

Saudi Arabia intercepts missile from Yemen targeting Riyadh airport

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Riyadh: Saudi Arabia said its forces intercepted a ballistic missile fired Saturday from Yemen toward one of the kingdom's major international airports on the outskirts of the capital, Riyadh.

Representation Image: Saudi Arabia intercepts missile from Yemen targeting Riyadh airport

The missile was fired across Saudi Arabia's southern border by Yemen's Houthi rebels, according to several Houthi-owned media outlets, including Al-Masirah and SABA. The rebels are at war with the kingdom.

Saudi Arabia said the missile was shot down by its air defense forces, with fragments of the missile landing in an uninhabited area north of the capital. Saudi Arabia's Civil Aviation Authority said the missile did not cause any damage to the King Khalid International Airport and that flights were not disrupted.

This is the first time that a Houthi missile has come so close to a heavily populated area, and it appears to be the farthest that such a missile has reached inside Saudi Arabia. Riyadh is around 620 miles (1,000 kilometers) north of the border with Yemen.

A Saudi military spokesman condemned the attack in a statement, saying the missile was fired "indiscriminately" toward a populated civilian area.

Saudi military forces have intercepted missiles fired by Houthis several times since March 2015, when a Saudi-led coalition launched a war against the rebels and their allies after they captured northern Yemen and ousted the Saudi-backed president from power. The kingdom has also imposed an air and sea blockade on Yemen.

The stalemated war has killed more than 10,000 civilians and displaced 3 million others, pushing the Arab world's poorest country to the brink of famine

The U.S., which is one of the kingdom's most important military suppliers, has backed the coalition with logistical support.

Saudi Arabia accuses its rival, Shiite power Iran, of training and helping arm the rebels. Iran denies that it has provided material support, though it acknowledges its political support of the Houthis.

News outlet Al-Masirah said the missile launched Saturday evening was made in Yemen and was the third to be fired toward Riyadh this year. It reported the rebels saying the missile was fired in response to "Saudi-American aggression and crimes against the people of Yemen."

Earlier this week, a suspected airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition killed at least 29 people, including children, in northern Yemen.

- AP