

■ Troops near western entrance of Al Anad

# BATTLE FOR AIRBASE

**Aden**  
Loyalist forces began a major offensive yesterday aimed at retaking Yemen's largest airbase, which is held by rebels, as troops from the Saudi-led coalition entered recaptured second city Aden.

The pro-government troops deployed heavy armour supplied by their backers in the assault on Al Anad base, some 60 kilometres (35 miles) north of Aden, military sources said.

"The battle to retake Al Anad base has begun," a military source said.

Hundreds of troops and militia equipped with tanks and armoured vehicles supplied by the coalition deployed around the base before yesterday's attack, their commander Fadhl Hassan said.

Another source said Saudi-led warplanes were providing air cover for the loyalist forces, who launched the offensive from a mountainous region west of the base.

Al Anad, in southern Lahj province, housed US troops overseeing a drone war against Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula until shortly before Iran-backed Shia Huthi rebels

overran it in March. An officer taking part in the offensive said the troops had reached the western entrance of Al Anad by mid-afternoon yesterday.

**The pro-government troops deployed heavy armour supplied by their backers in the assault on Al Anad base**

But, an attempt to break into the base from the south failed and loyalist forces met "stiff resistance" from the rebels, added the officer who asked not to be named.

Fierce fighting was under way outside the base and "several" people were killed on both sides, he said.

Another officer said that coalition warplanes helped loyalists on the ground by launching new raids, destroying two rebel tanks and



A member of a coalition of fighters made up of local tribes, Popular Resistance Committees and supporters of the southern Yemeni separatist movement pictured the Al Anad airbase

four vehicles and killing those inside, he said.

Retaking Al Anad would help bolster security in Aden, whose liberation the government of

exiled President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi announced in mid-July.

It would also open the way to loyalist forces to push further

north against the Huthis, who have enjoyed strong support on the ground from fighters close to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Meanwhile, the Saudi-owned *Al Hayat* newspaper said 1,500 troops, most of them from the United Arab Emirates, had reached Aden.

The UAE is a member of the coalition, which has carried out more than four months of air strikes targeting the rebels and their allies.

Military sources spoke of further progress by loyalist forces who they said had recaptured Houta, the provincial capital of Lahj, and seized Al Ribat highway north of Aden.

Aden has been devastated by four months of coalition air strikes and fighting on the ground.

**Saudi beheads murderer in 110th execution since Jan**

**Riyadh**  
Saudi Arabia yesterday beheaded one of its citizens convicted of murder, adding to a sharp increase in executions this year.

Mugrib al Thanyan was executed in Eastern Province after being found guilty of shooting dead another Saudi after a dispute, the ministry of interior said in a statement. His case brings the number of beheadings this year in the kingdom to 110.

**5.3-magnitude quake rocks Pakistan's southwest: USGS**

**Islamabad**  
A 5.3-magnitude earthquake struck Pakistan's southwestern Baluchistan province yesterday, the US Geological Survey said, but local officials said there were no reports of damage or casualties.

The quake struck at a depth of 27 kilometres, with its epicentre located 82 kilometres south west of Khuzdar district in Baluchistan province, where people felt the shockwave.

"The magnitude of the earthquake was recorded 5.5 and its depth was 10 kilometres," Muhammad Shafique, a meteorologist at Pakistan's met office, said.

**11 soldiers killed in attack on Mali camp: government**

**Bamako**  
Eleven soldiers were killed yesterday in a "terrorist" attack on their camp in northern Mali's Timbuktu region, said a government statement. "The toll is 11 guards killed, one wounded," the statement said, condemning it as a "cowardly and barbaric terrorist act perpetrated by lawless individuals". According to Mauritanian news agency *Al Akhbar*, jihadist group Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has claimed responsibility for the attack in Gourma-Rharous.



Armed militiamen loyal to Yemen's fugitive President Abderabbo Mansour Hadi stand at the entrance to Aden's airport

## Yemeni refugees flee to Djibouti

**Djibouti**

Djibouti appealed yesterday for aid after hundreds of Yemeni refugees fleeing civil war arrived in the Horn of African nation, adding to thousands already being supported. "The refugees arriving have lost everything," said presidential spokesman Naguib Ali Taher, adding they needed shelter as well as medical care, including psychological support.

Djibouti, a tiny nation of over 800,000 people, is a haven for Yemeni refugees fleeing the air strikes that have devastated their country.

Two boatloads bearing more than 200 refugees arrived last week, Taher said, warning that the "flood does not stop", with more boats arriving over the weekend.

Almost 10,000 Yemenis have arrived in the small state since late March, according to the UN refugee agency, the UNHCR.

## Global anger

# Pak 'teen' convict faces gallows despite protests

**Karachi**

Pakistan is preparing today to hang a convicted killer whose case has attracted international protests.

Shafqat Hussain was sentenced to death for killing a seven-year-old boy in Karachi in 2004, but has had several stays of execution, most recently in June.

The case has prompted grave concern among human rights campaigners as Hussain's lawyers and family claim he was only 15 at the time of the killing, though a government-ordered probe ruled he was

an adult. Hussain's supporters also say he was tortured into confessing.

Yesterday the local government in the Kashmir region, where Hussain is from, requested a stay of execution while they look into the controversy surrounding his age. "On the basis of the recommendations of the Sindh Human Rights Commission, I have decided to conduct an enquiry at the level of the Government of Kashmir into the matter of the juvenility of Mr. Hussain," the state's leader, Sardar Muhammad

Yaqoob Khan, said in a letter to Pakistan's President.

"It is in the interest of justice that the execution of Mr. Hussain ... be postponed on humanitarian grounds," he wrote.

Khan added that he had also asked the local government in Sindh province, where Hussain is jailed, to look into allegations that torture was used to extract a confession.

A government official in Sindh confirmed that the provincial authorities had also recommended a stay in the execution. Late

yesterday, however, the federal government was yet to announce any postponement.

United Nations rights experts have said his trial "fell short of international standards" and called on Islamabad to reinstate a moratorium on the death penalty.

Maya Foa of the British anti-death penalty campaign group Reprieve condemned the plan to hang Hussain as an "absolute disgrace".

An official at Karachi Central Prison said Hussain's execution was scheduled for today following a death warrant issued by a court.



The parents of Shafqat Hussain hold a photograph of their son