Crosetto: Houthi advance on Hanish islands puts Mediterranean security at risk

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Geopolitical tensions in the Red Sea are experiencing an **additional and dangerous escalation**. The Yemeni Houthi militias have managed to reach and occupy the **Hanish islands (Greater and Lesser) and Zuqar island**, positioned in an area of **vital strategic importance** south of the Red Sea, close to the **Strait of Bab el-Mandeb** and major international shipping routes.

A Strategic Offensive on the Western Coast

The advance in the archipelago is not an isolated event, but part of a **broader and more aggressive campaign** conducted by the rebels along Yemen's western coast. This offensive has allowed Tehran-aligned forces to capture the **port city of Mokha** and significantly increase military pressure on government forces and regional energy infrastructure.

The President of Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad Al-Alimi, has warned that any attempt to alter the status quo at Bab el-Mandeb cannot be considered a mere internal matter, as it **directly threatens global commerce and energy flows** connecting the Gulf to the Mediterranean through the Suez Canal.

Islamabad's Mediation, the Defense Pact, and the Axis Reactions

The situation risks triggering a **chain reaction on a regional scale**. According to diplomatic sources and reports from *Reuters*, **Pakistan has transmitted a stern warning to Tehran** from Saudi Arabia to curb the actions of its Yemeni allies.

Pakistan's Defense Minister, Khawaja Asif, has clarified that any extension of the conflict to Saudi territory could **activate the joint security agreement** linking Islamabad, Ankara, and Riyadh, based on the principle that an aggression against one of the three countries is considered an attack against all. For its part, while formally replying that it does not exercise direct control over the Houthis, Iranian sources have reportedly confirmed **logistical support and the deployment of IRGC commanders** to coordinate pressure operations along the coast.

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The Arsenal and Regional Role

Regarding the operational capabilities of the rebels, the arsenal and strategic impact are articulated in the following points:

- **Long-Range Projection:** Availability of **ballistic missiles and kamikaze drones** with an operational range of up to **2,000 kilometers**, enabling direct strikes against regional targets and energy infrastructure.
- **Maritime Interdiction:** Use of **anti-ship missiles, remote-controlled boats, and minefields** to impose a de facto blockade or strong deterrence to merchant vessel transit.
- **Tehran Axis:** Logistical support, intelligence activities, and supply flows guaranteed by Iran, integrating the Houthis into Iran's **horizontal strategy** alongside the Strait of Hormuz.

Implications for International Security

The evolution of the crisis demonstrates how the Houthis have transcended the perimeter of Yemen's complex civil war to establish themselves as **a leading regional military actor**. Exploiting the geographic configuration of the territory and the **inability of the international community and regional partners to sustain a complex ground campaign** in Yemen, the militias continue to wear down opposing defenses.

The situation requires **constant monitoring** by the naval and air forces engaged in the region's security, as the consolidation between the coastal control of Mokha and the island outpost of Hanish **further reduces the safety margins** for global maritime traffic, intensifying fears of a wider conflagration.