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South Yemen: President Deposed, Executed; Other Developments

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South Yemeni President Salem Rubaya Ali was deposed and executed June 26 by a rival faction of the pro-Soviet ruling National Liberation Front after 12 hours of heavy fighting in Aden, the capital.

The upheaval followed the slaying June 24 of North Yemeni President Ahmed Hussein al-Ghashmi by a bomb that exploded in a briefcase of a visiting envoy sent by Rubaya. The South Yemeni aide also was killed by the blast. 1977 [North Yemen: President, Brother Assassinated](#)]

The fighting was reported to have broken out after the central committee of the National Liberation Front decided at an all-night session to oust Rubaya because of his alleged involvement in Ghashmi's assassination.

Other reports said the meeting ended inconclusively with several members calling for the dissolution of the Presidential Council, which was headed by Rubaya and included the secretary general of the front and the premier, an Iraqi news agency said.

The account said Rubaya left the meeting and joined troops loyal to him at an army barracks at the Straits of Bab el Mandeb outside the capital while other government leaders remained at the presidential palace in Aden.

Three planes of the pro-Rubaya forces bombed and strafed the palace. At the same time, Rubaya's troops attempted to march on Aden but were stopped in the city by militia forces opposed to him and bloody fighting ensued. Casualties were reported high.

After the anti-Rubaya forces prevailed and seized power, Aden radio announced June 26 that Rubaya had been arrested, convicted by a revolutionary court for attempting to seize complete power and shot by a firing squad.

Two other members of the National Liberation leadership, Jasem Saleh and Salem Awar, were tried on similar charges and put to death, according to the broadcast.

A tripartite leadership supportive of the Soviet Union was reported by Arab diplomatic sources June 27 to have assumed power. Its members were Premier Ali Nassar Mohammed Hasani, who also became the new head of state; Abdel Fattah Ismail, secretary general of the National Liberation Front, and Lieutenant Colonel Ali Antar, the defense minister, who was said to have ordered his 21,000-man army to crush the forces loyal to Rubaya.

The underlying cause of Rubaya's downfall was believed to have been his policy dispute with Ismail. Rubaya had indicated that he favored improved relations with the U.S. and conservative Saudi Arabia and a loosening of ties with the Soviet Union, views that conflicted with those of Ismail.

Rubaya also was said to have been opposed to permitting the Soviet Union to use Aden as a link in its arms and troop airlift to Ethiopia to aid the Addis Ababa government in its drive against the Eritrean rebels.

Ismail was said to favor continued Soviet and South Yemeni assistance to Ethiopia. [See 1978 [Middle East: Senate OKs Mideast Jet Sales](#); 1978 [Horn of Africa: Soviet Role in Eritrea Noted](#); 1978 [Horn of Africa: Soviet Airlift to Ethiopia Halted; Other Developments](#)]

U.S. Mission Thwarted

The government shakeup in South Yemen forced the U.S. to call off a diplomatic mission that was scheduled to arrive in Aden June 27. The mission was headed by Joseph W. Twinam, a State Department official in charge of Arabian Peninsula affairs. He was instructed to proceed to North Yemen instead.

Twinam's trip had been arranged in May, largely through the initiative of Representative Paul Findley (R, Illinois), who had visited South Yemen in January. Twinam was to have discussed with South Yemeni officials outstanding issues between Washington and Aden.

Military Takes Power in N. Yemen

A three-man Military Command Council replaced assassinated North Yemeni President Ahmed Hussein al-Ghashmi, it was reported June 25. The group was headed by Abdel Karim al-Arshi, speaker of parliament. Its other two members were Premier Abdel Aziz Abdel Ghani and Lieutenant Colonel Ali Shiba, the new military commander-in-chief.

Reporting on Ghashmi's assassination, a North Yemeni broadcast said June 24 that he "was killed from a quarter known for its perfidy against the nation and Allah," an apparent reference to South Yemen.

The bomb exploded as an unidentified envoy from South Yemen opened his bag to hand Ghashmi a letter from President Rubaya. The incident occurred at Ghashmi's office at military headquarters in Sana, the capital.

Charging South Yemeni complicity, North Yemen had broken relations with South Yemen and threatened retaliation, an Iraqi press agency said June 25.

An Aden broadcast June 25 denied South Yemeni involvement in Ghashmi's death, saying the government had sent a cable of condolence to the president's family, "condemning the treacherous act."

Saudi Arabia condemned Ghashmi's slaying later June 24 and warned against foreign intervention in North Yemen. The official statement also declared that Saudi Arabia would "safeguard the stability and development of North Yemen." Ghashmi had followed a policy of close financial and military cooperation with Saudi Arabia.

Arab diplomatic sources in Beirut said June 25 that they believed North Yemeni exiles in South Yemen were connected with Ghashmi's murder. They said the exiles had defected to Aden four weeks earlier after an unsuccessful mutiny against Ghashmi. The leader of the group, Major Abdullah Abdel Aalem, had been a member of the Military Command Council under Ghashmi that assumed office in October 1977 after the assassination of Ghashmi's predecessor, President Ibrahim al-Hamidi.

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