Twitter Thread by Chris Murphy



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A little noticed decision by Mike Pompeo Sunday may result in tens of thousands dying of starvation and also a massive oil spill 4 times bigger than the Valdez.

1/ A THREAD of the mind blowing insanity of Pompeo's decision to name Yemen's Houthis as a terrorist group.

2/ A civil war has been raging in Yemen since 2014. Saudi Arabia and the U.S. are on one side. The rebel Houthi tribe and Iran on the other. It has caused a humanitarian crisis - the worst in the world. 100,000 children have died of starvation or disease. 16m are malnourished.

3/ The Houthis are bad guys. They target civilians. They steal food aid. But they aren't what we would traditionally consider a "terrorist group". They are using barbaric tactics in the conduct of war. But so are the Saudis. They intentionally target civilians too.

4/ Only food aid keeps people alive in Yemen. But humanitarian organizations can't work in areas of countries controlled by terrorist organizations. Now, these programs will shut down in areas of Yemen controlled by the Houthis.

5/ Gets worse. Commercial food importers will not send food into the same areas. Yemen imports almost all its food. So the designation is essentially a death sentence for millions. No humanitarian food. No commercial food.

5/ Gets worse. The only way to achieve a political settlement is for the U.S. and the UN to broker a settlement between Houthis and the Saudis. But by law, the U.S. can't talk to terrorist groups, and frankly, the Houthis won't talk now anyway. They've been backed into a corner.

6/ And in that corner is Iran. At the start of the war, there was a loose relationship between the Houthis and Iran. As the war has dragged, the alliance has grown stronger. Now, it cements. The Iran-skeptic wing of the Houthis is now pushed into Iran's waiting arms. Disaster.

7/ Gets worse. A Houthi controlled rotting oil tanker sits right off the coast of the country's most important port. Soon, it will start leaking oil, or worse, explode, making the Beirut blast look like child's play. Houthis will now be much less willing to deal with UN on this.

8/ Finally, there's no upside. At all. Pompeo says it will send the Houthis a message. What? The State Dept. briefing today was a disaster. They had no answers for how this will drive Houthis to the negotiating table. No answers for how to prevent starvation.

9/ Biden can, and should, reverse the designation on day one. It's a no brainer. But the damage will be lasting. Some humanitarian groups may be spooked out of Yemen. The Houthis will be pushed to Iran. Peace negotiations will be less likely. A disaster of our own making.