

Yemen Separatists Seize \$225M in Russian-Printed Cash

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The UN calls the war between separatists and the Saudi-backed Yemeni government the world's largest humanitarian crisis. **Najeeb Almahboobi / EPA / TASS**

Separatists in southern Yemen have seized 64 billion riyals (\$255 million) in banknotes that Russia had printed for the country's central bank, Moscow [confirmed](#) Wednesday.

Forces loyal to a council that declared self-rule in southern Yemen's port of Aden in April commandeered the cash convoy leaving the port, Reuters [cited](#) Yemen's central bank as saying Saturday. The seizure threatens the nominal alliance between Aden's separatists and the Saudi-backed Yemeni government in a war against rebels linked to Iran, which the UN calls the world's largest humanitarian crisis.

"The incident did take place in the southern Yemeni capital city of Aden," Interfax quoted Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova as saying at a press briefing.

Zakharova said Russia's Goznak, one of the world's largest printers of banknotes and coins, has been printing money for Yemen's government as part of a commercial contract signed in

2017.

An unnamed Yemeni government source, in comments to Reuters, called the seizure “piracy.” The separatists said it was “part of several measures to end sources of corruption” and financing terrorism with public money.

Last month, Malta seized \$1.1 billion worth of currency printed by Goznak destined for Libya. The U.S. State Department said it “commended” the move while Russia’s Foreign Ministry [denied](#) the countries’ claims that the money was counterfeit.

In its denial, the Foreign Ministry noted that Libya has two central banks because the country has two de-facto governments.

A Saudi-led coalition and Yemen's internationally recognized government have been at war for the past five years against Iran-backed Houthi rebels who control much of the north including the capital Sanaa.

Separatists in the south, which used to be an independent country, have repeatedly agitated to break away again — a campaign that was temporarily put to rest with a power-sharing, coalition-sponsored deal signed in Riyadh last November.

But the Southern Transitional Council (STC) declared self-rule in southern Yemen on April 26, accusing the government of failing to perform its duties and of "conspiring" against the separatists' cause.

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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