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## Saudi Arabia Says Lebanon, Iran Declare War

11/6/2017

Over the weekend, Saudi Arabia intercepted a ballistic missile fired by north Yemeni forces at their capital city. The missile was identified as a Burqan 2H, a Yemeni design, and Yemen's Defense Ministry confirmed firing it.

Rather than just the latest retaliation in Saudi Arabia's two and a half year war in Yemen, however, Saudi officials seem to be looking to turn the incident into the start of a region-wide war, saying it amounted to a declaration of war against them by both Lebanon and Iran.



This claim centers on Saudi claims, which appear to have started Monday but weren't mentioned over the weekend when the interception happened, that the missile was an "Iranian" missile, fired at the Saudi capital by Lebanon's Hezbollah movement, which is part of the Lebanese government.

This narrative aligns neatly with Saudi foreign policy goals, as they've long tried to present Yemen's Shi'ite Houthi movement as an Iranian proxy, and have been keen to pick fights with Hezbollah over the group's support for the Syrian government.

Factually, however, the claim has major problems. Saudi and Yemeni officials were both identifying the missile as a Burqan 2H immediately after the interception. This is a known Yemeni model, meaning it's not an Iranian missile smuggled into Yemen. There has likewise never been evidence of Hezbollah have any presence in Yemen, and no conceivable reason why Yemen would need a Lebanese militia to fire a Yemeni-made missile from inside Yemeni territory.

Analysts say the Saudi Crown Prince is keen to confront Iran militarily, and that this may provide a pretext to do so. Exactly what his plans with Lebanon are remain unclear, but the Lebanese Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, was visiting Saudi Arabia at the time, and has subsequently resigned amid claims of an "assassination plot," and blamed Iran and Hezbollah as well.