

Arabian Peninsula Background Notes

APBN-012

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The Saudi-Yemeni War of 1934 Through British Official Sources

Prefatory Note. The Saudi-Yemeni War of 1934 has received only brief and passing mention in the Western literature. One of the few publications dealing with it is Karl Twitchell's address to the Royal Central Asian Society in 1934, although it deals more with the background and was delivered as the war was winding down.¹

This account of the war attempts to provide detail on the course of the fighting, relying exclusively upon British official sources, particularly the Foreign Office. British records provide considerably more detail than any other Western source because of British diplomatic interaction with King 'Abd al-'Aziz and his officials, as well the presence of Royal Navy ships off the Yemeni coast.

It should be noted, however, that there are serious lacunae in the British reporting. First, there was no corresponding reporting from Sanaa since there was no British representation to the imam and relations between the two governments was

habitually tense. Consequently, the British understanding of the war's progress was that gained either from Riyadh or from the observations of its ships. Second, Britain was able to keep fairly close tabs on the operations and movements of Prince Faysal as he made his way down the coast. There was far less information available on Prince Sa'ud's progress through the mountains and British understanding of the tribal situation in the interior was patchy. As a consequence, this paper should be regarded as a partial history of the war, intended primarily to bring attention to primary material.

This is an *Arabian Peninsula Background Note (APBN)* written by J.E. Peterson

N.B. This background note is a preliminary attempt to present in summary form the essential details of a particular set of circumstances or event in Arabian Peninsula history. It lays no claim to being comprehensive or fully accurate. Although considerable effort has been made to assure the reliability of the information it contains, its accuracy is limited to the information contained in the sources listed in the note. The contents of this note may be freely quoted and cited provided both the author and source are given. A complete listing of APBNs is contained on www.JEPeterson.net.

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To the south of the newly declared Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of 1932 lay Yemen, a mountainous, fertile, and the most highly populated region of the Arabian Peninsula. In modern times, Yemen had become divided. In the north, a traditional imamate (a traditional state based on rule by a religious *imam*) prevailed in the territories previously held by the Ottoman Empire. The ruler for most of the first half of the 20th century (1904-1948) was Yahya b. Muhammad Hamid al-Din, an *imam* of the Zaydi subsect of Shi'ah Islam, who relied on the tribes of the two great confederations of Hashid and Bakil to maintain his control over the country.

The south of Yemen, however, was subject to British control or influence. Britain had taken Aden in 1839 and in following decades extended its influence into the hinterland until it had established a network of protectorates up to a contested border with the imamate. Tensions between Ibn Sa'ud and Yemen were evident as early as 1926, with rumors of clashes in the mountains, of the Saudi ruler's intentions of eliminating the independent status of the Idrisi amir of 'Asir, and of Yemeni schemes to attack Saudi forces in 'Asir.²

The border situation in the north was far more confused, even after the Al Sa'ud secured control of al-Hijaz. The Yemeni *imam*'s gaze had long extended northward toward the mountainous region of 'Asir. But Ibn Sa'ud was quicker to the mark, forcing the weak Idrisi dynasty to accept a protectorate in 1926 and then effectively annexing the region in 1931. These developments were not accepted by Imam Yahya and he gave refuge to the Idrisi pretender. The *imam* also sought to

extend his control over the adjacent area of Najran. This ancient and storied oasis had enjoyed an independent status under a combination of tribal rule and the religious authority of the dominant community belonging to the Isma'ili subsect of Shi'ah Islam.

Rumors of possible moves by both the Imam of Yemen and King 'Abd al-'Aziz proliferated throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s. For example, it was rumored in 1930 that Prince Faysal and Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Sulayman were both to be sent to Najd to make arrangements for an expeditionary force to be used in Yemen. This was said to have followed Imam Yahya's occupation of Abu 'Arish.³ The King subsequently strengthened his position in 'Asir in late 1931 when the Idrisi turned over administration and finance to the Saudi monarch. However, Ibn Sa'ud's capability to act more forcefully was stymied by poor logistics.

With reports of Yemeni occupation of points on the Hijazi side of the border, the despatch of reinforcements and ammunition to the border, with a subsidiary intention of controlling rebellious tribes around Jazan, depended on money and fuel. Both, however, were in short supply. Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Sulayman was able to pressure Hijazi merchants into providing more loans and he sent 250 troops by sea to Jazan. The lack of petrol though prevented other troop movement.

Expected Soviet supplies failed to arrive, the British firms Gellatly, Hankey (representing Shell) and Sharqieh (Limited) (representing Standard Oil) would supply only on cash

terms, and the Dutch bank, the Netherlands Trading Society, refused any more credit. Consequently, Shaykh ‘Abdullah ordered his men on the night of 12 September 1931 to remove the necessary petrol from the premises of Gellatly, Hankey and Sharqieh.

It was a brash and provocative move and earned a protest from the British Legation. ‘Abdullah al-Sulayman agreed to a compensation scheme but had his petrol. At the same time, though, the complete collapse of the fledgling Hijazi Air Force removed a major weapon from the equation. With the benzine problem “solved,” Hijazi forces reached Jazan (and camel-mounted Najdi tribesmen were also despatched to the south) and the presumed Yemeni threat was neutralized.⁴

As a consequence, talks between Saudi and Yemeni delegates were held near Mount Arwa, a point of dispute between the two countries. While no agreement was reached at these talks, surprisingly a treaty of friendship and extradition was signed at Abu ‘Arish on 15 December 1931.⁵

Once Imam Yahya had secured control over the lower end of the Tihamah coastal plain on the Red Sea in 1929-1930, he turned his attention to subduing Najran. But by 1934, his efforts to secure the allegiance of Najran’s tribes resulted in clashes between the Yemeni and Saudi forces. Negotiations carried out through an exchange of telegrams failed and skirmishes escalated. The deteriorating situation meant that there were increased requirements for funds as the kingdom prepared for war with Yemen. To this end, the King canvassed Buraydah, ‘Unayzah, al-

Shaqrah, and al-Kharj for a loan of Rs. 50,000.⁶

At the same time, the Yemeni ruler imprudently provoked the Saudi monarch in a direct challenge, apparently believing that Ibn Sa‘ud would shy away from confrontation. However, Ibn Sa‘ud was not so inclined and he mounted a two-pronged attack that swept into Yemen. One force, commanded by King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s eldest son and future king Sa‘ud, easily captured Najran and moved into imamate territory. The other forces, commanded by ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s second son and future king Faysal, rapidly swept down the Tihamah and captured the major seaport of al-Hudaydah without a shot being fired.

Despite this overwhelming success, the Saudi position was precarious. Their supply lines were vulnerable and the meager finances available to King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz meant that they could not stay long in occupation. Furthermore, the Yemeni *imam* was raising additional tribal levies to mount a counter-attack. By the resultant Treaty of al-Ta’if, the southern Tihamah was returned to the Imamate, in exchange for which Imam Yahya was forced to recognize Saudi claims not only to Najran but ‘Asir and the northern Tihamah, including the town and area of Jazan, as well.

Shaykh ‘Abdullah al-Sulayman’s role in this war was similar to the part he played in earlier conflicts. He was ordered to set sail to Yemen with additional troops and supplies meant for Prince Faysal in the Tihamah. Once in al-Hudaydah, arriving on 27 Muharram 1353/10 May 1934, Shaykh ‘Abdullah was tasked with creating a temporary government to administer the affairs of al-Hudaydah and the

surrounding areas under Saudi occupation. After peace had been arranged, Shaykh 'Abdullah was ordered to arrange for the transfer to the Yemeni government what the Saudis had brought to the Tihamah, as well as what they had appropriated during their occupation.

In addition, Shaykh 'Abdullah's brother Hamad had been sent along with Khalid Bey al-Qarqani to 'Asir in late 1932 to settle relations between the King and the Idrisi. They were kept standing by in 'Asir for some time, along with Turki al-Madhi, the Inspector-General in 'Asir.⁷ At the beginning of 1933, their remit was modified to investigate the situation in 'Asir as part of the finalization of the treaty of Abu 'Arish between Saudi Arabia and Yemen.⁸ The pair were then sent from Jazan to Sanaa to negotiate a further treaty with the Imam.⁹

The administration of 'Asir, in particular the lowland area of Tihamat 'Asir (comprising Sabya, Jazan, and Abu 'Arish), was reorganized by the King's cousin Ibn Musa'id (normally governor of Ha'il), and new governors were appointed. In addition, a government launch, long thought inoperable, was utilized to ferry troops from Jiddah to the south,¹⁰

Despite the revolt in 'Asir in the latter part of 1932, relations between King and Imam remained correct. However, King 'Abd al-'Aziz discovered in January 1933 that Hasan al-Idrisi and others had taken refuge in Yemen: while the *imam* conceded to his demand that they be surrendered, they were never handed over. Finally in April, the King agreed that Hasan could remain in Yemen but

the *imam* would guarantee his behavior.¹¹

On 20 July 1933, Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Sulayman called upon the British chargé d'affaires Calvert in Jiddah with a message from the King about the situation with Yemen regarding 'Asir, and also handed over a note by the Minister for Foreign Affairs (Prince Faysal). The Minister of Finance began by informing the chargé d'affaires that negotiations had begun in Sanaa on 17 July but had quickly stalled because of the *imam*'s insistence on restitution of Idrisi territory.

Both Shaykh 'Abdullah's words and the note alleged an Italian interference on behalf of the *imam*, and the Minister of Finance was careful to point out that the King had troops in readiness to fight the Imam although he would seek British advice before taking that step.¹² With negotiations at an impasse in Sanaa, the Saudi delegates sought to leave but were detained on the grounds that the *imam* would return to negotiations after recovering from his illness.¹³ When Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Sulayman called upon Calvert on 1 August, he said that his brother Hamad had sent a telegram to him through intermediaries saying that the delegation had been preventing from leaving Sanaa and from communicating with King 'Abd al-'Aziz.¹⁴ The delegation finally returned to Saudi Arabia at the beginning of August.¹⁵

The situation continued to worsen. On 11 August, over 900 troops (mainly tribesmen) left Jiddah by steamship and dhow for Jazan.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Sulayman continued to be the contact between the King and the British government on the situation. On 28 August 1933, Shaykh 'Abdullah read a

short telegram from the King to Calvert that stated that Saudi forces had been moved from the northeast to 'Asir – Shaykh 'Abdullah confirmed that the action had been taken three weeks previously. He also read five telegrams from the king to the *imam* with the king's terms on the region.¹⁷ A week later, Shaykh 'Abdullah said that the *imam* had not given any substantive reply to the king but in his opinion, the king would wait until his military preparations were complete and then demand the *imam*'s definite and final answer.¹⁸

King 'Abd al-'Aziz's position, as given in his telegrams to Imam Yahya, were that Tihamat 'Asir had been settled by treaty between himself and the *imam* (implying that the Idrisi should be excluded from any consideration). Furthermore, the Bani Yam had close relations with many tribes of Najd and the king proposed a division of the sections according to their individual affiliations.

Additionally, King 'Abd al-'Aziz pointed out that the treaty negotiated between the *imam* and the Saudi delegates provided for a division of the territory of Najran at Weilah (Wa'ilah?). The king also complained that, although he had agreed that the Idrisi could receive sanctuary with the *imam*, the Idrisi had been involved in fomenting trouble along the frontier, thus breaching the agreement; therefore he demanded that the Idrisi be expelled.¹⁹

More negative developments followed. Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Sulayman informed the British in late September 1933 that Prince Faysal b. Sa'd, a nephew of the King, had been sent to Abha to take command of 'Asir.²⁰ A *note verbale* from the Italian Ministry of

Foreign Affairs, relying on information from Sanaa, contended that there had been no negotiated agreement on Saudi-Yemeni borders in 1927 but only a draft, as confirmed by the absence of any mention of it during Italo-British discussions in 1927. Furthermore, the note added that the *imam*'s eldest son, Sayf al-Islam Ahmad, had conducted operations in Najran against recalcitrant tribes but contended that the possession of Najran by Saudi Arabia had never been agreed.²¹

Consequently, more than 700 soldiers were embarked in Jiddah for Jazan in mid-September 1933 amid active recruiting throughout al-Hijaz.²² In early October, the settlement of Badr, the religious center of the Makrami sect some 40-50 miles northwest of Najran, was occupied by the *imam*'s forces but, according to Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Sulayman, the subsection of Bani Yam of that area had always been independent and sided with the forces of the Imam.

This apparently allowed Sayf al-Islam Ahmad to take control of Najran. Furthermore, all of King 'Abd al-'Aziz's forces were said to be either in 'Asir or en route. Soon, the Minister of Finance said, the king would present the *imam* with an ultimatum. Shaykh 'Abdullah's personal opinion was that the *imam* would reject the king's demands and hostilities were almost inevitable.²³

According to Shaykh 'Abdullah, these terms included the handover of the Idrisi to the Saudis, the *imam* to cease intrigues and disturbing the peace, Yemeni evacuation of Najran, establishment of present frontiers, and putting the existing treaty between the two countries into force.²⁴ The *imam* sent the king

three telegrams during the last 10 days of November but these were regarded as nothing more than procrastination.²⁵

Meanwhile, the tribes around Badr harassed Yemeni forces so much that they were forced to abandon Badr (after razing it) and possibly Najran as well.²⁶ Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Sulayman was also kept busy moving between al-Ta'if, Makkah, and Jiddah, engaged in the task of organizing the despatch of troops and supplies to 'Asir.²⁷

Prospects for averting war were brighter in December with the attainment of an agreement after peripatetic negotiations on several points; however, the question of Najran remained a sticking point.²⁸ On and off negotiations continued with few results. In exchange for the king's withdrawal of his demand for the Idrisi's extradition, the *imam* was willing to keep him away from the border area, probably in Zabid in Yemen's Tihamah.

In addition, the king had proposed that Najran should be considered neutral territory and the *imam* began withdrawing his forces, although they had burned and razed Badr. The situation on the ground was generally quiet although the king continued to move reinforcements and supplies south to Abha.²⁹ The king had written to the *imam* to say that the question of Najran could remain in abeyance until the conference convened to fashion a treaty regarding all the border points; the *imam*, however, procrastinated in replying. In response, the king sent both his sons Sa'ud and Faysal to 'Asir to command forces there. More troops were ferried to the south.

The *imam*'s eventual reply resulted in the

despatch of Fu'ad Hamza to Abha to conduct negotiations with the *imam*'s representative. While there was still no fighting by the end of January, the situation was tense and the Yemeni delegation designated to handle the negotiations had yet to leave Sanaa.³⁰

The situation changed in January 1934 as King 'Abd al-'Aziz had become obviously irritated at the *imam*'s incessant delays in replying. Orders were given to Prince Sa'ud to march south with his forces from Najd and to Prince Faysal to advance from 'Asir (where he had been in command for some time) along the coastal region. After the king sent his last proposals to the *imam* on 3 January, Imam Yahya finally replied on the 9th. While orders were communicated to Faysal to stop, Sa'ud couldn't be reached.³¹

The dispute was further complicated by a general imprecision in the matter of borders. With the absorption of the former Idrisi state into Saudi Arabia, the Saudi-Idrisi borders became irrelevant. But there had been no settled agreement on Idrisi-Yemeni borders, which of course led to the Saudi-Yemeni disagreement. This led to extreme Saudi claims to al-Hudaydah on the Yemeni Tihamah coast, based solely on the Idrisi's temporary occupation of the town in 1921 following the Ottoman evacuation and then British withdrawal after World War I. This claim was regarded by observers as untenable and perhaps an opening gambit of the king in future negotiations.³²

An exchange of letters in early January 1934 failed to resolve the situation. Consequently, Fu'ad Bey Hamza was sent to Abha to treat with Sayyid 'Abdullah al-Wazir, representing

the *imam*. Stress was placed on Prince Sa'ud's presence in Abha, with the implication that he had been given wide authority to either accept peace or make war.³³ The seriousness of the situation was shown by the advance of Saudi forces to Samtah near the frontier to back up the tribes of Masarihah, Bani Shubayl, and al-Mareth (sic) who had been importuned by both the *imam* and the Idrisi.³⁴

With the absence of Fu'ad Hamza in the south, Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Sulayman was again pressed into service as a messenger between the king and the British Legation.³⁵ When Shaykh 'Abdullah next saw the British minister, he emphasized that neither side expected the Abha conference to succeed. In consequence, the kingdom was continuing its sustained preparations for war.³⁶

There was little news from the front for over a month, until late March when Prince Faysal (who seemed to be still in Makkah and Jiddah) informed the British that there had been no result from either messages between the two rulers or the conference in Abha. Furthermore, the prince said that the *imam* had sent 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Idrisi (a nephew of the former Idrisi *amir*) with forces to invade and occupy the mountains of Fayfah, Bani Malik, and Bilghazi.

As a result, the king had had no choice but to take action to recover his territory and ordered Prince Sa'ud to advance toward the frontier.³⁷ The Saudi government made more specific claims to the effect that the *imam* had not only sent his troops to the Bani Malik and Fayfah areas but had installed officials and collected taxes there. Furthermore, he was insisting that he would contemplate evacuation of this area

only if his claim to Najran was recognized.³⁸

There was some indication that part of the king's reluctance to initiate combat was the potential strength of Yemeni forces. The Saudi Director-General of Military Organization estimated that the *imam* could muster 12,000 regulars immediately and supplement them with another 13,000 regulars and 50,000 irregulars.³⁹ This of course said little about their fighting quality, especially vis-à-vis the Saudi forces.

The war had indeed begun. A Saudi government communiqué on 6 April 1934 announced that three advances were under way, one towards Baqim, a second towards Najran and Sa'dah, and the third towards Harad, which it claimed had fallen.⁴⁰ Shortly afterwards, a high-level Arab delegation arrived in Jiddah from Damascus, seeking to mediate in the conflict.⁴¹

In alarm at his reverses, the *imam* asked the king about 12 April to receive his envoy. 'Abd al-'Aziz's response was that he would do so provided that Najran was truly evacuated by Yemeni forces, all hostages were released, and the Idrisi family were surrendered as provided in the agreement of December 1931. The *imam*'s response was ambiguous.⁴²

As a result, the Saudi offensive continued. By 21 April, Yemeni forces had been driven out of Najran and on the following day the Saudis occupied most of the coastal town of Midi, near Harad, except for one fort. By the time that the British naval vessel HMS Penzance anchored off Midi on 29 April, the Saudis were clear in control.⁴³ A few days later, HMS Penzance had brought 200 refugees from al-

Hudaydah to Kamaran with word that Yemeni troops had abandoned the town and tribesmen had looted the town.

The following day, the British Royal Air Force reported similar conditions at al-Hudaydah and noted that the Saudis had yet to arrive.⁴⁴ On 3 May, the Italians told the British that the *imam* had accepted all conditions imposed by King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz and had ensured that his troops had evacuated al-Hudaydah.⁴⁵

Desperate, the *imam* appealed to King Fu‘ad of Egypt to mediate in the conflict but the king declined.⁴⁶ The Saudi attack down the Tihamah was spectacularly successful and about 100 Saudi troops entered al-Hudaydah on 5 May while Prince Faysal arrived on the following day. King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ordered Shaykh ‘Abdullah al-Sulayman to travel to al-Hudaydah with officials and police to organize the administration there, which he did by Besse steamer on 7 May.⁴⁷

As clearly the occupying power, the Saudis asked both the British and the Italians to withdraw their landing parties. While there was some question of whether the Saudis would advance as far as al-Mukha’ (Mocha), there was more concern on the part of the king that the *imam* (rumored falsely to have died) would mount a counter-attack from the mountains.⁴⁸ The Minister of Finance arrived at al-Hudaydah, accompanied by 200 armed police, on 11 May.⁴⁹

The Saudi occupation extended to Bayt al-Faqih and to the edge of the mountains, while the Yemenis continued to hold Zabid, al-Mukha’ and the interior, including Sa‘dah in

the north.⁵⁰ Surprisingly, there was no word of Prince Sa‘ud’s activities in the mountains during this period and Jiddah was filled with rumors.⁵¹ Still, it appeared that Prince Sa‘ud had advanced to the outskirts of Sa‘dah although he never took it.⁵²

Imam Yahya sent a telegram of capitulation to the king on 11 May, which King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz accepted, possibly because he feared that the *imam* could prepare an effective counter-attack with his virtually unscathed forces. The Saudi government published an official communiqué on 13 May stating that since the *imam* had agreed to surrender the Idrisis, to evacuate disputed mountain territory around Bani Malik, and to release his hostages, the king had ordered a suspension of all hostilities in order to resume peace negotiations.⁵³

Negotiations were concluded successfully and a peace treaty was signed by the negotiators at al-Ta’if on 20 May. King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz settled for sovereignty over Najran and accepting the *de facto* boundary as the permanent border. Nevertheless, he insisted that the treaty depended on the *imam*’s compliance with his preliminary conditions and hostilities nearly resumed when satisfactory replies were not forthcoming from Imam Yahya.⁵⁴

Although Prince Faysal’s advance had stopped at al-Hudaydah, minor hostilities continued. A skirmish was reported close to Zabid on 27 May and about 10 wounded Saudis were returned to al-Hudaydah. Shaykh ‘Abdullah al-Sulayman remained in charge of administration in al-Hudaydah.⁵⁵ Yemeni concentrations were reported at Zabid, Manakhah, and Hajjah, and the latter were said to be threatening Zuhrah on the coast. It

seemed that the *imam* was playing for more time.⁵⁶

But by the beginning of June, resolution of the conflict was in full swing. Sayyid ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Idrisi was to surrender at Abu ‘Arish on 5 June and Imam Yahya was expected to turn over the other Idrisi members. He had begun evacuation of disputed mountainous areas already and the Saudis were preparing to leave al-Hudaydah.⁵⁷

An official Saudi announcement on 11 June stated that the Yemeni forces had evacuated all of the mountain areas in disputed territories and that the Idrisi had been brought back to Sanaa prior to being surrendered.⁵⁸ ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Idrisi arrived in al-Hudaydah on 26 June, while Hasan and ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Idrisi had arrived already in Makkah on 25 June.⁵⁹

The first troops left on 7 June although others arrived later.⁶⁰ As a consequence, the actual Saudi withdrawal from al-Hudaydah began around 22 June, with 300 Saudis leaving by land and four Saudi motor dhows departed for the north with stores.⁶¹ The handover of Bayt al-Faqih and Bajil was expected on 24 June.⁶² On 3 July, 1500 Saudis left by sea with another 350 mounted troops departing the following day, and on 5 July Shaykh ‘Abdullah al-Sulayman left by sea with his staff and 200 men. Prince Faysal left on 6 July by car with the remaining 250 soldiers, leaving the town open to Yemeni re-occupation.⁶³

Shaykh ‘Abdullah arrived in Jiddah on 9 July, where “He was accorded an official reception, the almost triumphal character of which was

in strong contrast with the lack of attention shown to Fuad Bey Hamza when he left Jeddah two days earlier.”⁶⁴

The Treaty of al-Ta’if was signed on 6 Safar 1353/20 May 1934 by Prince Khalid b. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Al Sa‘ud and Sayyid ‘Abdullah b. Ahmad al-Wazir. Ratifications were exchanged by Prince Faysal and Sayyid ‘Abdullah al-Wazir at al-Hudaydah on 22 June. The treaty acknowledged King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s sovereignty over former Idrisi territory, al-Aidh, Najran, and the Yam country. Article 4 provided a detailed explanation of the two states’ common boundary. Subsequent articles laid out each party’s obligations of returning fugitives and non-interference in internal affairs.⁶⁵ The treaty was to remain in force for 20 years and then to be renewable at 10 year intervals. A final border treaty was signed on 12 June 2000 that permanently fixed the two countries’ boundaries.

Later in 1934, Philby expressed his belief on several occasions that Imam Yahya had surrendered a war indemnity to King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz of the equivalent of perhaps £100,000 gold. His evidence was the daily payment of about 40,000 Maria Theresa dollars to tribal visitors in Riyadh. There were skeptics who maintained that the king instead had raided his treasury deeply to avoid trouble with tribesmen who had been disappointed by a lack of loot in the war. Their opinion was reinforced by the belief that the *imam* would have continued the war rather than pay such a substantial sum.⁶⁶ A joint Saudi-Yemeni commission completed the delimitation of the two countries’ boundary in early 1936.⁶⁷

Notes:

1. Twitchell, K.S. "The Operations in the Yemen," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1934), pp. 445-449.
2. See the various Jiddah Reports in United Kingdom, National Archives (Kew), Foreign Office Records (FO), FO/371/11443.
3. FO/371/14461/E3058; Sir Andrew Ryan, British Minister, Jiddah, to George Rendel, Foreign Office, 22 May 1930.
4. FO/371/15289, E6029; Jiddah Report for September-October 1931. This account, presumably influenced by the reaction of the British firms involved, is decidedly hostile to Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Sulayman, to the point of referring to him as an "ignorant Nejd." Shell Oil of Egypt also lodged a protest with the Foreign Office in London but agreed to let the Legation in Jiddah handle the matter. FO/371/15301/E4855; Foreign Office memorandum, 24 September 1931. Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Sulayman signed an agreement with Gellatly Hankey on 18 September agreeing to pay for the benzine in three installments plus 9% compensation. FO/371/15301/E4855; Jiddah to Foreign Office, tel. 219 of 27 September 1931. C.G. Hope Gill in Jiddah was convinced that Shaykh 'Abdullah was so amenable to an agreement because of the telegrams that Hope Gill had sent to al-Ta'if after the event *en clair* demanding to know who was responsible for the theft. He remarked that "The misappropriation was, of course, a shocking affair, but it is frequently done here, though never quite so blatantly. There seems no doubt that Shaykh Abdullah Suleyman was at his wits' end to supply the demands of Ibn Sa'ud and the needs of the military transport which was urgently required for Asir. He had frequently tried to come to credit terms with both the Shell and Standard Oil agents, Messrs. Sharqieh, Limited, but failed." It became known later that the company representatives had been prevented access to their stocks and some of these apparently had been gradually been removed even before 12 September. FO/371/15301/E5139; Hope Gill to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 29 September 1931. Further details are given in additional correspondence in the same file.
5. FO/371/16024/E1197; Jiddah Report for November-December 1931.
6. British Library, Oriental and India Collection, India Office Records, R/15/2/330; Political Agent, Bahrain, "Diary of News from Saudi Arabia," 29 March 1934.
7. FO/371/16871/E3463; Ryan to Simon, 2 June 1933.
8. FO/371/16871/E759; Sir Andrew Ryan, Jiddah, to Foreign Office, 11 January 1933. The treaty of Abu 'Arish was dated 15 December 1931, Ibn Sa'ud ratified it on 29 December 1931, and the Yemeni *imam*'s reply agreeing to it was dated 23 January 1932. FO/371/16871/E899.
9. FO/371/16871/E3072; Sir Andrew Ryan to FO, tel. of 1 June 1933.
10. FO/371/16875/E3963; Jiddah Situation Report for June 1933.
11. FO/371/17941/E3126; Ryan to FO, 28 April 1934, enclosing "Annual Report for Saudi Arabia, 1933."
12. FO/371/16872/E4010; Chargé d'affaires, Jiddah, to FO, tel. no. 140 of 20 July 1933. In a minute on the document's jacket, George Rendel in the Foreign Office reported on a conversation by the Saudi minister in London that repeated many of the same points. They alleged that the *imam* had opened the negotiations at Sanaa by claiming all of 'Asir for himself and not for the Idrisi.

13. FO/371/16872/E4209; Calvert, Jiddah, to FO, tel. no. 146 of 30 July 1933.
14. FO/371/16872/E4251; Calvert to FO, tel. no. 149 of 1 August 1933; and FO/371/16872/E4711, Calvert to Simon, 1 August 1933. Translations of the Minister for Foreign Affairs' note of 10 July and of the telegram sent by the King to the Minister of Foreign Affairs reporting on the telegram the King had received from Hamad al-Sulayman are contained as an enclosure to FO/371/16872/E4700; Calvert to Simon, 26 July 1933.
15. FO/371/17941/E3126; Ryan to FO, 28 April 1934, enclosing "Annual Report for Saudi Arabia, 1933."
16. FO/371/16875/E6328; Jiddah Situation Report for August 1933.
17. FO/371/16872/E5052; Calvert to FO, tel. no. 161 of 29 August 1933.
18. FO/371/16872/E5248; Calver to FO, tel. no. 163 of 7 September 1933.
19. FO/371/16872/E5422; Calvert to Simon, 29 August 1933.
20. FO/371/16872/E5670; Calvert to FO, tel. no. 173 of 25 September 1933.
21. FO/371/16872/E5694; Murray, Rome, to Sir John Simon, 22 September 1933, enclosing the *note verbale* of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs of 21 September 1933.
22. FO/371/16872/E5369; Calvert to FO, tel. of 12 September 1933
23. FO/371/16873/E6288; Calvert to FO, tel. no. 179 of 19 October 1933; FO/371/16873/E6772; Calvert to Simon, 24 October 1933. Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Sulayman informed the British chargé d'affaires that the Bani Yam actually consisted of elements of Bani Yam proper, al-Dawasir, and Al Murrah. FO/371/16873/E6329; Calvert to Simon, 3 October 1933.
24. FO/371/16873/E6669; Calvert to FO, tel. no. 186 of 2 November 1933. There was a further dispute regarding the territory of the Bani Malik and the Abadil in a mountainous area apparently between Najran and 'Asir, with the *imam* accused of having fomented a revolt of the local tribes. FO/371/17941/E3126; Ryan to FO, 28 April 1934, enclosing "Annual Report for Saudi Arabia, 1933."
25. FO/371/16874/7400; Calvert to FO, tel. of 1 December 1933.
26. FO/371/17941/E3126; Ryan to FO, 28 April 1934, enclosing "Annual Report for Saudi Arabia, 1933." This report also summarizes the historical and legal background to the Saudi-Yemeni territorial disputes.
27. FO/371/16875/E7249; Jiddah Report for October 1933.
28. FO/371/16874/E8031; Ryan to FO, tel. of 29 December 1933.
29. FO/371/17922/E79; Calvert to Sir John Simon, 12 December 1933.
30. FO/371/17934/E1102; Jiddah Report for January 1934.
31. FO/371/17922/E479; Ryan, Jiddah, to FO, tel. no. 8 of 19 January 1934. There seems to have been some confusion regarding when Prince Faysal left Jiddah to assume command on the southern littoral. The Jiddah Report for April 1934 (FO/371/17935/E3550) stated that he left on 15 April and that Prince Sa'ud "remained in supreme

command in the inland portion of the southern front.” Their brother Muhammad had gone to Riyadh already to lead further troops from Najd, while Khalid was appointed Acting President of the Legislative Council and acting minister of the interior in place of Faysal.

32. FO/371/17922/E504; Ryan to Simon, 2 January 1934.

33. FO/371/17923/E985; Ryan to Simon, 27 January 1934.

34. FO/371/17923/E988; Fu’ad Bey Hamza to Ryan, 28 January 1934, enclosure in Ryan to Simon, 30 January 1934; *ibid.*, E1103; Ryan to Simon, 6 February 1934. The latter encloses the substance of a number of telegrams exchanged between King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz and Imam Yahya.

35. FO/371/17923/E1106; Ryan to FO, tel. no. 24 of 19 February 1934; which discusses Shaykh ‘Abdullah al-Sulayman’s delivery of a message from the king regarding affairs in Transjordan.

36. FO/371/17923/E1431; Ryan to Simon, 13 February 1934.

37. FO/371/17923/E1851; Ryan to FO, tel. no. 42 of 23 March 1934.

38. FO/371/17923/E1891; Ryan to FO, tel. no. 45 of 24 March 1934. The Saudi government’s message was delivered by Yusuf Yasin.

39. FO/371/17924/E2354; Ryan to Simon, 25 March 1934.

40. FO/371/17923/E2166; Ryan to FO, tel. of 6 April 1934.

41. The members of this delegation were Hashim Atasi of the Syrian parliament, Hajji Amin al-Husayni, the Mufti of Jerusalem, Syrian nationalist Shakib Arslan, and Ali Pasha Allouba (sic) of Egypt and apparent representative of the Muslim Congress. FO/371/17924/2381; Ryan to FO, tel. no. 62 of 16 April 1934.

42. FO/371/17925/E2861; “Diary of Recent Events in Saudi-Yemeni Conflict,” FO memorandum of ca. 7 May 1934.

43. FO/371/17924/E2652; Ryan to FO, tel. no. 76 of 27 April 1934; *ibid.*, E2714, HMS Penzance to the Admiralty, tel. of 29 April 1934; FO/371/17925/E2861; “Diary of Recent Events in Saudi-Yemeni Conflict,” FO memorandum of ca. 7 May 1934.

44. FO/371/17924/E2735, HMS Penzance to the Admiralty, tel. of 1 May 1934; FO/371/17925/E2771; Air Ministry to HQ British Forces, Aden, tel. of 2 May 1934.

45. FO/371/17925/E2809; Sir E. Drummond, Rome, to FO, tel. no. 123 of 4 May 1934.

46. FO/371/17925/E2861; “Diary of Recent Events in Saudi-Yemeni Conflict,” FO memorandum of ca. 7 May 1934; *ibid.*, E2865; M. Lampson, Cairo, to FO, tel. of 5 May 1934.

47. FO/371/17925/E2866; Ryan to FO, tel. no. 97 of 5 May 1934; *ibid.*, E2883; HMS Penzance to the Admiralty, tel. of 6 May 1934; FO/371/17926/E2928; Ryan to FO, tel. no. 101 of 7 May 1934. Shaykh ‘Abdullah was to transfer the Jazan wireless station from Jazan to al-Hudaydah, with messages to be transmitted via the HMS Penzance. *Ibid.* He was accompanied by his secretary, Najib Salihah. FO/371/17930/E5321; HMS Hastings at al-Hudaydah to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 1 July 1934.

48. FO/371/17926/E2983; Ryan to FO, tel. no. 104 of 8 May 1934.
49. FO/371/17926/E3064; HMS Enterprise at al-Hudaydah to the Admiralty, 11 May 1934.
50. FO/371/17928/E3760; Ryan to the Political Resident, Bushire, tel. of 14 May 1934; FO/371/17935; Jiddah Report for May 1934.
51. FO/371/17928/E3998; Ryan to Simon, 29 May 1934.
52. FO/371/19019/E3607; Ryan to Simon, 18 May 1935, "Saudi Arabia Annual Report for 1934."
53. FO/371/17926/E3088; Ryan to FO, tel. of 14 May 1934.
54. FO/371/17935/E4334; Jiddah Report for May 1934. The negotiations went well in part because of the good personal relations that developed between the king and 'Abdullah al-Wazir. This prompted speculation that King 'Abd al-'Aziz had agreed to promote Wazir family interests in Yemen against the Hamid al-Din. FO/371/19019/E3607; Ryan to Simon, 18 May 1935, "Saudi Arabia Annual Report for 1934."
55. FO/371/17928/E3760; Ryan to the Political Resident, Bushire, tel. of 14 May 1934; FO/371/17927/E3453; HMS Penzance to the Admiralty, tel. of 27 May 1934.
56. FO/371/17935/E4334; Jiddah Report for May 1934.
57. FO/371/17927/E3727; Ryan to FO, tel. no. 134 of 5 June 1934.
58. FO/371/17935/E4334; Jiddah Report for May 1934.
59. FO/371/17929/E4189; HMS Penzance to the Admiralty, 26 June 1934; FO/371/17929/E4626, Ryan to Simon, 3 July 1934.
60. FO/371/17928/E3782; S.O. of Red Sea Sloops to the Admiralty, tel. of 7 June 1934. There was some scattered looting by Saudi forces as they retired but Prince Faysal stressed the difficulty of control over irregular troops. FO/371/17929/E4189; HMS Penzance to the Admiralty, 26 June 1934.
61. FO/371/17928/E4109; HMS Penzance to the Admiralty, tel. of 22 June 1934. A diary of events in al-Hudaydah during this period is contained in FO/371/17928/E4106; J.S. Barnes, Admiralty, to the FO, 21 June 1934, enclosing report; and in FO/371/17928/E4128; J.S. Barnes, Admiralty, to the FO, 22 June 1934, enclosing report of HMS Penzance at al-Hudaydah. As part of their withdrawal, the Saudis scoured the port for troop transportation, including sounding out Gellatly, Hankey for the transport of 5000 troops from al-Hudaydah to Jazan and Jiddah. FO/371/17928/E4123; Ryan to FO, tel. of 23 June 1934.
62. FO/371/17928/E4150; HMS Penzance to the Admiralty, 23 June 1934.
63. FO/371/17929/E4404; S.O. Red Sea Sloops to the Admiralty, 4 July 1934; FO/371/17929/E4421; S.O. Red Sea Sloops to the Admiralty, 5 July 1934. By the end of July, Prince Faysal had got no farther than Jazan while Prince Sa'ud, whose role in the war was extremely mysterious, remained in Najran until mid-July when he withdrew to Abha on his way to al-Ta'if. FO/371/17935/E5333; Jiddah Report for July 1934.
64. FO/371/17929/E4808; Ryan to Simon, 10 July 1934.

65. A translated copy of the treaty is enclosed in FO/371/17929/E5194; Ryan to Simon, 30 July 1934.

66. FO/371/17930/E7797; Calvert to Simon, 10 December 1934.

67. FO/371/20064/E1529; Ryan to Eden, 26 February 1936. Ryan's assertion that one of the Saudi commissioners, Shaykh Muhammad al-Sulayman, was a relative of Shaykh 'Abdullah was in error. Interview with a member of al-Sulaiman family, Jiddah, April 2012.