discrepancy between activity and perceived efficacy may lie in the wider feelings of betrayal expressed by

the Yemeni survivors of the battle. Many of those soldiers were angered by the poor planning and lack of foresight characterizing the coalition's haphazard incursion into the Jabara Valley. Another explanation is that the withdrawal of the Saudi OMLTs may have left the Yemeni troops without JTACs for coordinating close-air fires, leading to a perception of a lack of support. Without ground-observer control, it would have been difficult for Saudi pilots to differentiate between the intermingled light infantry forces. Indeed, at least one Yemeni position was inadvertently hit by a Saudi airstrike seemingly during this phase of the fighting.⁹⁴ More friendly-fire incidents would follow.



27-28 August: Rescue attempt and collapse

As the ground battle played out and coalition forces executed an ill-fated rescue attempt – see below – Ansar Allah's long-range fires campaign continued with strikes on targets in the Najran area and on Saudi airfields. On 27 August, a Qasem-1 medium-range ballistic missile struck a coalition encampment at Saqam on the Saudi-Yemen border, reportedly causing dozens of casualties.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, Saudi air defenses reportedly intercepted a drone

⁸⁹Exact date of this incident remains unclear but, given the MRAPs were heading southward – with at least one vehicle carrying food supplies, it seems likely it occurred on the first or second day of the operation. The ambush reconstructed in this paragraph is filmed from 07:14–14:42 in Ansar Allah Media, "The complete footage of the first stage of Operation Victory From God – Part Three," 2019, accessed February 27, 2026, <https://www.mmy.ye/17342/> [caution potentially hazardous URL].

⁹⁰07:14–14:42 in Ansar Allah Media, "The complete footage...Part Three" 2019.

⁹¹Saudi Arabia employs at least two Panavia Tornado variants (ADV and IDS). For a good if thinly sourced description of this program see: Jon Lake, "Saudi Arabia's Tornado IDS and ADV Variants – Desert Kingdom Warriors," Key.Aero, October 20, 2023.

⁹²Al-Lahza Satellite Channel, September 29, 2019.

⁹³Ashraf al-Falahi, September 30, 2019; "I curse myself..." Middle East Eye, 2019; Hassan Mohammed, "Accounts from the heart of the setback," 2019; as visible in parts 1–4 of "The complete footage of the first stage of Operation Victory From God," Ansar Allah Media.

⁹⁴Al-Lahza Satellite Channel, [Telegram](https://t.me/AlLahzaSatelliteChannel), October 2, 2019, [caution graphic].

over Khamis Mushayt, likely thwarting another attack on the King Khalid Air Base.⁹⁶

On 28 August, several Qasef-2K one-way attack drones attacked a military position in Najran and a newly established coalition camp in Jizan, again reportedly inflicting a number of casualties.⁹⁷ And late in the evening, Ansar Allah also fired a Quds-1 cruise missile at Abha International Airport, targeting the facility's military operations center and hangars.⁹⁸ According to coalition statements, the missile successfully struck the airport at 2335 local time but caused no casualties.⁹⁹ The extent to which these strikes disrupted coalition operations can only be speculated at, but their persistence and relative sophistication is noteworthy.

Meanwhile, under the reported direction of Brigadier General Musa Bin Dhafer al-Balawi, commander of joint operations in the Najran Province, elements of the SANG's King Abdulaziz Mechanized Brigade were mobilized to strike across the border and then south down the R1556 to open an escape corridor for the Kitaf Axis.¹⁰⁰ Elements of the Yemeni 151st Infantry Brigade and al-Tahrir Brigade reportedly were also attached to support the Saudi task force.¹⁰¹



The wreckage of a Qasef-1 one-way attack drone on display after being recovered by coalition forces. The Qasef-1 is outwardly identical to the more advanced Qasef-2K.

Picture: Lisa Fernando, US Department of Defense

Full details of this rescue effort are masked by limited reporting and the timeline is somewhat fuzzy. Some sources claim the rescue effort launched on 27 August – the date cited by Ansar Allah as the end of Operation Victory from God's first phase – while others indicate the rescue force crossed the line of departure on 28 August.¹⁰²

⁹⁵The Media Center of Ansar Allah, [Telegram](#), August 27, 2019; ["Houthis: Ballistic missile fired at Saudi army gatherings in Najran,"](#) Anadolu Agency, August 27, 2019.

⁹⁶["The Arab Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen announced that the coalition forces were able to intercept a drone launched by the terrorist Houthi militia from Sana'a towards civilian objects in Khamis Mushait,"](#) Sky News Arabia, August 27, 2019.

⁹⁷The Media Center of Ansar Allah, [Telegram](#), August 28, 2019.

⁹⁸The Media Center of Ansar Allah, August 28, 2019.

⁹⁹["A hostile projectile fell on Abha airport in southern Saudi Arabia,"](#) Sky News Arabia, August 29, 2019.

¹⁰⁰["Report: Saudi dismisses commander over Houthi attack in the kingdom,"](#) Middle East Monitor, October 11, 2019. This counterattack is documented in Ahmed Al-Barti, September 2, 2019. The specific presence of the King Abdulaziz Mechanized Brigade is confirmed by prisoner testimonies, with at least two prisoners reporting to be from the brigade's 23rd Infantry Battalion, see: AllahdahNet, [Telegram](#), October 1, 2019. For further evidence, see the speech of the brigade's commanding officer released on August 30, 2019, after a 'fierce battle': [YouTube](#), August 30, 2019.

¹⁰¹Abdul Jabbar al-Abbu (@abdularjabbar1612), ["The War in Yemen"](#) thread beginning January 11, 2019.

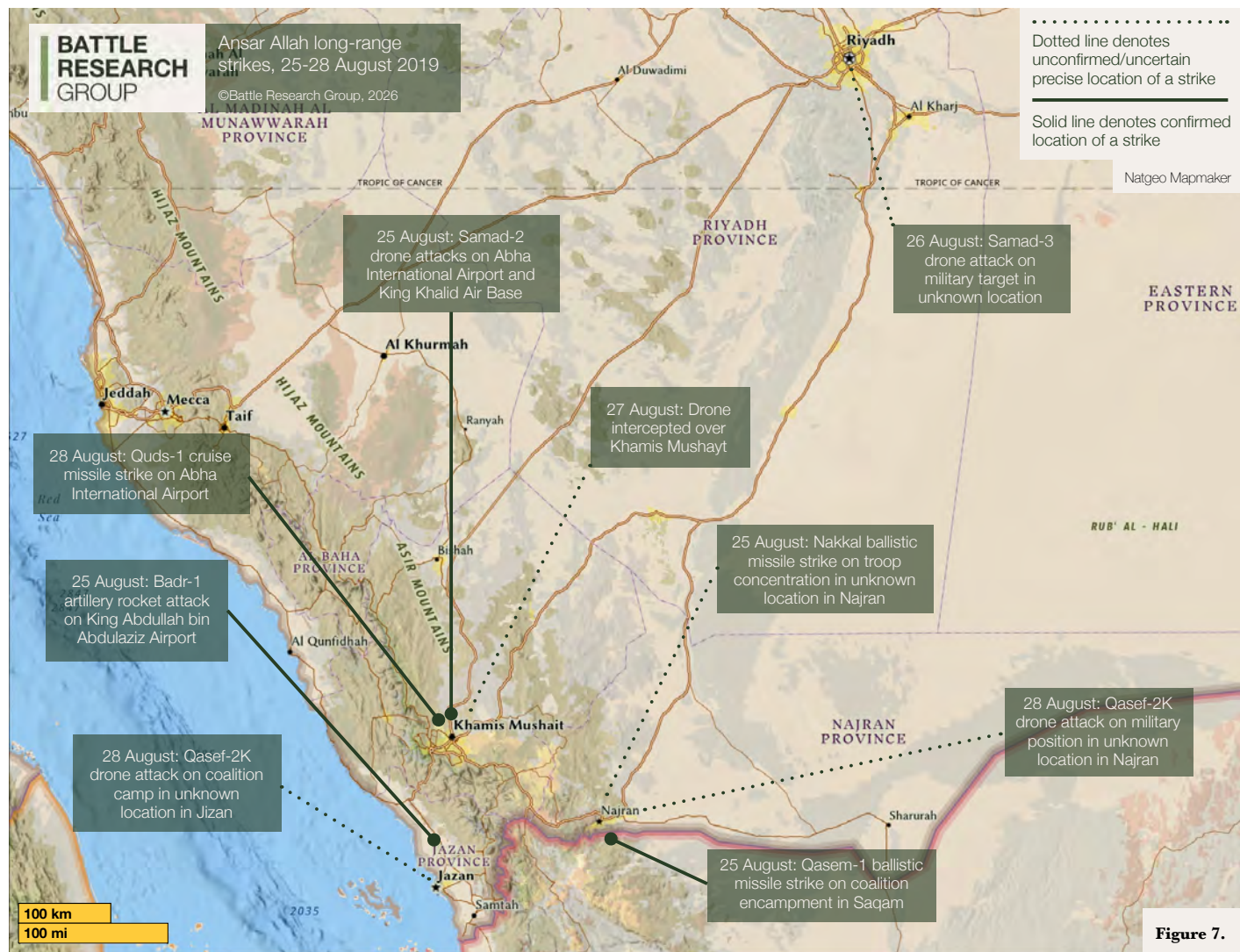


Figure 7.

No video of the initial advance appears to be available from public sources. Instead, visual evidence only begins when the coalition force had apparently moved through the northern edge of the Ansar Allah pincer, linked up with remnants of the Kitaf Axis' brigades and turned around to begin their withdrawal northward

back up the valley. It is not clear if they were allowed through to spring a trap; if they fought their way through to the Yemeni defenders; or if Ansar Allah failed to seal its northern perimeter. In any event the reaction to the presence of the relief force in the perimeter was quick and violent.

A Yemeni soldier filmed a column of at least 12 SANG LAVs, many with Yemeni infantrymen riding on top, intermingled with Land Cruisers and MRAPs at the pass leading northwards out of the al-Jabara village area between Wadi Misak and Jabal al-Mahwi (see Figure 8). In this footage, outgoing autocannon and machinegun fire can clearly be heard as the column begins to skirmish with the enemy positions along the sides of the valley.¹⁰³

Mirrored Ansar Allah footage shows bursts of autocannon fire kicking up dust in the surrounding hills, then the column beginning to move off as dismounted Yemenis run alongside the vehicles in apparent confusion.¹⁰⁴ What appears to have been an initial contact escalated as a coalition Type 63 multiple rocket launcher and five Land Cruisers were later filmed abandoned in this area. Vehicle windows were shattered and tires were deflated by gunfire.¹⁰⁵

As the column began its withdrawal, dozens of Land Cruisers from the 84th Brigade seem to have slipped ahead of the heavier LAVs. A leading group of five vehicles had almost made it to the first series of mountain passes when they decided to turn around, perhaps realizing how far forward they were ahead of the main convoy. At about the same time and a kilometer further south, a group of some 18 Land Cruisers came under accurate Ansar Allah fire. This prompted their crews and passengers to abandon the vehicles and begin running away from the road northward

toward the Jabal al-Sawa'il mountain, even as the first LAV arrived on the scene.¹⁰⁶

A crowd of perhaps 200 or more fleeing Yemeni troops began to ascend Jabal al-Sawa'il. As they scrambled and trudged uphill they came under more fire from Ansar Allah positions on the mountain's shoulders. Thinning out as men dropped and others fell behind from exhaustion, the group continued over the mountain and into the rolling hills beyond in a desperate bid to escape. Eventually, however, it seems the majority realized the futility of their situation and surrendered en masse. Ansar Allah footage shows a procession of dozens of prisoners being marched into captivity, with one particularly dejected individual throwing down his YNA-issue jacket and beating it with a stone.¹⁰⁷

Meanwhile, back in the valley the King Abdulaziz Brigade column, interspersed with Yemenis riding Land Cruisers, MRAPs and motorcycles, continued in its bid to escape along the road to the Saudi border. As the column entered the hairpin pass at the foot of Jabal al-Sawa'il (see Figure 8), machinegun and rifle rounds kicked up spurts of dust around the vehicles. Yemeni soldiers clinging onto the roofs were fully exposed to the fusillade, while the LAV-25s returned fire with their autocannons. In the chaos, a Land Cruiser-ZU-23-2 technical ran off the road, leaving its crew and other stragglers to continue retreating on foot while still under fire.

¹⁰²Al-Lahza Satellite Channel, September 29, 2019; Hans Lammerant, et al., 2019.

¹⁰³[Sheikh Ridad al-Hashemi, Commander of the Katif Front] "[*Oh our heroes, God willing, relief is near...*](#)," Facebook, September 1, 2019. It is very likely this footage was filmed prior to the date of posting.

¹⁰⁴07:35–07:45 in Ansar Allah Media, "The complete footage...Part Four" 2019.

¹⁰⁵32:53–33:22 in Ansar Allah Media, "The complete footage...Part Three" 2019.

¹⁰⁶The appearance of this LAV behind the Land Cruisers is a crucial detail, as it confirms this incident was part of the same train of events of the King Abdulaziz Brigade column's withdrawal.

¹⁰⁷This paragraph describes events captured from 15:09–22:22 in Ansar Allah Media, "The complete footage...Part Three," 2019.

**BATTLE
RESEARCH
GROUP**

Coalition Retreat,
27/28 August
2019

©Battle Research Group,
2026



LAV-25 ablaze at ambush site

Location of previous
MRAP ambush

Toward al-Fara village



Land Cruisers abandoned under fire

Coalition convoy in
pass out of al-Jabara



Historical imagery from July 21, 2019
Google Earth Pro





LAVs negotiating the hairpin pass



Coalition soldiers fleeing under fire over the Jabal al-Sawa'il mountain



Worse followed as the column drove into the passes where the earlier ambush of the three al-Wahsh vehicles had occurred. A succession of IED blasts caused two LAV-25s to tumble off the road into the ravine below, while another LAV-25 was flipped fully onto its side on the highway. An additional LAV-25 and a LAV-A (ambulance variant) were knocked out in the same vicinity.¹⁰⁸ Several of the dismounted soldiers from these vehicles were gunned down but most – including a handful of Saudi Army National Guard troops – appear to have scattered and subsequently surrendered to Ansar Allah.¹⁰⁹

Beyond the ambush site, the rest of the column continued on toward the al-Fara Valley, still under fire even as they reached the last hills before the road descended into the relative safety of al-Fara village.¹¹⁰

In the aftermath of the column's escape, Ansar Allah infantry teams fanned out over the hills and mountains to mop up the remnants of the Kitaf Axis still stranded in the valley. Some fighting continued in the vicinity of the site where the crowd of Land Cruisers had been abandoned.¹¹¹ At least one platoon-sized element of Yemeni soldiers attempted a fighting retreat over rough ground in an unknown location.¹¹² In al-Jabara itself, another



Picture: Ansar Allah

A pile of small arms captured from the Kitaf Axis.

group tried to run for it under a hail of gunfire.¹¹³ Broadly though, the demoralized Yemenis threw down their arms and surrendered.

An exact count of prisoners is unavailable. Ansar Allah claimed to have captured over 2,000 Yemeni soldiers and dozens of Saudis.¹¹⁴ Footage confirms they captured at least several hundred Yemenis and a few Saudi soldiers.¹¹⁵ Sources in Sana'a quoted in a contemporaneous article reported 1,200 prisoners of war (POWs), with a further ~500 coalition personnel killed.¹¹⁶ More

¹⁰⁸It is not clear from the video how these two vehicles were disabled.

¹⁰⁹The proceeding description of the escape of the column is based on 07:55–32:02 in Ansar Allah Media, "The complete footage...Part Four," 2019.

¹¹⁰Hans Lammerant et al., 2019.

¹¹¹28:30–29:18 in Ansar Allah Media, "The complete footage...Part Three" 2019.

¹¹²29:16–32:02 in Ansar Allah Media, "The complete footage...Part One" 2019.

¹¹³11:00–11:30 in Ansar Allah Media, "The complete footage...Part Two" 2019.

¹¹⁴Yemeni Military Media, May 4, 2021.

¹¹⁵32:00–33:33 in Ansar Allah Media, "The complete footage...Part Four" 2019.

¹¹⁶Ahmed Al-Barti, September 2, 2019.

recent reporting has put the number of prisoners as low as 700.¹¹⁷

One final blow awaited the defeated coalition forces: RSAF aircraft repeatedly bombed the dismounted Ansar Allah, Saudi and Yemeni infantry as they became entangled during the pursuit and prisoner round-up. These strikes errantly killed and wounded an unknown number of Yemeni soldiers.¹¹⁸ Ansar Allah later claimed that this was a deliberate betrayal of the Kitaf Axis by their Saudi backers. A more charitable interpretation would be that RSAF drone operators and fighter-bomber pilots could not differentiate between friendly and enemy forces in the chaos.¹¹⁹

In the aftermath of the battle, Ansar Allah claimed the destruction of three coalition brigades, presumably the 84th Brigade, the 151st Brigade, and the al-Farouq Brigade.¹²⁰ In return, hundreds of Ansar Allah fighters reportedly were killed, including some senior field commanders.¹²¹ Given their asymmetric victory conditions, we assess this battle as a victory for Ansar Allah.¹²² Their success at Jabara Valley set the groundwork for the second phase of Operation Victory from God, during which Ansar Allah continued

the offensive northwards to the Yemeni-Saudi border itself. Full accounting of that action will be saved for a future *Battle Brief*.

A few days after the Kitaf Axis' defeat in the Jabara Valley, al-Hashimi posted a speech on Facebook in which he addressed his men. True to his background, he couched the military failure in religious terms. He described Jabara Valley as a trial from God from which the Kitaf Axis would emerge with a stronger resolve.¹²³ His words were not enough to soothe some of the families of the missing and the dead who called on the Yemeni government to put al-Hashimi under investigation. However, they were informed by government sources that he was not associated with the Yemeni Ministry of Defense and was therefore beyond their authority.¹²⁴

Even after the defeat at Jabara Valley, al-Hashimi reportedly remained a favorite of the Saudis. As of at least mid-April 2026 he still commanded the former Kitaf Axis, renamed as the 4th Division of the Yemeni Emergency Forces. This new division continues to face Ansar Allah along Yemen's northern frontier in early 2026.¹²⁵

¹¹⁷"*Tribal mediation succeeds in the release of four prisoners from the prisons of the Houthi militia,*" *Marib Press Special*, January 1, 2024.

¹¹⁸ 35:09–36:44 in Ansar Allah Media, "The complete footage...Part One" 2019.

¹¹⁹Both sides wore almost identical clothing and equipment. *Al-Lahza Satellite Channel*, September 29, 2019.

¹²⁰*Al-Lahza Satellite Channel*, September 29, 2019.

¹²¹Reports of field-commander deaths are not confirmed by other sources. See: Ahmed Al-Barti, September 2, 2019.

¹²²In war all victory conditions are, to varying extents, somewhat asymmetric. In this case Ansar Allah sought to push the Saudi-led coalition out of the Jabara Valley while inflicting heavy casualties; it succeeded. Saudi Arabia probably sought to maintain its control of the Valley, kill Ansar Allah fighters, and expand its salient southward. It failed outright in achieving two of these conditions and almost certainly suffered more casualties than it inflicted. Vehicle losses were significant and the OMLTs failed.

¹²³Media Centre of the 4th Division - Yemeni Emergency Forces, *Facebook*, August 30, 2019.

¹²⁴Ahmed Al-Barti, September 2, 2019.

¹²⁵Mohammed Albasha, "Saudi Arabia's Quiet Build-Up Along the Yemen Border," *Basha Report's Substack (blog)*, November 25, 2025.

Addressing the (mostly) untold modern military history of Yemen

As of early 2026, only a few Western analysts have recorded and analyzed the tactical-operational dimension of the war in Yemen. Michael Knights has written two books on the battles of Aden and Mukalla, both fought in the opening phase of the coalition's intervention. Meanwhile, Tom Cooper has published a study of the early air war.¹²⁶ But at least dozens of battles in Yemen from 2004 through at least mid-2026 remain effectively unrecorded in the public domain. This feeds a known and worrying gap in modern warfare knowledge.

Anyone struggling to characterize modern warfare would be mistaken in dismissing the combat in Yemen as either purely irregular or irrelevant. The Battle of Jabara Valley 2019 was equivalent to the confrontation of two brigade-sized ground forces, with the Kitaf Axis arguably being closer in form to a very small division. Probably 6,000 troops engaged each other with a mix of 20th century and more advanced 21st century weapons and munitions; this mix is common to all modern wars.¹²⁷

Admittedly uneven documentation of this battle still revealed heavy use of dismounted, motorized and mechanized infantry forces; employment of medium reconnaissance drones and 4th generation fighter-bombers; infantry-armor teaming; at least rudimentary combined-arms warfare; and an innovative operational shaping campaign using surface-to-surface missiles and one-way attack drones. This was not modern war as it is fought along the frontlines in Ukraine in 2026. But the Battle of Jabara Valley probably shares more common characteristics with the majority of global ground combat cases in the 21st century than the Russo-

Ukrainian war does. Both offer important lessons that should be compared and contrasted.

Tactical observations

As with *The Battle of Tabqa Airbase 2014*, this *Battle Brief* highlights the limits of conventional technological superiority when undercut by issues of weak will, poor leadership, questionable tactics, inadequate technical infantry discipline, unfavorable battlefield geometry, and a determined and tactically adept foe.

It also shows how non-state actors can conduct robust offensive counter-air campaigns using drones and surface-to-surface missiles to make up for their lack of traditional airpower capabilities. We offer the following specific considerations:

■ **For ground forces, the tyranny of terrain is inescapable.** Tight and undulating contour lines, rugged valleys and the lack of adequate secondary roads channelized and isolated the vehicle-dependent coalition troops. More foot-

mobile Ansar Allah fighters took advantage of the same terrain that had so dangerously restricted their adversaries.

■ **Tactical security is a constant necessity in ground combat.** Al-Hashimi extended a tenuous salient into difficult-to-traverse enemy territory. While some scouting was conducted, both he and his subordinate leaders failed to adequately secure their flanks. Their poorly motivated soldiers probably did not constantly patrol and reconnoiter all likely enemy avenues of approach. These tactical security failures allowed Ansar Allah to cut the R1556 highway and effectively encircle coalition forces. [See the final note on drones on page 34.]

Anyone struggling to characterize modern warfare would be mistaken in dismissing the combat in Yemen as either purely irregular or irrelevant.

¹²⁶Michael Knights, *The Race for Mukalla*, 2024; Michael Knights, *25 Days to Aden*, 2023; Tom Cooper, *Hot Skies*, 2018.

¹²⁷On common and less-common characteristics in modern war see, for example: Stephen Biddle, *Military Power*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT University Press, 2004; Ben Connable, *Ground Combat: Puncturing the Myths of Modern War*, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2025.

■ **Reserve and reaction-force actions require thoughtful planning.** It is not clear if the Kitaf Axis had a mobile organic reserve element on the Yemeni side of the border; based on cited sources they probably did not. That put great pressure on the Saudi-led motor-mechanized units to rush headlong and in column down a highly exposed road in broad daylight. Ansar Allah leaders must have known about the reaction force given their use of interdiction fires against Saudi assembly areas. Lack of coalition planning turned what could have been a reinforcement – or at least a rescue – into a trap.

■ **Asymmetric fires by irregular forces can be tactically and strategically effective.** Ansar Allah's long-range fires campaign shows how a non-state military can offset its lack of manned airpower against even a wealthy, technologically advanced military foe. A full assessment of their effectiveness would require a more accurate accounting of weapons fired and those that were intercepted, missed or hit their targets. But they clearly contributed to the successful outcome.

■ **Airbases are targeted routinely even in irregular modern warfare and must be protected.** Since the world wars, airfields have been the targets of raids, conventional ground or airborne attacks, and air and (more recently) missile strikes.¹²⁸ Drone attacks against airfields have been a feature of warfare since at least the mid-2010s. Ansar Allah attacks against Saudi airfields were particularly salient in relation to their overall combat power and they are

generally representative of similar drone and missile attacks against airfields across Syria, Russia, Libya and other conflict areas.¹²⁹ Global airfield security against all types of attacks historically has been terrible; the Saudis are in good company here.

■ **Tactical infantry discipline paid combat dividends.** Ansar Allah fighters worked in dispersed cells and exploited natural concealment during their infiltration into the Jabara Valley area. Small-unit movements allowed them to avoid aerial detection despite heavy Saudi drone and manned-aircraft sorties against the southern stretch of the R1556 in the days leading up to the attack.¹³⁰ During the battle Ansar Allah fighters remained dispersed to reduce casualties from coalition airstrikes.



Ansar Allah fighters
worked in dispersed cells
and exploited natural
concealment during their
infiltration into the Jabara
Valley area.

■ **Lack of tactical infantry discipline correlated with failure.** We note above that coalition small unit leaders and troops failed to adequately secure their flanks or (probably) to actively defend their positions with patrols; set and maintain adequate observation posts; plan for breaks in communication; continuously improve their defensive positions; prepare for counterattack; set mines and obstacles along approach routes and cover them with fires; or to apply individual soldier discipline. They did in at least one case establish mutually supporting fires from peak to peak. But in that instance, they were out-shot and out-fought, demonstrating at least relative combat inadequacies.

¹²⁸See: Alan Vick, *Snakes in the Eagle's Nest: A History of Ground Attacks on Air Bases*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1995.

¹²⁹Ben Connable, "[Putting Operation Spider's Web in Context](#)," *Irregular Warfare Initiative*, June 20, 2025.

¹³⁰Media Center of the Fourth Division - Yemeni Emergency Forces, [Facebook](#), August 1, 2019.

■ Strong will to fight provides advantage over weak will to fight.¹³¹ Ansar Allah was in 2019 a battle-hardened and motivated fighting force, many of whose soldiers had undergone intensive ideological indoctrination at a young age. During the Battle of Jabara Valley they fought to defend Ansar Allah's heartland of Saada. By contrast, reports indicate that the soldiers of the Kitaf Axis were motivated primarily by money, had no social or personal connections to the Jabara Valley, and had undergone only rudimentary training. Protests and perhaps riots over withheld pay just before the start of the battle were a reliable indicator of weak will to fight, at least amongst the Yemeni elements of the Kitaf Axis. Saudi OMLT performance suggests they also lacked will to fight.



A note on drones: Given the broad perception that drone warfare in Ukraine signifies an overall change in the character of war, it is important to think about how the Battle of Jabara Valley 2019 might have played out under the watchful eye of an AI-networked drone web. Speculation has limited value, but it might be useful to consider this question for professional military education. And we recommend taking into account the fact that battles like this one – with similar drone-coverage densities – continue to be fought across the Middle East and around the world through at least mid-2026.

¹³¹On will to fight see: Ben Connable, et al., *Will to Fight: Analyzing, Modeling, and Simulating the Will to Fight of Military Units*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2018.

Battle Research Group thanks Mohammed Al-Basha for reviewing this *Battle Brief* and providing insightful feedback, particularly on the Ansar Allah order of battle and the implications of the Jabara Valley battle for the wider Yemen war.





BATTLE BRIEF

© Battle Research Group Foundation, Inc, 2026

Unless explicitly noted, Battle Research Group Foundation, Inc., conducts its qualitative research without the use of large-language model (LLM) support.

We do not give permission to any entity, corporation, nonprofit, or individual to in any way scrape, capture, or reuse this material for training artificial intelligence of any type or in any form.

Copyright and Fair Use: This is copyrighted material. Apply U.S. Fair Use doctrine and contact our team for explicit permissions: **info@battleresearchgroup.org**

This publication is available at:
battleresearchgroup.org/publications

**BATTLE
RESEARCH
GROUP**