

Al-Qaeda

Name: Al-Qaeda

Type of Organization:

- Non-state actor
- religious
- terrorist
- transnational
- violent

Ideologies and Affiliations:

- Jihadist
- pan-Islamist
- Qutbist
- Salafist
- Sunni
- takfiri

Place of Origin:

Afghanistan and Pakistan

Year of Origin:

1988

Founder(s):

Osama bin Laden, Abdullah Azzam, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Sayeed al-Masri, Mamdouh Mahmud Salim, Abu Ubaidah al-Banjshiri, WaelHamzaJulaidan, Sayyed Imam al-Sharif, Mohamed LoayBayazid (Abu Burhan, Sheikh Tameem, Abu Hajir, Abu Anas, Abu al Hasan al-Maki, Abu Ibraheem)

Places of Operation:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Burma, Djibouti, Ethiopia, France, India, Kashmir, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia, United States, Yemen

Overview

Executive Summary:

[Osama bin Laden](#) founded al-Qaeda during the latter stages of the Soviet-Afghan War with the goal of waging global jihad. Since its founding in 1988, al-Qaeda has played a role in innumerable terrorist attacks, and is most notoriously responsible for the multiple attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. The 9/11 terror attacks—the deadliest ever on American soil—left nearly 3,000 people dead and provoked the United States to wage war against al-Qaeda in the group’s home bases in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other sanctuaries worldwide. Since then, the group has established five major regional affiliates pledging their official allegiance to al-Qaeda: in the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, East Africa, Syria, and the Indian subcontinent.

In addition to directing and carrying out the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaeda is responsible for terrorist atrocities across the globe, including the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the 2002 Bali bombing, the 2003 Saudi Arabia bombings, the 2004 Madrid bombing, and the 2005 London bombing. Al-Qaeda is also responsible for several failed operations, including the 2009 Christmas Day plane bombing attempt, the 2010 Times Square bombing attempt, and the 2010 cargo plane bombing attempt. Today, al-Qaeda’s structure is increasingly decentralized, with affiliates acting semi-autonomously as extensions of al-Qaeda’s core mission. These affiliates carry out fatal terrorist attacks and hostage

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operations, and wage war under the al-Qaeda banner. Although al-Qaeda maintains affiliates worldwide, some of its affiliates have pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda's former affiliate in Iraq and current competitor, [ISIS](#). However, despite the dramatic rise of ISIS since 2013, the Pentagon, the National Counterterrorism Center, and the U.S. House Intelligence Committee have all forcefully stressed that al-Qaeda remains a critical terrorist threat.¹ This assessment was borne out in January 2015, when al-Qaeda's Yemeni affiliate, [al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula \(AQAP\)](#), was credited with the deadly attack on French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* that left 12 people dead. Despite important strategic and ideological differences, Zawahiri has indicated that future cooperation with ISIS is not out of the question, for the ultimate goal of destroying the United States or, in the event of ISIS's own destruction, absorbing its fighters into a reinvigorated al-Qaeda.² In April 2017, Iraqi Vice President Ayad Allawi confirmed that al-Qaeda was seeking an alliance with ISIS, as Iraqi forces closed in on Mosul, ISIS's last key stronghold. Allawi claimed discussions were occurring between representatives of Baghdadi and Zawahiri.³

Doctrine:

Al-Qaeda is a jihadist network that seeks to establish a caliphate (global Muslim state) under sharia (Islamic law). In 1996, bin Laden issued a declaration of jihad against the United States and its allies, the contents of which continue to serve as the three cornerstones of al-Qaeda's doctrine: to unite the world's Muslim population under sharia; to liberate the "holy lands" from the "Zionist-Crusader" alliance, and to alleviate perceived economic and social injustices.⁴

Ultimately, al-Qaeda believes that it is fighting a "defensive jihad" against the United States and its allies, defending Muslim lands from the "new crusade led by America against the Islamic nations..."⁵ In his 1996 declaration of jihad against the United States, Osama bin Laden justified the use of force by citing 13th century Islamic scholar Ibn Taymiyyah: "To fight in defence of religion and Belief is a collective duty; there is no other duty after Belief than fighting the enemy who is corrupting the life and the religion. There [are] no preconditions for this duty and the enemy should be fought with [one's] best abilities."⁶

Since then, the group has adapted its strategy in an effort to meet its evolving goals. In 2005, details of al-Qaeda's 20-year strategy to implement its ideology emerged. Following a series of interviews and correspondence with senior al-Qaeda officials by Jordanian journalist Fouad Hussein, he described the "stages" leading to the ultimate objective of establishing a caliphate. According to Hussein, the first stage was the "awakening stage," which ranged from the 9/11 attacks to the U.S. taking over Baghdad in 2003.⁷ This period was then to be followed by the "opening eyes" stage which was expected to last between 2003 and 2006. According to Hussein, this stage entailed enhanced al-Qaeda operations in the Middle East, centralizing power in Iraq, and establishing bases in other Arabic states. The third stage, "Arising and Standing Up," was staged to last between 2007 and 2010 and was focused on goading Syria to conduct attacks on Israel and Turkey. The following three years, 2010 to 2013, would involve the overthrow of Arabic monarchies and cyber-attacks on the United States economy. The declaration of the caliphate would come between 2013 and 2016.⁸

However, al-Qaeda's planned declaration of a caliphate was usurped by [ISIS](#). In September 2015, on the eve of the 14th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaeda leader [Ayman al-Zawahiri](#) denounced ISIS for its so-called unilateral and premature imposition of a caliphate without coordination with other jihadist groups through sharia courts, which he calls the "prophetic method."⁹ In particular, Zawahiri expressed his dismay that ISIS leader [Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi](#) had anointed himself the fourth caliph "without consulting the Muslims."¹⁰ Zawahiri also strongly criticized infighting among jihadist groups, especially the killing of other Muslims because, according to Zawahiri, it distracted from the overriding goal of destroying the United States.¹¹

Since then, and despite the local-oriented activities of al-Qaeda's regional affiliates, Zawahiri has maintained that the group's primary target is the United States and "its ally Israel, and secondly its local allies that rule our countries."¹² Despite al-Qaeda's criticism of ISIS, Zawahiri has not ruled out the possibility of cooperating with ISIS, or absorbing its fighters if ISIS is eventually defeated.¹³ In April 2017, the Iraqi vice president confirmed that an al-Qaeda-ISIS merger was a possibility as the government had seen reports of high-level talks between the two groups.¹⁴

Organizational Structure:

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Al-Qaeda's central command, which includes current leader [Ayman al-Zawahiri](#) and his top aides, has traditionally been headquartered in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Al-Qaeda has long pledged allegiance to the Afghan-based [Taliban](#), which provided sanctuary to al-Qaeda after the United States turned its military focus on the group following the 9/11 attacks. In June 2016, Zawahiri reaffirmed al-Qaeda's allegiance by publicly endorsing the Taliban's new leader, [Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada](#).¹⁵

Since the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent U.S.-led campaign against the organization's base of operations, al-Qaeda spawned affiliate groups that have spread throughout North Africa and the Sahel, East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and most recently, South Asia. Despite the affiliates' dispersal over such a vast area, the commander of each branch has pledged allegiance to—and takes operational directions from—al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.¹⁶

In North Africa and the Sahel, al-Qaeda is represented by [al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb \(AQIM\)](#) and its breakaway factions. In East Africa, the group is represented by Somali-based [al-Shabaab](#). [Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula \(AQAP\)](#), which many security analysts believe poses the greatest security threat to Western targets, operates primarily in Yemen. [Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Subcontinent \(AQIS\)](#) is the most recent regional al-Qaeda affiliate to be established, operating chiefly in India, Bangladesh, as well as in the traditional al-Qaeda "home" countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan. For years, al-Qaeda has sustained a formal affiliate in Syria, the [Nusra Front](#). In July 2016, the groups announced that they had split, a move which some analysts have dismissed as artificial.¹⁷

Recent developments suggest that al-Qaeda's primacy of command is not exclusive to the group's geographical base in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In August 2013, Zawahiri appointed [Nasir al-Wuhayshi](#), former head of AQAP, as deputy leader of al-Qaeda's global organization.¹⁸ After Wuhayshi died in a U.S. airstrike in June 2015, Zawahiri appointed deputy leader [Abu Khayr al-Masri](#), who was also killed in a U.S. airstrike.¹⁹ Zawahiri reportedly groomed Osama bin Laden's son [Hamza bin Laden](#) for a senior leadership role prior to Hamza bin Laden's death in 2019.²⁰

The 2011 death of bin Laden compounded with the deaths or arrests of other al-Qaeda leaders have degraded the group's communications, financial support, and facilitation of terror attacks, according to the U.S. State Department. Nevertheless, al-Qaeda's core remains a source of inspiration for its affiliate groups, according to the State Department.²¹

On November 13, 2020, there were reports that Zawahiri may be dead or at least "completely off the grid." The claim came from Hassan Hassan, the director of the U.S.-based Center for Global Policy (CGP), who has closely monitored the militant group's activities over the years. According to Hassan—who corroborated the claim with sources close to al-Qaeda—Zawahiri had been seriously ill and had possibly died in mid-October due to natural causes.²² According to Arab News on November 20, security sources in Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as an al-Qaeda translator with close ties to the group, claimed Zawahiri died in Ghazni, Afghanistan from "asthma because he had no formal treatment." The exact date of Zawahiri's death was not released, but a Pakistani anti-terror security officer claims Zawahiri died sometime in November 2020.²³ It is suspected that Saif al-Adel, one of Zawahiri's chief deputies, is next in line to succeed Zawahiri as the leader of al-Qaeda.²⁴

In late February 2021, some British media began reporting that Adel is soon to be or may have already been named the leader of al-Qaeda. According to retired British Army officer Colonel Richard Kemp, Adel is highly respected among both al-Qaeda and ISIS. As such, some analysts expected Adel to begin recruiting from current ISIS fighters. Analysts told the *Mirror* Adel is a more effective leader than Zawahiri and could make al-Qaeda as dangerous as it was in 2001.²⁵

Financing:

In its early stages, al-Qaeda's primary bankroller was its founder Osama bin Laden. Since then, al-Qaeda has come to rely on donations and extorted funds for financing. The CIA estimates that al-Qaeda maintained a \$30 million annual budget prior to the 9/11 attacks, and that donations primarily made up this budget.²⁶ A 2002 report by the Council on Foreign Relations identified a network of "charities, nongovernmental organizations, mosques, websites, intermediaries, facilitators, and banks and other financial institutions" that were serving to finance the terrorist organization.²⁷

Today, al-Qaeda receives funding from a wide range of sources, including private donors, Islamic charities and foundations, state sponsors, and from activities linked to drug trafficking, bank robbery, and hostage-taking. Nonetheless, wide-ranging sanctions by the United States, United Nations, Financial Action Task Force, and other international financial organizations have slowed the flow of money to the terror group. By 2009, al-Qaeda was reportedly suffering from negative cash flow and was forced to seek out new revenue streams²⁸ as al-Qaeda recruits complained

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of being charged for weapons and other supplies.²⁹ In October 2009, David S. Cohen, then-assistant Treasury secretary for terrorist financing, said that al-Qaeda was in its “weakest financial condition in several years.”³⁰

After bin Laden’s death in 2011, analysts questioned whether al-Qaeda could survive financially or if it had depended too much on bin Laden’s celebrity. But al-Qaeda had laid the groundwork for a new fundraising strategy based on drug trafficking and kidnappings to bolster its finances.³¹ A year before, a U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration official had pointed to an “unholy alliance” between al-Qaeda and Colombian guerillas in the cocaine smuggling trade.³²

U.S. forces searching bin Laden’s Pakistani compound in May 2011 discovered a trove of financial records. Analysts believe that al-Qaeda’s structure of international affiliates necessitated a paper trail in order for the group’s leadership to maintain control of its affiliates’ finances.³³ Receipts found in an al-Qaeda hideout in Mali in 2013 revealed al-Qaeda’s corporate-like financial structure. The group meticulously kept receipts and invoices for major and minor expenses, from propaganda trips to fresh produce and tea.³⁴ According to William McCants, a former adviser to the State Department’s Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, “They have so few ways to keep control of their operatives, to rein them in and make them do what they are supposed to do. They have to run it like a business.”³⁵

Islamic Charities

Al-Qaeda has misused charities to enhance its cash flow. In 2004, for example, the U.S. government sanctioned the Sudan-based Islamic Relief Agency (ISRA) for funneling roughly \$5 million to Maktab al-Khidamat, bin Laden’s al-Qaeda predecessor. ISRA is present in 40 countries around the world. According to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, ISRA began collaborating with Maktab al-Khidamat in 1997. An ISRA leader was allegedly involved in planning to relocate bin Laden in the late 1990s.³⁶ According to a December 2020 U.S. Senate investigation, the Obama administration in 2014 approved a \$200,000 grant to the non-profit humanitarian agency World Vision United States, which was collaborating with ISRA at the time. World Vision ended its funding of ISRA after later learning of its designation.³⁷

Private Donors

During the 1990s, bin Laden built a network of private donors to al-Qaeda using contacts he established during the Soviet-Afghan war. Bin Laden’s early donors to al-Qaeda in the 1990s relied “on ties to wealthy Saudi individuals that he had established during the Afghan war in the 1980s,” according to the U.S. 9/11 Commission.³⁸ In 2002, U.S. forces in Bosnia seized a cache of al-Qaeda documents that revealed a global network of private donors. Among the documents was a 1988 memorandum that identified a group of 20 Saudi financial donors, referred to as “the Golden Chain,” which included members of bin Laden’s family, as well as prominent wealthy Saudis such as Saleh Kamel and Khalid bin Mahfouz, and the Al-Rajhi family.³⁹

High-profile private donors to al-Qaeda also include: ‘Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Umayr al-Nu’aymi;⁴⁰ ‘Abd al-Wahhab Muhammad ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Humayqani;⁴¹ Enaam Arnaout;⁴² Muhammad Yaqub Mirza;⁴³ Shafi Sultan Mohammed al-Ajmi;⁴⁴ Hajjaj Fahd Hajjaj Muhammad Shabib al-Ajmi;⁴⁵ and Abd al-Rahman Khalaf Ubayad Juday al-Anizi.⁴⁶

By 2009, donations to al-Qaeda had reportedly slowed to a near halt. On June 3, 2009, bin Laden issued an appeal for “charity and support” for al-Qaeda’s affiliates in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In an audio message a week later, al-Qaeda’s Afghanistan leader, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, said that the group lacked food, weapons, and other supplies.⁴⁷ That August, then-deputy al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri entreated Pakistani Muslims in particular to “back the jihad and mujahideen with your persons, wealth.”⁴⁸

In October 2015, a U.S. airstrike killed [Sanafi al-Nasr](#), a former senior al-Qaeda financial leader who had revived the group financially.⁴⁹ Nasr had set up a fundraising network based in Iran, from where he transferred donations from around the Persian Gulf to al-Qaeda’s leadership in Afghanistan and Pakistan.⁵⁰ Today, according to the U.S. State Department, al-Qaeda funding continues to come primarily from donations and the diversion of funds from Islamic charities.⁵¹

Recruitment:

Al-Qaeda has focused its recruiting on the Middle East, where al-Qaeda’s holy war garners adherents from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Potential recruits are often identified due to the character of their faith. Recruiters patrol certain mosques known for extremist interpretations of Islamic texts and seek out the most curious or fervent believers.⁵² Recruits are quickly immersed in doctrines of martyrdom and jihad and

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instructed in the religious duty to establish the caliphate.

Local insurgent groups in the Middle East and North Africa have found that the al-Qaeda label itself helps to attract new members on the basis of al-Qaeda's global revolutionary agenda. As counterterrorism scholar Daniel Byman notes, "Groups like al-Shabab often have an inchoate ideology; al-Qaeda offers them a coherent—and, to a certain audience, appealing—alternative."⁵³

In Europe, al-Qaeda has sought recruits from those marginalized by society. They have actively, if informally, recruited members from Europe's prison system. In 2006, Steve Gough of the U.K.'s Prison Officers Association said he did not think there were "al-Qaida-controlled wings" yet in British prisons. Nonetheless, Gough noted that al-Qaeda was already recruiting prisoners who shared their cells or were held in cells nearby.⁵⁴ In France, two of the alleged January 2015 Paris attackers, Amedy Coulibaly and Cherif Kouachi, met al-Qaeda's "premiere European recruiter," Djamel Beghal, in prison.⁵⁵

In recent years, both al-Qaeda and ISIS have reportedly focused their international recruitment efforts on young adults. Psychologists call this group "in-betweeners," referring to young adults who have not solidified their identities.⁵⁶ One example is [Ahmad Khan Rahami](#), the 28-year-old naturalized Afghan-American who allegedly planted bombs in New York City and New Jersey in September 2016. Police discovered that Rahimi had praised bin Laden and deceased AQAP cleric Anwar al-Awlaki in his journal.⁵⁷ Rahimi spent several weeks in Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2011, and his father believed he had radicalized on the trip.⁵⁸

In Pakistan, al-Qaeda entices recruits through a plethora of benefits. Documents recovered from bin Laden's Pakistani compound in May 2011 revealed that married al-Qaeda fighters received seven days of vacation for every three weeks worked, while bachelors received five days of vacation per month. Married fighters received a monthly salary of \$108, or more if they had more than one wife.⁵⁹

Al-Qaeda's online recruitment has grown increasingly sophisticated. Its broad goal has been twofold: to increase the charm of an austere existence rooted in religion and then to shame those who abstain from this duty. These dual messages are conveyed online in many ways. Jihadist-inspired rap music, video games, and comics have successfully cast holy war positively and pulled new recruits into the organization.⁶⁰

Training:

Al-Qaeda relies on multiple methods to train its fighters, ranging from physical training camps to propaganda. In May 2012, AQAP's English-language magazine, *Inspire*, published instructions on how to carry out domestic terror attacks, focusing on arson.⁶¹ Also that month, al-Qaeda released a training manual for Western recruits, authored by American AQAP member [Samir Khan](#). The manual included information to help Western recruits acclimate to life with al-Qaeda in the Middle East, though it also encouraged recruits to instead carry out terror attacks in their home countries. According to the manual, one of the "pillars of modern day jihad" is secrecy.⁶²

From the Lackawanna Six to Charlie Hebdo

Sahim Alwan was one of the "Lackawanna Six" from Buffalo, New York, who were convicted of supporting al-Qaeda after attending a terror training camp in Afghanistan in the spring of 2001.⁶³ More than 10 years later, Saïd Kouachi, one of the perpetrators of the *Charlie Hebdo* killings, confirmed that he spent "a few months" training in small-arms combat, marksmanship, and other skills on display in videos of the military-style attack. Thus, despite the increase in lone-wolf incidents since 9/11, traditional terrorist operations, including recruitment and training at foreign camps, remain a threat to Western security today.

Training Camps

Al-Qaeda training camps are located in numerous countries around the globe. While allied with the Taliban, al-Qaeda established several training camps in Afghanistan, including the sprawling Tarnak Farms, where Osama bin Laden allegedly plotted 9/11. Most Afghan camps were destroyed during the U.S. invasion and occupation of the country after 9/11.⁶⁴ Unfortunately, as Joshua E. Keating of *Newsweek* noted in January 2015, "Where once there were few sanctuaries for jihadists [i.e., primarily in Afghanistan], now there are many—in Syria and Iraq, Pakistan and Yemen, Nigeria and Somalia." Today's jihadist training camps are created by a dispersed membership of not only al-Qaeda core but also offshoots like AQAP and AQIM.⁶⁵

In Africa, AQIM ran a training camp for eight months in Timbuktu, Mali before France conducted an airstrike that destroyed the unassuming building. A cook and cleaner at the facility recalled, "[The building was] ringed by a perimeter fence topped with barbed wire" and "became the

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hub for AQIM's new recruits. They [the recruits] ate, slept and trained in the old Gendarmerie, turning some of its rooms into dormitories.⁶⁶ ”

Al-Qaeda also relies on proxy training facilities from like-minded terrorist outfits like Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET) in Pakistan. The latter group allegedly plotted the 2008 Mumbai attacks.⁶⁷ Keating notes that:

The camps these groups run are often small, just one or two buildings, and temporary — such groups stay on the move to avoid detection by satellite or intelligence agents. These groups are believed to be increasingly sharing resources when it comes to training. According to some estimates, there are about 40 militant training camps around Pakistan.⁶⁸

Nonetheless, in late 2015, U.S. and Afghan forces discovered a large training camp in Qandahar Province, suggesting that al-Qaeda has “expanded its presence in Afghanistan.”⁶⁹

Indoctrination

In addition to physical training, indoctrination through study, videos, prayer, and a generally regimented lifestyle is meant to reinforce the singular message of jihad that al-Qaeda wishes to inspire in its trainees. Alwan noted that at the camp he attended, there was a billboard displaying a Quranic message that said, “Prepare for them what you can of strength so they may cast fear in the enemies of God.”⁷⁰

An al-Qaeda manual found in May 2000 further illustrates the degree of indoctrination that jihadists face in camp. The 180-page “handwritten terror instruction book” is dubbed the “Manchester Manual” because British anti-terror police found it in a raid on the apartment of al-Qaeda commander Abu Anas al-Liby in Manchester, England. Liby was wanted for plotting the 1998 U.S. embassy attacks in Kenya and Tanzania.⁷¹ The manual provides significant insight on the type of training al-Qaeda soldiers receive beyond physical training. Specifically, according to the U.S. Joint Task Force Guantanamo, “The Manchester Manual is literally an overarching basic guide that simply covers just about everything. It covers how to conduct general combat operations, how to escape and evade capture and how to behave in captivity. There is even a chapter on how to poison yourself using your own feces.”⁷²

Much of the information in the manual was corroborated by Guantanamo Bay detainees regarding al-Qaeda operative training. For example, Omar Sheik [a kidnapper of Daniel Pearl] told his interrogators that he was trained in... the art of disguise... secret rendezvous techniques; hidden writing techniques; [and] cryptology and codes... Moreover, Khalid Sheik Muhammad—the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks—admitted that he assisted the hijackers in preparing to live a Western lifestyle by instructing them how to order food at restaurants and wear Western clothes, amongst other things. Furthermore, an al-Qaeda training manual entitled, “Declaration of Jihad Against the Country’s Tyrants (Military Series), written primarily with the stated purpose of helping operatives avoid detection when infiltrating an enemy area, teaches lessons in forging documents and counterfeiting currency, living a cover, cell compartmentalization, and meeting and communicating clandestinely...”⁷³

Today, there are numerous ideological offshoots that either continue to support or have deviated from al-Qaeda in the Middle East and other regions. As mentioned above, al-Qaeda itself continues some training camps but also increasingly outsources to allied groups in countries such as Pakistan. The need for such camps to remain under the radar will only grow as more countries band together to fight ISIS (which has more than 40 camps in Iraq and Syria alone) and other violent extremist groups like the Nusra Front and Boko Haram.

¹ “Special Issue: The Al-Qa’ida Threat 14 Years Later,” Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, September 2015, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=787133>; Eric Schmitt, “ISIS or Al Qaeda? American Officials Split Over Top Terrorist Threat,” *New York Times*, August 4, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/05/world/middleeast/isis-or-al-qaeda-american-officials-split-over-biggest-threat.html?_r=0.

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⁴ “Bin Laden’s Fatwa,” PBS Newshour, August 23, 1996, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/military-july-dec96-fatwa_1996/.

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Al-Qaeda

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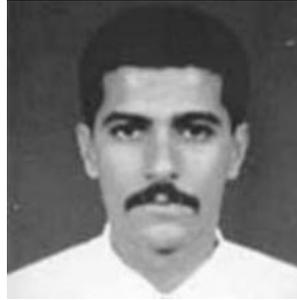
Key Leaders



Ayman al-Zawahiri
current emir of “core” al-Qaeda



Abu Khayr al-Masri
Second-in-command, Deputy
Leader (deceased)



Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah
a.k.a. Abu Muhammad al-Masri
Deputy leader (deceased)



Saif al-Adel
Senior leader, member of the
majlis al-shura leadership council

Al-Qaeda

History:

- **March 12, 2021:** Al-Qaeda releases a new video featuring Zawahiri’s voice addressing the plight of Rohingya Muslims in China. However, Zawahiri is not the main speaker, nor does he physically appear in the video, leading observers to question whether the video had used pieces of a previously recorded speech by Zawahiri. Sources: “New video message from al-Qai’dah’s Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri: “The Wound of the Rohingya is the Wound of the Islamic Nation,” Jihadology, March 12, 2021, <https://jihadology.net/2021/03/12/new-video-message-from-al-qaidahs-dr-ayman-al-%e1%ba%93awahiri-the-wound-of-the-rohingya-is-the-wound-of-the-islamic-nation/>; Cole Bunzel, “Is Ayman al-Zawahiri Dead?,” Jihadica, March 17, 2021, <http://www.jihadica.com/is-ayman-al-zawahiri-dead/>.
- **February 28, 2021:** Some British media begin reporting that Adel has already been, or is likely to soon be, named the new leader of al-Qaeda. Sources: Dan Keane, “TERROR TAUNT Al-Qaeda now as dangerous as under Osama Bin Laden as new chief dubbed ‘Sword of Revenge’ vows to attack, expert claims,” *Sun* (London), February 25, 2021, <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/14159205/al-qaeda-dangerous-osama-bin-laden/>; Chris Hughes, “New Al-Qaeda boss known as Sword of Revenge is ‘worse than Osama bin Laden,’” *Mirror* (London), February 24, 2021, <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/new-al-qaeda-boss-known-23559133>.
- Security sources in Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as an al-Qaeda translator with close ties to the group, claim Zawahiri died in Ghazni, Afghanistan, from “asthma because he had no formal treatment.”
A Pakistani anti-terror security officer claims Zawahiri died sometime in November 2020. It is suspected that Saif al-Adel, one of Zawahiri’s chief deputies, is next in line to succeed Zawahiri as the leader of al-Qaeda. Sources: Baker Atyani and Sayed Salahuddin, “Al-Qaeda chief Zawahiri has died in Afghanistan — sources,” Arab News, November 20, 2020, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/1765746/world>; Tim Stickings, “Al-Qaeda’s leader Ayman al-Zawahiri has died, reports claim terror chief Ayman al-Zawahiri has died in Afghanistan from ‘asthma-related breathing issues,’” Daily Mail, November 20, 2020, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8970231/Al-Qaeda-leader-Ayman-al-Zawahiri-died-reports-claim.html>; Kabir Taneja, “Al Qaeda is battered, but don’t rejoice yet,” Observer Research Foundation, November 18, 2020, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/al-qaeda-is-battered-but-dont-rejoice-yet/>.
- **October 29, 2020:** Ambassador Edmund Fitton-Brown, coordinator of the ISIL, Al-Qaida and Taliban Monitoring Team of the U.N. Security Council, tells the BBC that al-Qaeda is still “heavily embedded” within the Taliban in Afghanistan despite the U.S.–Taliban agreement that was signed in February.
Furthermore, Fitton-Brown claims al-Qaeda continues to “do a good deal of military action and training action with the Taliban.” Source: Secunder Kermani, “Al-Qaeda still ‘heavily embedded’ within Taliban in Afghanistan, UN official warns,” BBC News, October 29, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-54711452>.
- **October 24, 2020:** Afghan security forces launch a special operation in Ghazni province, targeting and killing Abu Muhsin al-Masri—an Egyptian national believed to be al-Qaeda’s second-in-command.
Al-Masri was on the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) Most Wanted Terrorists list and was charged in the United States with providing material support and resources to a foreign terrorist organization and conspiracy to kill U.S. nationals. Source: Senior al-Qaeda leader Abu Muhsin al-Masri killed in Afghanistan,” Al Jazeera, October 25, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/25/senior-al-qaeda-leader-abu-muhsin-al-masri-killed-in-afghanistan>.
- **September 19, 2020:** India’s National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrests nine al-Qaeda operatives in West Bengal and Kerala who were allegedly planning attacks throughout the country, including the capital New Delhi.
According to the NIA, the suspects were associated with the “Pakistan sponsored module of al-Qaeda.” Source: “India arrests nine al Qaeda militants planning ‘terrorist attacks,’” Reuters, September 19, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-militants-idUSKCN26A0GQ>.
- **August 7, 2020:** Two assassins on motorcycles shoot and kill Al-Qaeda deputy leader Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah, a.k.a. Abu Muhammad al-Masri, on the street in Tehran, Iran.
His daughter, Miriam, the widow of Hamza bin Laden, is also killed. Iranian media initially identify the victims as Lebanese history professor and Hezbollah member Habib Daoud and his 27-year-old daughter Maryam. Masri was allegedly one of the masterminds of the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Africa. Unidentified intelligence officials confirm Abdullah’s identity three months later to the *New York Times* and allege that the Iranian government had provided Abdullah with the Daoud identity and cover story. According to the officials, Israeli agents carried out the assassination at the behest of the United States. Source: Adam Goldman, Eric Schmitt, Farnaz Fassihi, and Ronen Bergman, “Al Qaeda’s No. 2, Accused in U.S. Embassy Attacks, Was Killed in Iran,” *New York Times*, November 13, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/13/world/middleeast/al-masri-abdullah-qaeda-dead.html>.
- **July 23, 2020:** According to a July counterterrorism report published by the United Nations, al-Qaeda remains “covertly active in 12 Afghan provinces.”
Additionally, it is reported that al-Qaeda leader al-Zawahiri remained based in Afghanistan, and that the militant group commands around 400 to 600 fighters. Source: “Letter dated 16 July 2020 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council,” United Nations Security Council, July 23, 2020, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/717>.
- **June 24, 2020:** Hurras al-Din and Ansar al-Tawhid jihadists of the “Be Steadfast” Operations Room—a coalition of jihadist groups aligned with al-Qaeda—ambush Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) militants on the western outskirts of Idlib city in Syria.
According to media reports, the jihadist groups managed to capture a number of locations, including the Idlib Central Prison. Al-Qaeda later issued a statement condemning the fighting between the groups and urged the members to rather focus on the “revolution” in Syria. Following the statement, “Be Steadfast” agrees to meet with HTS to negotiate a ceasefire which HTS declines. Sources: “Jihadist civil war turns ugly as al-Qaeda linked group seizes several sites in Idlib,” Al Masdar News, June 24, 2020, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/jihadist-civil-war-turns-ugly-as-al-qaeda-linked-group-seizes-several-sites-in-idlib/>; Will Christou and Walid Al Nofal, “Infighting between extremist opposition groups reveals tension with HTS rule in Idlib,” Syria Direct, June 25, 2020, <https://syriadirect.org/news/infighting-between-extremist-opposition-groups-reveals-tension-with-hts-rule-in-idlib/>.
- **May 27, 2020:** The United Nations releases a report claiming that the Taliban continues to work closely with al-Qaeda, despite the Taliban’s February 29 peace deal with the American government.
According to the report, about 400 to 600 armed al-Qaeda operatives are stationed in Afghanistan. The February 29 peace agreement saw the Taliban agree to prevent al-Qaeda from operating in Afghanistan in order for U.S. troops to gradually withdraw from Afghanistan. Despite the conditions of the negotiations, the U.N. report claims that the Taliban regularly consulted with al-Qaeda during the peace process, promising to not break its “historical ties” with al-Qaeda for any price. Source: Ryan Browne and Jennifer Hansler, “UN report says Taliban is maintaining relations with al Qaeda despite deal with US,” CNN, June 1, 2020, https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/01/politics/un-report-taliban-al-qaeda/index.html?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=1259405_.

Al-Qaeda

- **April 29, 2020:** ISIS’s Yemen-based cell releases a video intended to undermine al-Qaeda’s legitimacy. The video, “A Documentary Shedding Light on Al-Qaeda Organization’s Deviation Following What Is Known as the Arab Spring,” directs most of its criticism towards al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, as well as al-Qaeda’s senior leadership. The video claims that al-Qaeda undermined its jihadist message by cooperating or being lenient towards insufficiently religious organizations—such as Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood—and political parties during the Arab Spring. Source: Thomas Joscelyn, “Analysis: The Islamic State’s ideological campaign against al-Qaeda,” Long War Journal, May 4, 2020, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2020/05/analysis-the-islamic-states-ideological-campaign-against-al-qaeda.php>.
- **March 13, 2020:** Al-Qaeda’s general command releases a three-page statement praising the Taliban for its “great victory” over American and its allies in Afghanistan. Despite the Taliban agreeing to prevent al-Qaeda from launching attacks against the United States and its allies, the statement refers to Haibatullah Akhunzada, the Taliban’s top leader, as “Emir of the Faithful.” The statement also calls on all Afghans to support the efforts of the Taliban to establish the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Source: Thomas Joscelyn, “Al-Qaeda lauds Taliban’s great ‘victory’ over America and allies,” Long War Journal, March 13, 2020, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2020/03/al-qaeda-lauds-talibans-great-victory-over-america-and-allies.php>.
- **February 29, 2020:** Following an agreed seven-day reduction in violence period, U.S. and Taliban representatives meeting in Doha, Qatar, sign an agreement for a U.S. troop withdrawal. The United States agreed to draw its forces down to 8,600 from 13,000 in the next three to four months, with the remaining U.S. forces withdrawing in 14 months. In exchange, the Taliban agreed to renounce al-Qaeda and prevent al-Qaeda and other groups from using Afghanistan as a base for terrorism against the United States. The Taliban also agreed to negotiate a permanent ceasefire with other Afghan militants and the Afghan government. The troop drawdown is dependent on the Taliban maintaining its commitments. Sources: Asad Hashim, “Pakistan warns US of ‘spoilers’ on US-Taliban deal in Afghanistan,” Al Jazeera, March 1, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/pakistan-warns-spoilers-taliban-deal-afghanistan-200302093650382.html>; Matthew Lee and Kathy Gannon, “US and Taliban sign deal aimed at ending war in Afghanistan,” Associated Press, February 29, 2020, <https://apnews.com/491544713df4879f399d0ff5523d369e>; “Susannah George and Dan Lamothe, “Afghan government objects to elements of U.S.-Taliban peace deal,” *Washington Post*, March 1, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/afghan-government-questions-aspects-of-us-taliban-peace-deal/2020/03/01/0a973228-5a68-11ea-8efd-0f904bdd8057_story.html.
- **September 23, 2019:** U.S. special operations forces backing Afghan commandos raid a building filled with dozens of al-Qaeda fighters in southern Afghanistan. The raid kills over 20 militants and wounds another 14. Source: Lucas Tomlinson, “US, Afghan forces kill over 20 Al Qaeda fighters in southern Afghanistan raid, officials say,” Fox News, September 23, 2019, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/us-kill-al-qaeda-fighters-afghanistan>.
- **August 14, 2019:** Al-Qaeda affiliate al-Shabaab releases their third installment of “Then Fight the Leaders of Disbelief” series. The video is filled with messages intending to justify al-Shabaab’s jihad against the Somali government and opposition to allegedly illegitimate rulers elsewhere. Among other incendiary statements, the narrator states that these rulers have “justified” their own “deposal,” because “the kafir [infidel] has no authority over a Muslim.” Source: Thomas Joscelyn, “Shabaab’s jihad against the ‘leaders of disbelief,’” Long War Journal, August 14, 2019, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2019/08/shabaabs-jihad-against-the-leaders-of-disbelief.php>.
- **August 13, 2019:** The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation intends to question an alleged Egyptian al-Qaeda operative living in Brazil. The FBI added Mohamed Ahmed Elsayed Ahmed Ibrahim to its Most Wanted List the day prior for “providing material support,” since 2013 for Al Qaeda. Source: “FBI seeking to question alleged Al Qaeda operative in Brazil,” Reuters, August 13, 2019, <https://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKCN1V31IN>.
- **July 31, 2019:** U.S. officials report that Osama bin Laden’s son and the “heir” to al-Qaeda, Hamza bin Laden, is dead. Source: Courtney Kube, “Osama bin Laden’s son and heir, Hamza, is dead, U.S. officials say,” NBC News, July 31, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/u-s-has-intel-osama-bin-laden-s-son-heir-n1037236>.
- **July 30, 2019:** According to a U.N. report, al-Qaeda “remains resilient” and continues to closely cooperate with Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Haqqani network, while also routinely functioning as military and religious instructors for the Taliban. However, the health of its leader, Ayman Muhammed al-Zawahiri is in doubt. Source: “Al-Qaeda remains resilient, continues to cooperate closely with LeT: UN,” *The Economic Times of India*, July 30, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/al-qaeda-remains-resilient-continues-to-cooperate-closely-with-le-t/articleshow/70445882.cms?from=mdr>.
- **July 30, 2019:** Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the accused al-Qaeda mastermind of the September 11, 2001 attacks, indicates a willingness to cooperate in a lawsuit filed by victims seeking damages from Saudi Arabia, if the United States decides not to seek the death penalty against him. Source: “Accused 9/11 mastermind open to testimony against Saudi Arabia,” Al Jazeera, July 30, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/accused-911-mastermind-open-testimony-saudi-arabia-190729231512390.html>.
- **July 26, 2019:** Al-Qaeda’s emir Ayman al-Zawahiri releases a video titled “Don’t Forget Kashmir.” His video message calls upon jihadist crusaders to incite violence against India and Pakistan for the plight of Muslims in Kashmir. Source: Animesh Roul, “Al-Qaeda’s Ayman al-Zawahiri Invokes Kashmir Again, Calls for ‘One’ Jihad,” *The Jamestown Foundation*, July 26, 2019, <https://jamestown.org/program/al-qaedas-ayman-al-zawahiri-invokes-kashmir-again-calls-for-one-jihad/>.
- **July 19, 2019:** U.S. forces launch an airstrike near the town of Kunyo Barrow, killing Mohamed Nur Ikhlaas, head of al-Shabaab’s domestic intelligence. Ikhlaas was al-Shabaab’s top political officer. Source: Harun Maruf, “Somalia Car Bombing Kills at Least 17,” *Voice of America*, July 22, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/somalia-car-bombing-kills-least-17>.
- **July 7, 2019:** Pakistani counterterrorism forces raid the offices of Human Concern International in Peshawar. During the raid, they arrest Ali Nawaz, a man accused of funding al-Qaeda militants through funds from the non-governmental organization. Source: “Police arrest al-Qaeda funder in Pakistan,” Associated Press, July 7, 2019, <https://apnews.com/6413b65591404192abeaa9149e540cc7>.
- **July 3, 2019:** A court in Kenya sentences al-Shabaab militant Rashid Charles Mberesero, to life in prison for his role in the 2015 Garissa

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University College attack, which killed over 148 people.

His two other accomplices Mohamed Ali Abikar and Hassan Edin Hassan each receive a 41-year sentence. Source: "Garissa University attack: Tanzanian and Kenyans get long sentences," BBC News, July 3, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48859937>.

- **July 1, 2019:** The U.S. carries out an airstrike against al-Qaeda in northwest Syria.
The strike targets a training facility holding "operatives responsible for plotting external attacks threatening U.S. citizens," claims U.S. Central Command. Source: "U.S. says it struck al Qaeda in Syria," Reuters, July 1, 2019, <https://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKCN1TW2H6>.
- **June 28, 2019:** Indian forces kill Shabir Ahmad Malik, the spokesman for al-Qaeda affiliate Ansar Gazwat-ul-Hind.
Malik was originally a member of Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, but defected to AGH. Source: Thomas Joscelyn, "Indian forces kill spokesman for al Qaeda group in Kashmir," Long War Journal, June 28, 2019, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2019/06/indian-forces-kill-spokesman-for-al-qaeda-group-in-kashmir.php>.
- **June 13, 2019:** Asim Umar, the emir of al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, releases a statement praising the Taliban's "victory" in Afghanistan.
The "victory" refers to the on-going peace talks between the United States and the Taliban as "America once threatened war, it is now "begging for ceasefire." Umar also asks Allah to "end this ISIS fitnah forever which has stabbed Jihad and Caliphate in the back." Source: Thomas Joscelyn, "Senior al Qaeda official praises Taliban's 'victory' in Afghanistan," Long War Journal, June 13, 2019, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2019/06/senior-al-qaeda-official-praises-talibans-victory-in-afghanistan.php>.
- According to sources on Telegram, Abdul Haseeb al-Kashmiri, a member of AQIS is killed sometime in late June.
The Telegram post stated, "The brother was known as the destroyer of tanks as he had destroyed many American tanks in recent battles fought with Americans and it's [sic] apostate allies in mainland Ghazni and other parts of Afghanistan." Source: Thomas Joscelyn, "AQIS member from Kashmir reportedly killed in Ghazni, Afghanistan," Long War Journal, June 24, 2019, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2019/06/aqis-member-from-kashmir-reportedly-killed-in-ghazni-afghanistan.php>.
- **May 23, 2019:** Indian forces kill Zakir Musa after an 11-hour gunfight in Indian-administered Kashmir.
Musa served as the rebel commander of Ansar, an al-Qaeda affiliated insurgency. Source: Rifat Fareed, "Zakir Musa: Tensions in Kashmir after killing of top rebel," Al Jazeera, May 24, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/zakir-musa-tensions-kashmir-killing-top-rebel-190524092820067.html>.
- **May 2, 2019:** A U.S. district court shortens Najibullah Zazi's sentence from life in prison to 10 years in prison.
Zazi plotted to bomb New York City's subways in 2009, then switched sides after his arrest, providing over a decade of help to the U.S. to identify and prosecute terrorists. Zazi is a naturalized U.S. citizen who was radicalized and received explosive training from al-Qaeda after traveling to Pakistan in 2008. Source: Jim Mustain, "Would-be NYC bomber gets 10 years in foiled al-Qaida plot," Associated Press, May 2, 2019, <https://www.apnews.com/e780912718c64c14ab462f9436424a47>.
- **March 20, 2019:** U.S. forces carry out airstrikes near Afgoye, Somalia, killing three suspected al-Shabaab militants.
The frequent airstrikes have helped to bolster Somalia's central government against al-Shabaab. Source: Abdi Sheikh, "Air strike kills four people in Somalia –relatives," Reuters, March 20, 2019, <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKCN1R117G-OZATP>.
- **February 8, 2019:** Libyan authorities arrest Abdel Qader Azuz, a suspected al-Qaeda leader.
Azuz was one of the senior militants in Derna. Source: "Libya arrests suspected al Qaeda leader, source says," Reuters, February 8, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security/libya-arrests-suspected-al-qaeda-leader-source-says-idUSKCN1PX1DY>.
- **January 18, 2019:** Eastern Libyan forces kill Abu Talha al-Libi in southern Libya.
Al-Libi was a senior figure in al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Source: "Eastern Libyan force says it killed senior al Qaeda operative," Reuters, January 18, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security/eastern-libyan-force-says-it-killed-senior-al-qaeda-operative-idUSKCN1PC1LU>.
- **January 6, 2019:** U.S. forces conduct an air raid in the Marib governorate of Yemen.
The raid kills Jamal al-Badawi, an al-Qaeda operative who orchestrated the deadly 2000 USS Cole bombing. Source: "Al-Qaeda operative linked to USS Cole attack killed: Trump," Al Jazeera, January 6, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/al-qaeda-operative-linked-uss-cole-attack-killed-trump-190106155356883.html>.
- **December 14, 2018:** A Saudi man pleads guilty in a federal court in Oklahoma to visa fraud and lying to the FBI about attending an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan in 2000.
Naif Abdulaziz M. Alfallaj faces up to 18 years in prison. Source: "Saudi man pleads guilty in Oklahoma to lying about al Qaeda training," Reuters, December 14, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-crime-saudi/saudi-man-pleads-guilty-in-oklahoma-to-lying-about-al-qaeda-training-idUSKBN1OD2MQ>.
- **November 30, 2018:** U.S. forces launch an airstrike in Libya's southwestern desert.
At least 11 suspected al Qaeda militants are killed. Source: "U.S. strike kills 11 suspected Qaeda militants in Libya: Africom," Reuters, November 30, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security/us-strike-kills-11-suspected-qaeda-militants-in-libya-africom-idUSKCN1NZ238>.
- **November 21, 2018:** A U.S. drone strike hits a suspected al-Qaeda site in al-Bayda province.
The strike kills six suspected AQIM members, including two people believed to be local leaders of the group. Source: "Six suspected al Qaeda militants killed in Yemen drone strike," Reuters, November 25, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-al-qaeda/six-suspected-al-qaeda-militants-killed-in-yemen-drone-strike-idUSKCN1NU0OZ>.
- **October 12, 2018:** The U.S. launches a precision airstrike near Harardhere, Somalia.
At least 60 al-Shabaab fighters are killed. Source: "Al-Shabab in Somalia: US air strike 'kills 60 militants'," BBC News, October 16, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-45881008>.
- **August 21, 2018:** U.S. officials express confidence that al-Qaeda's top bomb maker and mastermind of the attempted 2009 Christmas Day bombing, Ibrahim al-Asiri, was killed in Yemen sometime in the second half of 2017.
Source: "Some U.S. officials confident feared al Qaeda bomb maker killed," Reuters, August 21, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-yemen-militant/some-u-s-officials-confident-feared-al-qaeda-bomb-maker-killed-idUSKCN1L61UG>.

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- **July 1, 2018:** U.S. authorities arrest Demetrius Pitts, who pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda, in Cleveland, Ohio. Pitts allegedly had plans to bomb the city's 4th of July parade. Source: Travis Fedtschun, "July 4 terror plot thwarted in Cleveland, suspect pledged allegiance to Al Qaeda, FBI says," Fox News, July 2, 2018, <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/07/02/july-4-terror-plot-thwarted-in-cleveland-fbi-says.html>.
 - **June 8, 2018:** Al-Shabaab attacks a joint U.S.-Somali-Kenyan outpost near Kismayo, killing one American and wounding four others. Source: "U.S. soldier killed in attack by al Qaeda affiliate in Somalia," CBS News, June 8, 2018, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-soldier-killed-al-shabaab-attack-somalia-2018-06-08/>.
 - **April 20, 2018:** Al-Qaeda releases a propaganda video showing local commanders using Google Maps to plan attacks. The video also features former Guantanamo Bay detainee Ibrahim al-Qosi fighting alongside al-Qaeda fighters in what appears to be Yemen. Source: Lukas Mikelionis, "Al Qaeda uses Google Maps to plan attacks new video reportedly shows," Fox New, <http://www.foxnews.com/tech/2018/04/23/al-qaeda-uses-google-maps-to-plan-attacks-new-video-reportedly-shows.html>.
 - Hamza bin Laden releases a video calling for an uprising in Saudi Arabia. Urges Muslims throughout the Arabian Peninsula to rebel against their leaders and sever ties with the West. Source: Ciaran McGrath, "Osama bin Laden's Son Calls for Saudi Arabia Uprising as He Vows to Redistribute Wealth," Daily Express, April 5, 2018, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/941853/osama-bin-laden-hamza-bin-laden-al-qaeda-terrorist-terrorism-uprising-saudi-arabia>.
 - **March 28, 2018:** The United States carries out its first airstrikes against al-Qaeda in Libya killing a local AQIM leader near Ubari, Libya. Source: Ryan Browne, "US conducts first airstrike against al Qaeda in Libya," CNN, March 28, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/28/politics/us-airstrike-al-qaeda-libya/index.html>.
 - **February 27, 2018 - March 4, 2018:** A new Syrian rebel group forms under the name Hurras al-Deen ("Guardians of the Religion") and pledges loyalty to al-Qaeda central. The affiliation, however, is not confirmed by al-Zawahiri. On March 4, three Syrian rebel groups that had recently defected from Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham—Jaysh al-Malahim, Jaysh al-Badiya, and Jaysh al-Sahel—join Hurras al-Deen. Sources: Thomas Joscelyn, "Jihadists form 'Guardians of the Religion' organization in Syria," Long War Journal, March 4, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/03/jihadists-form-guardians-of-the-religion-organization-in-syria.php>; Thomas Joscelyn, "Jihadists try to rally opposition in southern Syria," Long War Journal, June 27, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/06/jihadists-try-to-rally-opposition-in-southern-syria.php>.
 - **February 16, 2018:** Ibrahim Suleiman Adnan Adam Harun is sentenced to life in prison for his role in a 2003 al-Qaeda attack against U.S. and coalition troops in Afghanistan as well as for attempting to bomb the U.S. embassy in Nigeria in 2004. Source: Ralph Ellis and Tammy Kupperman. "Al Qaeda operative sentenced to life in prison," CNN, February 26, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/16/us/al-qaeda-operative-gets-life-sentence/index.html>.
 - **January 23, 2018:** The U.S. Department of State designates Khalid Batarfi as a Specially Designated Global Terrorists. The State Department's announcement comes the day after AQAP releases a video featuring Batarfi in which he threatens the United States and Jews. Sources: Thomas Joscelyn, "Senior AQAP leader added to US terror list by State Department," Long War Journal, January 23, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/01/senior-aqap-leader-added-to-us-terror-list-by-state-department.php>; Office of the Spokesperson, "State Department Terrorist Designation of Khalid Batarfi," US Department of State, January 23, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/01/277593.htm>.
 - **December 8, 2017:** Zawahiri releases a new audio statement urging "jihad in Allah's name ... targeting the vital interests of the United States and its Zionist and Crusader (Christian) allies everywhere" in response to U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Source: "Al-Qaeda urges attacks on US, Israel after Trump's recognition of Jerusalem," Times of Israel, December 8, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/al-qaeda-urges-attacks-after-trumps-recognition-of-jerusalem/>.
 - Following U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, Hamza bin Laden releases a video calling for the overthrow of Saudi Arabia's monarchy due to Riyadh's alliances with the West. Source: Cristina Maza, "Bin Laden's Son Calls for Overthrow of Saudi Arabian Regime Following Trump's Jerusalem Announcement," Newsweek, December 11, 2017, <https://www.newsweek.com/bin-ladens-son-saudi-arabia-jerusalem-743990>.
 - **November 24, 2017:** Several al-Qaeda-affiliated groups in Egypt's Sinai condemn the suspected ISIS attack of a Sufi mosque that killed more than 300 worshippers earlier that day. Both Jund al-Islam and Ansar al-Islam offer condolences to the victims' families and condemn the perpetrators as "Khawarjis." Source: Tim Lister, "Why the massacre of Muslims in Sinai was too extreme for al Qaeda," CNN, November 27, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/11/27/middleeast/egypt-sinai-attack-isis-al-qaeda/index.html>.
 - **November 7, 2017:** In a new audio statement, Hamza bin Laden eulogizes his father and calls on "trusted scholars" to spread the call to Jihad and for "oppressed Muslim masses" to "[r]ise in rebellion against oppression and tyranny." Source: Thomas Joscelyn, "Hamza bin Laden lionizes his father and incites 'rebellion' in new audio message," Long War Journal, November 7, 2017, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/11/hamza-bin-laden-lionizes-his-father-and-incites-rebellion-in-new-audio-message.php>.
 - **September 14, 2017:** Hamza bin Laden releases a video addressed to jihadists in Syria, commending their "patience" and "endurance" while urging unity and strength against the "Crusader enemy along with its Rafidhi [Shiite] allies." Source: Thomas Joscelyn, "Hamza bin Laden tries to rally jihadists in Syria," Long War Journal, September 14, 2017, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/09/hamza-bin-laden-tries-to-rally-jihadists-in-syria.php>.
 - **August 15, 2017:** Al-Qaeda urges its followers to target trains and train stations in the West in its latest issue of *Inspire* magazine. The magazine includes detailed instructions on how to build a device that will derail trains "without requiring martyrdom." Source: Jack Moore, "U.S. TRAIN STATIONS THE TARGET OF AL-QAEDA IN LATEST MAGAZINE," Newsweek, August 15, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/us-train-stations-target-al-qaeda-latest-magazine-650334>
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- **May 15, 2017:** Media reports publish a recording of Osama bin Laden’s son, Hamza bin Laden, calling for fresh attacks against Westerners, Russians, and Jews. Hamza bin Laden, believed to be in his late 20s, is reportedly being groomed to take over his father’s leadership position. He came to public prominence in 2015, where he was introduced by leader Ayman al-Zawahiri as an al-Qaeda “lion.”
Source: “Latest al Qaeda propaganda highlights bin Laden’s son,” CNN, May 15, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/15/middleeast/al-qaeda-bin-laden-son/index.html>.
- **April 24, 2017:** Al-Qaeda leader al-Zawahiri calls for “guerilla war” against the Syrian government. In an audio recording entitled “Syria will only bow to God,” Zawahiri urges fighters to wage a “long war against Crusaders and shia allies.” The al-Qaeda leader had previously not appeared in public for several months.
Source: “Al-Qaeda’s Zawahiri calls for ‘guerilla war’ in Syria,” Al-Jazeera, April 24, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/04/al-qaeda-zawahiri-calls-guerrilla-war-syria-170424115728643.html>.
- According to Iraqi Vice President Ayad Allawi, al-Qaeda is seeking an alliance with ISIS, as Iraqi forces seek to wrest control from ISIS fighters in Mosul. Allawi claims that there are discussions occurring between representatives of Baghdadi and Zawahiri.
Source: “Islamic State seeking alliance with al Qaeda, Iraqi vice president says,” Reuters, April 17, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-islamic-state-idUSKBN17J1DT>.
- **July 28, 2016:** Nusra Front leader Abu Muhammed al-Golani announces the group’s split from al-Qaeda.
The move comes hours after Ayman al-Zawahiri releases an audio statement giving the Nusra Front permission to break ties.Source: “Syrian Nusra Front announces split from al-Qaeda,” BBC News, July 29, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36916606>.
- **June 11, 2016:** Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri pledges his support to the Taliban’s new leader, Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada.
Source: “Al Qaeda’s Zawahiri backs new Taliban chief Akhundzada,” Deutsche Welle, June 11, 2016, <http://www.dw.com/en/al-qaedas-zawahiri-backs-new-taliban-chief-akhundzada/a-19323475>.
- **May 9, 2016:** In an al-Qaeda video, Osama bin Laden’s son, Hamza, calls for Muslims to “participate in the intifada” by “killing the Jews and attacking their interests everywhere” and to attack Western interests in Islamic countries.
Hamza bin Laden also praises the stabbing of Jews by Palestinians.Source: “Bin Laden’s son urges jihad Against Jews, US interests,” Fox News, May 9, 2016, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/05/09/bin-ladens-son-urges-jihad-against-jews-us-interests.html>.
- **March 13, 2016:** AQIM gunmen open fire at a beach resort in Grand-Bassam, a coastal town located 25 miles east of Abidjan.
The attack—the first al-Qaeda attack in the country—leaves 19 people dead, including 16 civilians and three Ivorian soldiers. Among the killed are foreign citizens from France, Germany, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Cameroon.Sources: Joe Bavier, “Al Qaeda Gunmen Drank In Bar Before Unleashing Ivory Coast Attack,” Reuters, March 15, 2016, [http://news.abidjan.net/h/584273.html](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ivorycoast-attack-idUSKCN0WF0L9:Elisée B.,” “Attaques Terroristes A Grand Bassam : Les Forces Ivoiriennes Et Françaises Sur Le Théâtre Des Opérations,” Abidjan.net, March 13, 2016, <a href=)”; “After Ivory Coast Al Qaeda Attack, Is Senegal Next? Muslim Population, Unemployment Make Tourist Destination A Target,” International Business Times, March 17, 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.com/after-ivory-coast-al-qaeda-attack-senegal-next-muslim-population-unemployment-make-2337915>.
- **January 16, 2016:** Al-Qaeda affiliate AQIM storms a hotel and nearby cafe in Ougadougou, Burkina Faso, killing 28 and wounding dozens.
The attack is perceived as a message of strength to rival ISIS and in response to France’s deployment of 3,000 military personnel designed to combat Islamist militant groups in West Africa.Source: “Why did Burkina Faso become al-Qaida’s latest target?” Guardian (London), January 18, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/18/why-did-burkina-faso-become-al-qaidas-latest-target>.
- **November 20, 2015:** Al-Mourabitoun claims responsibility for a deadly gun and hostage attack on the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, Mali, allegedly as part of a joint attack with al-Qaeda affiliate, AQIM.
According to U.N. spokesman Olivier Salgado, 21 people were killed in the attack when gunmen stormed the hotel using counterfeit diplomatic license plates.Source: Faith Karimi and Erin Burnett, “Mali hotel attack: Gunmen barged in, shot at ‘anything that moved,’” CNN, November 22, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/21/africa/mali-hotel-attack/>.
- **March 6, 2015:** Al-Qaeda confirms the death of Abu Hommam al-Shami, the military commander of AQ’s affiliate in Syria, the Nusra Front.
Source: Associated Press, “Al Qaeda’s Syrian Branch Confirms Death of Senior Commander,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/al-qaedas-syrian-branch-confirms-death-of-senior-commander-1425634067>.
- **March 5, 2015:** Al-Qaeda’s Syrian affiliate, the Nusra Front, announces the death of its general military commander Abu Humam al-Shami due to a U.S. led coalition airstrike in Syria.
To date, al-Shami is the most senior militant to be killed in the Syrian civil war.Source: Mariam Karouny, “UPDATE 3—Blast in Syria Kills Top Al Qaeda Commander, 3 Others,” Reuters, March 6, 2015, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/03/05/mideast-crisis-syria-nusra-idUKL5N0W75GO20150305>.
- **March 3, 2015:** Five people are killed in an AQAP suicide attack on a Houthi outpost in central Yemen.
Source: “UPDATE 1-Five dead in Qaeda suicide attack on Houthis in central Yemen,” Reuters, March 3, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/03/yemen-security-idUSL5N0W551J20150303>.
- **February 28, 2015:** A U.S. drone attack in Yemen kills four suspected AQAP militants in the southern province of Shabwa.
Source: Mohamed Ghobari, Amena Bakr, and Hugh Lawson, “U.S. Drone Attack in Yemen Kills Four Suspected Al Qaeda Militants: Security Sources,” Reuters, February 28, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/28/us-yemen-attack-us-idUSKBN0LW0B320150228>.
- **February 26, 2015:** A New York City jury convicts al-Qaeda’s ‘minister of communications,’ Khaled al-Fawwaz, on charges of participating in a conspiracy that led to the 1998 bombing of two U.S. embassies in East Africa.
Source: “Khalid al-Fawwaz guilty of US embassy bombings,” BBC News, February 26, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-31652380>.

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- **February 26, 2015:** CNN reports that the Brooklyn terror trial of Abid Naseer reveals the documents and coded communication strategy of some al-Qaeda operatives planning attacks in the U.S., U.K., and Europe.
Source: Ray Sanches, "Al Qaeda documents outline U.S. terror campaign," CNN, February 26, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/02/26/us/new-york-terror-trial/>.
 - **February 26, 2015:** A Pakistani court sentences four al-Qaeda operatives to death. The four men had attacked a Pakistani prison in Lahore in July 2012, killing 10 and injuring seven.
Source: "Pakistan sentences four Al-Qaeda members to death," First Post, February 26, 2015, <http://www.firstpost.com/world/pakistan-sentences-four-al-qaeda-members-death-2122957.html>.
 - **February 25, 2015:** The *Guardian* reports that Russian intelligence fears al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is planning attacks against European targets in the Mediterranean from North Africa with a "kamikaze" marine unit.
Source: Seumas Milne and Ewen MacAskill, "Al-Qaida Planning Kamikaze Attacks on Ships in Mediterranean, Cables Claim," *Guardian* (London), February 25, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/25/al-qaeda-planning-kamikaze-attacks-ships-mediterranean-russian-cables>.
 - **February 24, 2015:** A Saudi court jails at least 13 men on counts including recruitment for 9/11 attacks and harboring Osama bin Laden in Pakistan.
Source: "Saudi court jails al Qaeda recruiters, bin Laden associate- newspaper," Reuters, February 24, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/24/us-saudi-security-court-idUSKBN0LS1G520150224>.
 - **February 17, 2015:** The U.S. trial of accused Pakistani al-Qaeda operative Abid Naseer begins.
Naseer allegedly headed an al-Qaeda cell in Manchester, England and participated in a 2009 plot to attack the New York City subway system. Source: Tom Hays, "Trial starts for terror suspect accused in US, Europe plots," Associated Press, February 17, 2015, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/c2d1f6b92b3c4ecdbd9a7dd35ffc44c4/trial-starts-terror-suspect-accused-us-europe-plots>.
 - **February 14, 2015:** The prosecution rests its case in the U.S. trial of Khaled al-Fawwaz, an accused early leader of al-Qaeda who allegedly helped plan the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.
Source: Larry Neumeister, "American: Bin Laden asked him in '90s to use plane as weapon," Associated Press, February 14, 2015.
 - **February 13, 2015:** Al-Qaeda fighters attack a Yemeni prison, freeing six al-Qaeda militants.
Source: Jason Hanna and Hakim Almasmari, "Al Qaeda freed 6 inmates in Yemen prison attack, officials say," CNN, February 13, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/02/13/world/yemen-unrest/>.
 - **February 12, 2015:** AQAP militants seize a large army base in southern Yemen, just hours after the U.N. warns that the country is on the brink of civil war.
Source: Mohammad Mukhashaf, "Al Qaeda fighters seize Yemen army base, U.N. warns of civil war," Reuters, February 12, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/12/us-yemen-security-idUSKBN0LG0VE20150212>.
 - **February 5, 2015:** A senior AQAP official, Harith al-Nadhari, is killed in a drone strike in Yemen.
In January 2015, he publicly praised the deadly attacks on the offices of French satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*. Source: Shuaib Almosawa and Rod Nordland, "Drone Strike in Yemen Said to Kill Senior Qaeda Figure," *New York Times*, February 5, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/06/world/middleeast/senior-qaeda-figure-in-yemen-killed-in-drone-strike.html>.
 - **January 30, 2015:** Fighting in Syria between Nusra Front and Western-backed rebel spreads.
Source: Oliver Holmes, "Syria battle between al Qaeda and Western-backed group spreads," Reuters, January 30, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/30/us-mideast-crisis-syria-idUSKBN0L31Z20150130>.
 - **January 14, 2015:** AQAP officially claims responsibility for the *Charlie Hebdo* attack.
Source: Sami Aboudi, "Al Qaeda claims French attack, derides Paris rally," Reuters, January 14, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/14/us-france-shooting-aqap-idUSKBN0KN0VO20150114>.
 - **January 8, 2015:** Britain's MI5 warns that the Nusra Front is planning massive attacks on the West.
Source: Guy Faulconbridge, "Britain's MI5 chief warns al Qaeda in Syria planning mass attack on West," Reuters, January 8, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/08/us-britain-security-idUSKBN0KH27M20150108>.
 - **January 7, 2015:** The perpetrators of the Paris attacks on the offices of satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* and a kosher supermarket claim that they received funding from AQAP.
One of the two Kouachi brothers had previously trained with al-Qaeda in Yemen. Source: Eric Schmitt, Michael S. Schmidt and Andrew Higgins, "Al Qaeda Trained Suspect in Paris Terror Attack, Official Says," *New York Times*, January 8, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/09/world/europe/paris-terror-attack-suspects.html>.
 - **January 3, 2015:** Yemeni authorities arrest three foreigners over possible links to al-Qaeda.
Source: "Yemen arrests three foreigners over possible al Qaeda links," Reuters, January 3, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/03/us-yemen-arrests-idUSKBN0KC04V20150103>.
 - **December 12, 2014:** Pakistani authorities arrest Shahid Usman, a commander of al-Qaeda's newly created South Asian wing.
Source: Syed Raza Hassan, "Pakistan arrests suspected South Asian al Qaeda commander," Reuters, December 12, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/12/us-pakistan-militants-idUSKBN0JQ11W20141212>.
 - **December 6, 2014:** Pakistani military kills an al-Qaeda leader—Saudi national Adnan el-Shukrijumah— wanted by the U.S. He is believed to have been al-Qaeda's external operations chief.
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Source: Hafiz Wazir, "Pakistan military kills al-Qaeda leader wanted in U.S.," Reuters, December 6, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/06/us-pakistan-military-militants-idUSKCN0JK08O20141206>.

- **November 25, 2014:** Yemeni and U.S. forces free eight hostages being held by al-Qaeda, including six Yemenis, a Saudi, and an Ethiopian. Despite previous assertions, there were no living American hostages present at the time of the raid. U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel states on December 6 that al-Qaeda militants had killed U.S. hostage Luke Somers in the raid. Sources: Mohammed Ghobari, "Yemeni forces free eight al Qaeda hostages; U.S. says no Americans," Reuters, November 25, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/25/us-yemen-kidnapping-idUSKCN0J909R20141125>; Phil Stewart, "Al-Qaeda militants killed Somers during U.S. rescue bid: Hagel," Reuters, December 6, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/06/us-yemen-usa-hostage-death-idUSKBN0JK0B820141206>.
- **November 5, 2014:** Yemeni officials kill al-Qaeda leader Turki al-Asiri, a.k.a. Marwan al-Mekki, in a raid in southern Yemen. Source: "Senior al Qaeda leader killed in south Yemen: officials," Reuters, November 7, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/07/us-yemen-security-qaeda-idUSKBN0IR1R620141107>.
- **October 27, 2014:** The Jordanian government arrests al-Qaeda scholar and "spiritual guide" Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi for incitement. Source: Suleiman al-Khalidi, "Jordan arrests influential al-Qaeda scholar for 'incitement'," Reuters, October 27, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/27/us-jordan-islamist-idUSKBN0IG1VS20141027>.
- **October 20, 2014:** Al-Qaeda suicide bombings and gun attacks kill at least 33 people in Yemen. Source: Mohammed Ghobari, "Al Qaeda attacks kill at least 33 in Yemen," Reuters, October 20, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/20/us-yemen-crisis-fighting-idUSKCN0I91PO20141020>.
- **October 15, 2014:** In Yemen, Shiite Houthi rebels clash with al-Qaeda militants. Source: "Yemen: Shiite Rebels Clash With Qaeda Militants," *New York Times*, *em*>, October 16, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/17/world/middleeast/yemen-shiite-rebels-clash-with-qaeda-militants.html>.
- **October 5, 2014:** At least 16 Nusra Front fighters are killed in clashes with Hezbollah in eastern Lebanon. Source: "Al Qaeda Affiliate Battles Hezbollah in Lebanon," *New York Times*, October 5, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/06/world/middleeast/al-qaeda-affiliate-battles-hezbollah-in-lebanon.html>.
- **September 27, 2014:** Nusra Front spokesman vows retaliation on the U.S.-led coalition amidst continued airstrikes, warning, "It's not a war against Nusra Front, it's a war against Islam. These countries have done a despicable act that will put them on the list of those targeted by jihadist forces all over the world." Source: "Syrian al Qaeda offshoot vows retaliation against U.S.-led airstrikes," Reuters, September 27, 2014, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/09/27/uk-mideast-crisis-nusra-idUKKCN0HM0N820140927>.
- **September 17, 2014:** Al-Qaeda's new wing in South Asia hijacks a Pakistani naval ship, and tries to use it to launch rockets towards U.S. vessels. Source: Maria Golovkina, "New al Qaeda wing in South Asia claims major attack," Reuters, September 17, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/17/us-southasia-attacks-idUSKBN0HC0YS20140917>.
- **September 14, 2014:** Al-Qaeda denies that that it is in "decline" as asserted by the U.S. government. Source: "Al Qaeda denies decline, acknowledges 'mistakes' by its branches," Reuters, September 14, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/14/us-mideast-idUSKBN0H90MU20140914>.
- **September 11, 2014:** The Nusra Front releases hostage U.N. peacekeepers into the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights. Source: Baz Ratner, "Syria's Nusra Front releases U.N. peacekeepers in Golan," Reuters, September 11, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/11/us-syria-crisis-fiji-idUSKBN0H60C120140911>.
- **September 4, 2014:** Al-Qaeda opens a new branch in the Indian subcontinent. In a video posted online, al-Qaeda leader al-Zawahiri says that it has taken more than two years to "gather the mujahedeen in the Indian subcontinent into a single entity." Source: Ellen Barry, "Al Qaeda Opens New Branch on Indian Subcontinent," *New York Times*, September 4, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/05/world/asia/al-qaeda-announces-new-branch-on-indian-subcontinent.html>.
- The U.S. carries out airstrikes against the Nusra Front, as well as al-Qaeda's 'Khorasan' cell in Syria. Source: Greg Miller and Kevin Sieff, "As U.S. Takes on the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda Remains Degraded but not Defeated," *Washington Post*, September 26, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/as-us-takes-on-the-islamic-state-al-qaeda-remains-degraded-but-not-defeated/2014/09/25/1f15c2c0-3eba-11e4-b0ea-8141703bbf6f_story.html.
- **August 31, 2014:** Al-Qaeda's Syrian proxy, the Nusra Front, confirms that it is holding 44 U.N. peacekeepers hostage in southern Syria, blaming the U.N. for failing to help Syrian civilians during Syria's civil war. Source: Ben Hubbard, "Affiliate of Al Qaeda Confirms Capture of U.S. Peacekeepers in Syria," *New York Times*, August 31, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/01/world/middleeast/un-peacekeepers-captured-in-syria.html>.
- **April 24, 2014:** Two al-Qaeda gunmen try and fail to kidnap U.S. embassy staff in Sanaa, Yemen. Source: JC Finley, "U.S. embassy employees repel AQAP kidnapping attempt in Yemen, killing 2 militants," *United Press International*, May 12, 2014, http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2014/05/12/US-embassy-employees-repel-AQAP-kidnapping-attempt-in-Yemen-killing-2-militants/4231399905320/.
- Al-Qaeda cuts ties with ISIS. Source: Ben Hubbard, "Al Qaeda Breaks with Jihadist Group in Syria Involved in Rebel Infighting," *New York Times*, February 3, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/04/world/middleeast/syria.html?_r=0.
- **January 3, 2014:** ISIS takes control of the Iraqi city of Fallujah— where 100 American forces died battling al-Qaeda in 2004— and declares it

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part of the “Islamic state.”

Source: Liz Sly, “Al-Qaeda-Linked Force Captures Fallujah Amid Rise in Violence in Iraq,” *Washington Post*, January 3, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/al-qaeda-force-captures-fallujah-amid-rise-in-violence-in-iraq/2014/01/03/8abaeb2a-74aa-11e3-8def-a33011492df2_story.html.

- **Al-Zawahiri names AQAP leader Nasir al-Wuhayshi his deputy.**
He reportedly gives him “clear orders” to carry out an attack, prompting the U.S. to temporarily shut down its embassies and consulates in the Middle East and North Africa. Source: Ellen Nakashima and Anne Gearan, “Al-Qaeda Leader Zawahiri Is Said to Have Ordered Terrorist Attack; U.S. Citizens Urged to Leave Yemen,” *Washington Post*, August 6, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/al-qaeda-leader-zawahiri-is-said-to-have-ordered-terrorist-attack/2013/08/05/9eb4799e-fe1b-11e2-bd97-676ec24f1f3f_story.html.
- **June 15, 2013:** ISIS renounces its affiliation with al-Qaeda after Zawahiri reprimands the group for fighting against the Nusra Front, another group that pledged its allegiance to Zawahiri.
ISIS’s leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi reportedly said, “I have to choose between the rule of God and the rule of al-Zawahiri, and I choose the rule of God.” Source: Ty McCormick, “Al Qaeda Core: A Short History,” *Foreign Policy*, March 17, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/03/17/al_qaeda_core_a_short_history.
- **Al-Qaeda in Iraq rebrands to become the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS)** as it becomes more heavily involved in the Syrian war.
Source: Ty McCormick, “Al Qaeda Core: A Short History,” *Foreign Policy*, March 17, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/03/17/al_qaeda_core_a_short_history.
- **Al-Zawahiri urges jihadists to take advantage of the Syrian civil war** to “Establish a state that defends the Muslim countries, seeks to free the Golan, and continues Jihad until the flag of victory is raised above the usurped hills of al-Quds...”
Then in September 2012, he releases a 35-minute audiotape reminding militants that “Supporting *jihad* in Syria to establish a Muslim state is a basic step towards Jerusalem...” Source: Paul Cruickshank and Tim Lister, “Zawahiri Messages Underline Al Qaeda’s Focus on Syria,” CNN, September 13, 2012, <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/09/13/zawahiri-messages-underline-al-qaedas-focus-on-syria/>.
- **Al-Shabaab leader Mukhtar Abu al-Zubayr releases a video tape pledging his allegiance to new al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri and announcing that the two groups had formally merged.**
Source: Thomas Joscelyn and Bill Roggio, “Shabaab Formally Joins Al Qaeda,” *Long War Journal*, February 9, 2012, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/02/shabaab_formally_joi.php#.
- **September 30, 2011:** Anwar al-Awlaki and Samir Khan, both American citizens and members of AQAP in Yemen, are killed in a drone strike carried out by the Central Intelligence Agency.
According to the White House, Awlaki had assumed “the lead role in planning and directing the efforts to murder innocent Americans.” Source: Mark Mazzetti, Eric Schmitt, and Robert Worth, “Two-Year Manhunt Led to Killing of Awlaki in Yemen,” *New York Times*, September 30, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/01/world/middleeast/anwar-al-awlaki-is-killed-in-yemen.html?pagewanted=all>.
- **May 2, 2011:** Navy SEALs kill bin Laden during a raid on his compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.
Source: Peter Baker, Helene Cooper, Mark Mazzetti, “Bin Laden Is Dead, Obama Says,” *New York Times*, May 1, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/world/asia/osama-bin-laden-is-killed.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.
- **Bin Laden allegedly drafts a letter that discusses “increased mistakes” on the part of Muslims carrying out attacks across the world.**
The letter is thought to be an attempt by bin Laden to unite various regional militant groups under al-Qaeda Central’s control. Source: “Bin Laden’s Final Letters,” *Wall Street Journal*, 16-17, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304743704577381823646622112>.
- **December 25, 2009:** Nigerian citizen Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab attempts to detonate explosives hidden in his underwear aboard a Northwest Airlines flight.
The flight was travelling from Amsterdam to Detroit. Abdulmutallah is subdued by passengers after setting his pants on fire. Abdulmutallah allegedly received training and explosives from AQAP in Yemen. Source: Dan Eggen, Karen DeYoung, and Spencer Hsu, “Plane Suspect Was Listed in Terror Database after Father Alerted U.S. Officials,” *Washington Post*, December 27, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/25/AR2009122501355.html>.
- **Afghan native Najibullah Zazi, who spent time in an al-Qaeda training camp in Pakistan’s Waziristan region, is arrested for allegedly planning to detonate homemade explosives in New York City’s subway system to mark the anniversary of 9/11.**
Zazi pleads guilty in February 2010 to three charges: conspiring to use weapons of mass destruction, conspiracy to commit murder in a foreign country, and providing material support to a terrorist organization. Source: Julian Cummings, “Najibullah Zazi Pleads Guilty in New York Terrorism Plot,” CNN, February 23, 2010, <http://www.cnn.com/2010/CRIME/02/22/najibullah.zazi.plea/>.
- **September 11, 2006:** Ayman al-Zawahiri announces a partnership between al-Qaeda and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) in Algeria.
In January 2007 the group becomes al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and carries out attacks in Algeria, Niger, Mauritania, and Mali. Source: Ty McCormick, “Al Qaeda Core: A Short History,” *Foreign Policy*, March 17, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/03/17/al_qaeda_core_a_short_history.
- **February 3, 2006:** 23 alleged al-Qaeda militants in Yemen escape from prison, including Nasir al-Wuhayshi, the future leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).
Source: Ty McCormick, “Al Qaeda Core: A Short History,” *Foreign Policy*, March 17, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/03/17/al_qaeda_core_a_short_history.
- **January 19, 2006:** In a video aired by Al Jazeera, bin Laden offers the U.S. a “long term truce.” The U.S. government rejects his offer.
Source: “Timeline: Al-Qaeda,” BBC News, September 4, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3618762.stm>.
- **July 7, 2005:** Suicide bombers attack the London Underground railway and a civilian bus, killing 56 people in the worst terrorist attack in U.K.

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history.

All four bombers are British nationals. On July 21, four British nationals attempt to blow up three trains and a bus in London but the bombs do not detonate. Source: "Al-Qaeda Timeline: Plots and Attacks," NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.

- The U.S. confiscates a letter from Ayman al-Zawahri to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi that describe al-Qaeda's long-term global strategy. The letter also criticizes al-Zarqawi for videotaping and distributing footage of beheadings, saying that such violence could alienate the Islamic world from al-Qaeda's cause. Source: "Zawahiri's Letter to Zarqawi (English Translation)," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, accessed February 19, 2015, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/zawahiris-letter-to-zarqawi-english-translation-2>.
- On December 6, al-Qaeda launches an attack against the U.S. consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, killing five non-American employees. On December 29, militants attack Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Interior in Riyadh. Saudi forces kill seven of the assailants. Source: "Al-Qaeda Timeline: Plots and Attacks," NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.
- **October 17, 2004:** Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's Tawhid and Jihad group pledges allegiance to bin Laden, uniting under the name al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Source: Ty McCormick, "Al Qaeda Core: A Short History," *Foreign Policy*, March 17, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/03/17/al_qaeda_core_a_short_history.
- **May 17, 2004:** A suicide bomber with suspected ties to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi detonates a bomb and blows himself up near the U.S.-led coalition headquarters in Baghdad, killing the acting president of the Iraqi Governing Council, Ezzedine Salim. Salim's death comes 45 days before the occupation forces are set to transfer limited political control back to the Iraqis. Source: Ian Fisher and Christine Hauser, "The Struggle for Iraq: Political Violence; Suicide Bomber Kills President of Iraqi Council," *New York Times*, May 18, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/18/world/struggle-for-iraq-political-violence-suicide-bomber-kills-president-iraqi.html>.
- **March 11, 2004:** Four rush-hour commuter trains in Madrid are bombed simultaneously, killing 191 and wounding more than 1,800. Police discovered that the bombs were hidden in backpacks and detonated remotely with mobile phones. Al-Qaeda claims that the attacks are in retaliation for Spain's troop presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. Spain indicts 29 people in the attacks, including 15 Moroccans, nine Spaniards, two Syrians, one Egyptian, one Algerian, and one Lebanese. Source: "The 2004 Madrid Bombings," *Guardian* (London), October 31, 2007, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/oct/31/spain.menezes>.
- On November 8, suicide bombers driving vehicles disguised as police cars attack another residential compound in Riyadh, killing 17 and injuring 122. On November 15, al-Qaeda affiliate Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades simultaneously bomb two synagogues in Istanbul, Turkey. The bombings kill at least 29 and wound dozens more. Five days later, 32 people are killed when suicide bombers from the Great Eastern Islamic Raiders' Front detonate trucks packed with explosives outside of HSBC bank and the British consulate in Istanbul. The Saudi militant cell calls itself al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Sources: "Al-Qaeda Timeline: Plots and Attacks," NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg; Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Terrorist Attacks by Al Qaeda," Congressional Research Service, March 31, 2004, 4, <http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/033104.pdf>.
- On May 12, al-Qaeda militants in Saudi Arabia attack three Western housing compounds in Riyadh, killing 34 people. Four days later, on May 16, fourteen suicide bombers from al-Qaeda affiliate al-Salafiyyah al-Jihadiyah detonate 5 bombs in Casablanca, Morocco. The attacks kill 44 people, including 12 of the assailants, and wound nearly 60. Source: "Al-Qaeda Timeline: Plots and Attacks," NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.
- **March 1, 2003:** CIA and Pakistani forces captured senior al-Qaeda leader Khalid Sheikh Mohammed— who U.S. authorities believe helped plan 9/11— near Islamabad. Source: "Timeline: Al-Qaeda," BBC News, September 4, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3618762.stm>.
- **November 28, 2002:** Al-Qaeda bombs a hotel in Mombasa, Kenya that is owned and frequented by Israelis, killing 15 people and wounding 40. Meanwhile, the group also tries but fails to shoot down an Israeli airliner with a surface-to-air missile as it takes off from the airport in Mombasa. Source: Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Terrorist Attacks by Al Qaeda," Congressional Research Service, March 31, 2004, 4, <http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/033104.pdf>.
- Al-Qaeda reportedly carries out attacks on a French oil tanker in Yemen on October 6, killing 1. On October 8, the group claims responsibility for attacking and killing two U.S. Marines on Faylaka Island in Kuwait. Then on October 12, al-Qaeda claims responsibility for bombing the Kuta Beach nightclub district of Bali, Indonesia, killing 202 and wounding hundreds more. Source: "Al-Qaeda Timeline: Plots and Attacks," NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.
- **September 11, 2002:** Pakistani authorities arrests suspected 9/11 plotter Ramzi bin al-Shibh. Source: "Timeline: Al-Qaeda," BBC News, September 4, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3618762.stm>.
- **April 11, 2002:** Al-Qaeda claims responsibility for a synagogue bombing in Djerba, Tunisia that kills 19 and injures 22. Source: Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Terrorist Attacks by Al Qaeda," Congressional Research Service, March 31, 2004, 4, <http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/033104.pdf>.
- **March 28, 2002:** Pakistani authorities captures senior al-Qaeda operative Abu Zubaydah during a raid and hand him over to U.S. officials for questioning. Zubaydah is allegedly Bin Laden's field commander and is the number three al-Qaeda leader wanted by the U.S. Source: "Timeline: Al-Qaeda," BBC News, September 4, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3618762.stm>.
- - : *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl is kidnapped and beheaded in Pakistan while on assignment to interview a militant leader about his ties to Richard Reid.

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Source: "U.S. Journalist Daniel Pearl is Dead, Officials Confirm," CNN.com, February 22, 2002, http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/south/02/21/missing_reporter/

- **December 23, 2001:** British citizen Richard Reid is arrested after he tries to detonate explosives hidden in his shoes on an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami.
Nicknamed the "Shoebomber," Reid pledged his allegiance to bin Laden during trial. Source: "Timeline: Al-Qaeda," BBC News, September 4, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3618762.stm>.
- **September 11, 2001:** Nineteen al-Qaeda operatives hijack U.S. commercial airliners and fly them into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, DC.
A fourth hijacked airplane, whose target may have been the U.S. Capitol building, crash in a field in rural Pennsylvania. More than 3,000 civilians are killed and thousands more are injured. The U.S. launches military operations against al-Qaeda's suspected safe havens in Afghanistan six weeks later. Source: "Timeline: Al-Qaeda," BBC News, September 4, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3618762.stm>.
- **October 12, 2000:** Suicide bombers driving an inflatable raft packed with explosives ram into the USS Cole as it is mooring a U.S. Navy destroyer to a buoy in the Port of Aden, killing 17 U.S. servicemen and injuring at least 40.
Both bombers are Yemenis, and six men are arrested in connection with the plot, including Saudi national Abdel Rahim al-Nashiri, who is reportedly al-Qaeda's chief of naval operations in the Persian Gulf. Source: "Suicide Bombers Attack USS Cole," BBC News, October 12, 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/12/newsid_4252000/4252400.stm.
- U.S. federal prosecutors obtain indictments against bin Laden and 11 of his associates.
This was on charges of conspiring to kill American citizens, including military personnel stationed in Saudi Arabia and Somalia, and U.S. embassy employees in Tanzania and Kenya. Source: "Osama Bin Laden: A Chronology of His Political Life," PBS Frontline, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/etc/cron.html>.
- Simultaneous suicide bombings at the U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya kill 258 people and wound more than 5,000.
In retaliation, the Clinton administration launched cruise missile attacks on suspected al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan and on the Al Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum. Source: "Osama Bin Laden: A Chronology of His Political Life," PBS Frontline, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/etc/cron.html>.
- Bin Laden issues a declaration of *Jihad*.
Among his objectives are forcing the U.S. military out of the Arabian Peninsula, dethroning the Saudi government, punishing the U.S. and its allies for their "Crusade" against Islam, and liberating Muslim holy sites. Source: "Bin Laden's Fatwa," PBS Newshour, August 23, 1996, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/military-july-dec96-fatwa_1996/.
- Bin Laden loses his safe haven in Sudan and returns to Afghanistan after the U.S. and Saudi Arabia pressure the Sudanese government to expel him.
Source: "Osama Bin Laden: A Chronology of His Political Life," PBS Frontline, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/etc/cron.html>.
- Members of Egyptian Islamic Jihad attack Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's motorcade during his visit to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to attend the Organization of African Unity summit.
Egyptian officials believe that bin Laden planned the attack. Source: "Al-Qaida Timeline: Plots and Attacks," NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.
- Bin Laden's associates in Manila conduct surveillance of U.S. President Bill Clinton and his Secret Service detail during a state visit to the Philippines.
This was in preparation for an assassination attempt during Clinton's planned trip to the APEC summit in November 1996. Surveillance tapes, maps, and notes are passed to Bin Laden in Sudan. Source: "Al-Qaida Timeline: Plots and Attacks," NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.
- Bin Laden meets with Hezbollah chief Imad Mughniyeh in Khartoum, where Mughniyeh allegedly offered Bin Laden his operational advice.
Source: "Al-Qaida Timeline: Plots and Attacks," NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.
- The Saudi government rescinds bin Laden's citizenship and freezes his local assets due to his support for militant groups.
Source: "Osama Bin Laden: A Chronology of His Political Life," PBS Frontline, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/etc/cron.html>.
- Ramzi Yousef and a militant cell in Bangkok hijack a delivery truck and attempt to deliver a one-ton bomb to the Israeli embassy.
The plot fails when the truck crashes and the militants are forced to abandon it. Source: "Al-Qaida Timeline: Plots and Attacks," NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.
- An al-Qaeda cell in Somalia allegedly shoots down a U.S. black hawk helicopter in Mogadishu.
Source: Andrew Wander, "A History of Terror: Al-Qaeda 1988-2008," *Guardian* (London), July 12, 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/13/history.alqaida>.
- -: The FBI stops a plot to bomb several targets in New York, including the Lincoln and Holland tunnels, the George Washington Bridge, the Statue of Liberty, the United Nations, the Federal Building, and one location in the Diamond District.
Source: "Al-Qaida Timeline: Plots and Attacks," NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.

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- Khalid Sheik Mohamed's nephew Ramzi Yousef masterminds the first attack on the World Trade Center, which kills six and wounds 1,500. Source: "Al-Qaida Timeline: Plots and Attacks," NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.
- Bombs explode at a hotel in Aden, Yemen where U.S. troops had stayed before traveling to Somalia. Two Austrian tourists die in the attack. Source: "Osama Bin Laden: A Chronology of His Political Life," PBS Frontline, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/etc/cron.html>.
- Bin Laden is forced to leave Saudi Arabia after publicly rebuking the monarchy for its alliance with the U.S. He flees to Afghanistan and then to Sudan between 1991 and 1992, establishing numerous businesses. Source: "Osama Bin Laden: A Chronology of His Political Life," PBS Frontline, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/etc/cron.html>.
- Iraqi troops invade Kuwait. Fearing further Iraqi aggression, bin Laden urges Saudi King Fahd to allow him and his "Afghan Arabs" — Arab fighters who cut their teeth fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan — to defend the Arabian Peninsula. King Fahd declines bin Laden's offer in favor of military intervention by U.S. and allied forces. Source: Andrew Wander, "A History of Terror: Al-Qaeda 1988-2008," *Guardian* (London), July 12, 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/13/history.alqaida>.
- Soviet forces withdraw from Afghanistan ten years after invading the country. Bin Laden and other Arab and Muslim fighters from the Afghan war return to their home countries emboldened by their perceived triumph over the Soviet forces. Source: "Timeline: Al Qaeda's Global Context," PBS Frontline, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/knew/etc/cron.html>.
- During a three-day meeting at Osama bin Laden's house in Peshawar, Pakistan, bin Laden, Abu Ubaidah al-Banjshiri, Abu Hajir, and 6 others establish al-Qaeda's Advisory Council. Additionally, they develop membership requirements and a pledge of allegiance. Source: "TareekhOsama/50/Tareekh Osama 122-123," Intelwire.com, February 24, 2009, <http://intelfiles.egoplex.com/1988-08-11-al-qaeda-founding.pdf>.

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Violent history:

- **December 1992:** Bombs explode at a hotel in Aden, Yemen where U.S. troops had stayed before traveling to Somalia. Two Austrian tourists die in the attack.⁷⁴
- **February 1993:** Khalid Sheik Mohamed's nephew Ramzi Yousef masterminds the first attack on the World Trade Center, which kills six and wounds 1,500.⁷⁵
- **April-June 1993:** FBI stops a plot to bomb several targets in New York, including the Lincoln and Holland tunnels, the George Washington Bridge, the Statue of Liberty, the United Nations, the Federal Building, and one location in the Diamond District.⁷⁶
- **October 1993:** An al-Qaeda cell in Somalia allegedly shoots down a U.S. black hawk helicopter in Mogadishu. 18 U.S. servicemen died in the operation.⁷⁷
- **March 1994:** Ramzi Yousef and a militant cell in Bangkok hijacks a delivery truck and attempt to deliver a one-ton bomb to the Israeli embassy. The plot fails when the truck crashes and the militants are forced to abandon it.⁷⁸
- **November 1994:** Bin Laden's associates in Manila conduct surveillance of President Bill Clinton and his Secret Service detail during a state visit, in preparation for an assassination attempt during Clinton's planned trip to the APEC summit in November 1996. Surveillance tapes, maps, and notes were passed to Bin Laden in Sudan.⁷⁹
- **June 1995:** Members of Egyptian Islamic Jihad attack former President Hosni Mubarak's motorcade during his visit to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to attend the Organization of African Unity summit. Egyptian officials believed that Bin Laden planned the attack.⁸⁰
- **August 1998:** Simultaneous suicide bombings at the U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya kill 258 people and wound more than 5,000. In retaliation, the Clinton administration launches cruise missile attacks on suspected al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan and on the Al Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum.⁸¹
- **October 12, 2000:** Suicide bombers driving an inflatable raft packed with explosives ram into the USS Cole as it was mooring a U.S. Navy destroyer to a buoy in the Port of Aden, killing 17 U.S. servicemen and injuring at least 40. Both bombers were Yemenis, and six men were arrested in connection with the plot, including Saudi national Abdel Rahim al-Nashiri, who was reportedly al-Qaeda's chief of naval operations in the Persian Gulf.⁸²
- **September 11, 2001:** Nineteen al-Qaeda operatives hijack U.S. commercial airliners and flew them into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, DC. A fourth hijacked airplane, whose target may have been the U.S. Capitol building, crashes in a field in rural Pennsylvania. More than 3,000 civilians are killed and thousands more injured. The U.S. launched military operations against al-Qaeda's suspected safe havens in Afghanistan six weeks later.⁸³
- **December 23, 2001:** British citizen Richard Reid is arrested after he tries to detonate explosives hidden in his shoes on an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami. Nicknamed the "Shoebomber," Reid pledged his allegiance to bin Laden during trial.⁸⁴
- **January-February 2002:** *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl is kidnapped and beheaded in Pakistan while on assignment to interview a militant leader about his ties to Richard Reid.⁸⁵
- **April 11, 2002:** Al-Qaeda claims responsibility for a synagogue bombing in Djerba, Tunisia, that killed 19 and injured 22.⁸⁶
- **October 2002:** Al-Qaeda reportedly carries out attacks on a French oil tanker in Yemen on October 6, killing 1. On October 8, the group claims responsibility for attacking and killing two U.S. Marines on Faylaka Island in Kuwait. Then on October 12, the group claims responsibility for bombing the Kuta Beach nightclub district of Bali, Indonesia, killing 202 and wounding hundreds more.⁸⁷
- **November 28, 2002:** Al-Qaeda bombs a hotel in Mombasa, Kenya, that was owned and frequented by Israelis, killing 15 and wounding 40. Meanwhile, the group also tries but fails to shoot down an Israeli airliner with a surface-to-air missile as it took off from the airport in Mombasa.⁸⁸
- **May 2003:** On May 12, al-Qaeda militants in Saudi Arabia attack three Western housing compounds in Riyadh, killing 34 people. Four days later, on May 16, 14 suicide bombers from al-Qaeda affiliate al-Salafiyyah al-Jihadiyah detonate 5 bombs in Casablanca, Morocco. The attacks killed 44 people, including 12 of the assailants, and wounded nearly 60.⁸⁹
- **November 2003:** On November 8, Suicide bombers driving vehicles disguised as police cars attack another residential compound in Riyadh, killing 17 and injuring 122.⁹⁰ On November 15, two synagogues in Istanbul, Turkey are bombed simultaneously by the al-Qaeda affiliated Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades. The bombings kill at least 29 people and wound dozens more. Five days later, 32 people are killed when suicide bombers from the Great Eastern Islamic Raiders' Front detonate trucks packed with explosives outside of HSBC bank and the British consulate

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in Istanbul.⁹¹ The Saudi militant cell called itself al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).⁹²

- **March 11, 2004:** Four rush-hour commuter trains in Madrid are bombed simultaneously, killing 191 and wounding more than 1,800. Police discover that the bombs were hidden in backpacks and detonated remotely with mobile phones. Al-Qaeda claims that the attacks were in retaliation for Spain's troop presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. Spain indicts 29 people in the attacks, including 15 Moroccans, 9 Spaniards, 2 Syrians, one Egyptian, one Algerian, and one Lebanese.⁹³
- **May 17, 2004:** A suicide bomber with suspected ties to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi detonates himself near the U.S.-led coalition headquarters in Baghdad, killing the acting president of the Iraqi Governing Council, Ezzedine Salim. Salim's death comes 45 days before the occupation forces were set to transfer limited political control back to the Iraqis.⁹⁴
- **December 2004:** On December 6, al-Qaeda launches an attack against the U.S. Consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, killing 5 non-American employees. Then on December 29, militants attack Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Interior in Riyadh. Saudi forces killed seven of the assailants.⁹⁵
- **July 7, 2005:** Suicide bombers attack the London Underground railway and a civilian bus, killing 56 people in the worst terrorist attack in UK history. All four bombers were British nationals.⁹⁶ On July 21, four British nationals attempted to blow up three trains and a bus in London but the bombs did not detonate.⁹⁷
- **February 22, 2006:** Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) bomb the Shiite Al Askari Mosque in Samarra, Iraq, one of the four major Shiite shrines in Iraq and the burial place for two of the 12 revered Shiite Imams. Reportedly, "a group of men dressed like Iraqi police commandos" walked into the shrine and set off the explosions.⁹⁸ The mosque attack set off a wave of intensified Shiite-Sunni attacks across Iraq.⁹⁹
- **August 16, 2007:** Suicide bombers from AQI simultaneously detonate five fuel trucks in the Yazidi Kurdish villages of al-Qataniyah and al-Adnaniyah, killing more than 300 Iraqis, injuring several hundred, and destroying dozens of homes. It is considered the worst terrorist attack in Iraq during the post-Saddam era.¹⁰⁰
- **September 2007:** Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) detonate a car bomb in the northern town of Dellys, killing 28 coast guard officers. Just days before, AQIM set off an explosion in a crowd that was waiting to greet Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika.¹⁰¹
- **September 2009:** Afghan native Najibullah Zazi, who spent time in an al-Qaeda training camp in Pakistan's Waziristan region, is arrested for allegedly planning to detonate homemade explosives in New York City's subway system to mark the anniversary of 9/11. Zazi pleads guilty in February 2010 to three charges: conspiring to use weapons of mass destruction, conspiracy to commit murder in a foreign country, and providing material support to a terrorist organization.¹⁰²
- **December 25, 2009:** Nigerian citizen Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab attempts to detonate explosives hidden in his underwear aboard a Northwest Airlines flight travelling from Amsterdam to Detroit, but was subdued by passengers after setting his pants on fire. Abdulmutallab allegedly received training and explosives from AQAP in Yemen.¹⁰³
- **November 2010:** Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula attempts to mail bombs loaded in printer cartridges via UPS and FedEx to Jewish community centers in Chicago. The bombs made their way from Yemen to Britain and Dubai before a last minute tip from Saudi intelligence alerted officials in each country to the cargo and foiled the plot.¹⁰⁴
- **May 2012:** The Central Intelligence Agency and foreign intelligence services foil an attempt by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula to send a suicide bomber carrying an "experimental bomb aboard an airliner" travelling to the U.S.¹⁰⁵
- **September 11, 2012:** Al-Qaeda affiliate Ansar al-Sharia in Libya attack the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, killing U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans at the Consulate.¹⁰⁶
- **January 23, 2013:** Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb seize control of a natural gas plant in eastern Algeria, tying up dozens of Western workers and planting explosives throughout the facility. After four days of negotiations failed, Algerian forces storm the facility, killing and driving out the militant. However, at least 37 hostages die in the hostage crisis and ensuing assault.¹⁰⁷
- **September 21, 2013:** Reportedly, gunmen from Al-Shabaab open fire on bystanders at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, killing more than 60 people during an 80-hour siege of the mall by Kenyan security forces.¹⁰⁸
- **January-February 2014:** Militants from Boko Haram in Nigeria stage numerous attacks on colleges and villages in Nigeria during the first two months of 2014, shooting and burning male students alive. According to estimates, the group murder more than 200 students during a four-week span.¹⁰⁹
- **April 24, 2014:** Two al-Qaeda gunmen try and fail to kidnap U.S. embassy staff in Sanaa, Yemen.¹¹⁰

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- **September 17, 2014:** Al-Qaeda’s new wing in South Asia hijacks a Pakistani naval ship, and tries to use it to launch rockets towards U.S. vessels.¹¹¹
 - **October 20, 2014:** Al-Qaeda suicide bombings and gun attacks kill at least 33 people in Yemen.¹¹²
 - **January 7, 2015:** The perpetrators of the Paris attacks on the offices of satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* and a kosher supermarket claim that they received funding from AQAP. One of the two Kouachi brothers had previously trained with al-Qaeda in Yemen.¹¹³
 - **January 14, 2015:** AQAP officially claims responsibility for the *Charlie Hebdo* attack.¹¹⁴
 - **February 12, 2015:** AQAP militants seize a large army base in southern Yemen, just hours after the U.N. warns that the country is on the brink of civil war.¹¹⁵
 - **February 13, 2015:** Al-Qaeda fighters attack a Yemeni prison, freeing six al-Qaeda militants.¹¹⁶
 - **February 25, 2015:** The *Guardian* reports that Russian intelligence fears al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is planning attacks against European targets in the Mediterranean from North Africa with a “kamikaze” marine unit.¹¹⁷
 - **March 3, 2015:** Five people are killed in an AQAP suicide attack on a Houthi outpost in central Yemen.¹¹⁸
 - **November 20, 2015:** Al-Mourabitoun claims responsibility for a deadly gun and hostage attack on the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, Mali, allegedly as part of a joint attack with al-Qaeda affiliate, AQIM. According to U.N. spokesman Olivier Salgado, 21 people were killed in the attack when gunmen stormed the hotel using counterfeit diplomatic license plates.¹¹⁹
 - **January 16, 2016:** Al-Qaeda affiliate AQIM storms a hotel and nearby cafe in Ougadougou, Burkina Faso, killing 28 and wounding dozens.¹²⁰
 - **March 13, 2016:** AQIM gunmen open fire at a beach resort in Grand-Bassam, a coastal town located 25 miles east of Abidjan. The attack—the first al-Qaeda attack in the country—leaves 19 people dead, including 16 civilians and three Ivorian soldiers. Among the killed are foreign citizens from France, Germany, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Cameroon.¹²¹
 - **October 14, 2017:** Al-Qaeda affiliate al-Shabaab is suspected of detonating a suicide bomb in Mogadishu, killing more than 500 people. While al-Shabaab is an al-Qaeda affiliate, more than 200 fighters have defected since 2015 and declared allegiance to ISIS.¹²²
 - **January 12, 2018:** Al-Qaeda prison inmate Christian Ganczarski injures three guards in a knife attack at the French prison where he is being held. Ganczarski was linked to the 2002 Tunisian synagogue bombing that killed 21.¹²³
 - **January 21, 2018:** The al-Qaeda affiliated Haqqani Network kills 22 people including several U.S. citizens in a 12-hour attack on a hotel in Kabul, Afghanistan.¹²⁴
 - **January 27, 2018:** Al-Qaeda fighters attack and briefly seize control of a Malian army base near Soumpi, Timbuktu, killing 14 and wounding 18.¹²⁵
 - **March 25, 2018:** Al-Qaeda affiliate al-Shabaab detonates three car bombs over four days in Mogadishu, Somalia, killing nearly 20 people.¹²⁶
 - **July 7, 2018:** An al-Shabaab suicide bombing in Mogadishu kills at least nine.¹²⁷
 - **November 9, 2018:** Suicide attackers set off two car bombs at a hotel in Mogadishu. The explosion kills at least 22 civilians and six militants. Abdiasisi Abu Musab, al-Shabaab’s spokesman for military operations, said the group targeted the Sahafi hotel because of its proximity to Somalia’s Criminal Investigations Department.¹²⁸
 - **January 15, 2019:** Four gunmen and one suicide bomber storm a complex in Nairobi. The 19-hour siege claims the lives of 26, including the attackers, and injures 28. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for the attack as it was “a response to the witless remarks of U.S. president, Donald Trump, and his declaration of al-Quds [Jerusalem] as the capital of Israel.”¹²⁹
 - **March 13, 2019:** Six Malian troops are killed after driving over improvised land mines. Two army vehicles were struck in Dialloubé killing two soldiers, and four soldiers are killed after driving over an explosive in Hombori.¹³⁰
 - **March 17, 2019:** Gunmen linked to al-Qaeda attack and briefly seize a Malian army base in Mopti region. At least 16 soldiers are killed.¹³¹
 - **March 23, 2019:** Gunmen launch assaults on the villages of Ogossagou and Welingara. At least 110 Fulani herders are killed. It is suspected that the gunmen were associated with al-Qaeda.¹³²
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- **March 28, 2019:** An explosive-laden vehicle detonates outside a busy restaurant in Somalia. At least 16 people are killed and another 17 are wounded. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for the attack.¹³³
 - **May 12, 2019:** Gunmen attack and burn down a church in Dablo, Burkina Faso. At least six people, including the priest, are killed. No group claims responsibility, but it is expected that the gunmen were affiliated with either al-Qaeda or ISIS given the rise of jihadist attacks in neighboring Mali.¹³⁴
 - **May 19, 2019:** Gunmen raid Timbuktu, Mali, targeting U.N. troops stationed there. One soldier is killed and three other peacekeepers are injured. The attackers are suspected to be associated with al-Qaeda.¹³⁵
 - **July 14, 2019:** At least four al-Shabaab militants attack a hotel in Mogadishu. The assailants blew up the gate of the hotel with a car bomb, taking over the building and killing over 26 people in the process. Somali forces manage to recover the hotel.¹³⁶
 - **July 22, 2019:** A car bomb detonates near a hotel close to the busy K-4 junction in Mogadishu. At least 17 people are killed and another 28 are taken to a hospital. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for the explosion.¹³⁷
 - **July 24, 2019:** A suicide bomber detonates an explosive inside a Mogadishu government building. The attack kills seven, including Abdirahman Omar Osman, the mayor of Mogadishu. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for the attack, claiming to target United Nations officials who were visiting the government building.¹³⁸
 - **August 2, 2019:** Al-Qaeda militants storm the al-Mahfad army base in Abyan province, Yemen. The attack kills at least 19 soldiers.¹³⁹
 - **August 14, 2019:** Al-Shabaab militants attack a government military base in Somalia. The assailants deploy car bombs and open fire on the base, with unofficial reports claiming over 50 soldiers are killed.¹⁴⁰
 - **August 14, 2019:** Al-Shabaab militants attempt to attack a military camp in Mogadishu. Somali troops manage to fend off the two car bombs and gun raid, but three people are killed in the crossfire.¹⁴¹
 - **August 15, 2019:** Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), otherwise known as the Nusra Front, shoots down a government warplane in Idlib. The militants capture the pilot who was ejected from the plane. Pro-government forces sought to destroy the Nusra Front's headquarters following their recent successful seizure of new grounds from rebels near the strategic town of Khan Sheikhouh.¹⁴²
 - **August 20, 2019:** The U.S. military conducts air raids targeting an al-Shabaab fighter in Qunyo Barrow, Somalia. The militant is killed in the raid.¹⁴³
 - **August 21, 2019:** Suspected jihadists ambush Malian soldiers between the cities of Hombori and Boni. At least five soldiers are killed. It is unconfirmed which insurgent outfit the rebels belonged to, but jihadist groups linked to al-Qaeda and ISIS have exploited ethnic rivalries in Mali and the surrounding areas to boost recruitment and render swathes of territory ungovernable.¹⁴⁴
 - **November 11, 2019 – April 16, 2020:** A man wielding a knife rushes onto a stage at King Abdullah Park in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The assailant, identified as 33-year-old Yemeni resident Emad Abdelqoui al-Mansouri, stabs three performers before being tackled by a security guard. Saudi state TV reports that al-Mansouri acted on an order of a senior leader of AQAP. On December 30, a court in Saudi Arabia finds al-Mansouri guilty of tampering with national security and creating chaos and terror. The court sentences him to death. On April 16, 2020, Saudi Arabia executes al-Mansouri.¹⁴⁵
 - **December 6, 2019 – February 02, 2020:** On December 6, a member of the Saudi Air Force goes on a shooting rampage in a classroom building at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola. Armed with a handgun, Second Lt. Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani kills three people and injures eight others. Alshamrani was one of hundreds of military trainees at the base. A sheriff's deputy eventually shoots Alshamrani dead during the attack. On February 2, AQAP releases a posthumous recording from AQAP leader Qasim al-Raymi that claims responsibility for directing the December shooting. The group does not provide evidence of training the gunman but offers copies of his will and correspondence that indicate his affiliation with AQAP.¹⁴⁶
 - **August 16, 2020:** A car bomb decimates the security gates leading to the Elite Hotel in the Lido beach area of Mogadishu, allowing five heavily armed Islamist militants to storm the building. Somali security forces end the siege after five hours of fighting, but at least 15 people are killed. The hotel is a popular destination for politicians, journalists, activists, and young people. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for the attack via its radio outlet, Andalus.¹⁴⁷
 - **September 9, 2020:** A suicide bombing in the Somali capital of Mogadishu kills at least three people, including one child, and injures seven others. The attacker targets the Blue Sky restaurant, a popular eatery among government troops and located near an army checkpoint that leads to the presidential palace. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for the attack in a statement.¹⁴⁸
 - **September 11, 2020:** A suicide bomber detonates his explosives outside of a mosque as congregants depart, following Friday prayers, in the
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southern port city of Kismayo. The attack leaves at least six worshippers dead and another 20 people injured. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility via its Radio Andalus.¹⁴⁹

- **October 29, 2020:** Armed with a knife and shouting “Allahu akbar,” Tunisian immigrant Ibrahim Issaoui stabs and kills three people at Notre Dame Basilica in Nice, France. Issaoui beheads one victim and slits the throat of another. Police shoot and wound Issaoui and take him into custody. Nice officials label the attack an act of terrorism, making it France’s third terror attack since September. According to Tunisian prosecutors, a previously unknown al-Qaeda-linked group called Al Mehdi of Southern Tunisia claims responsibility for orchestrating the attack. The group threatens more attacks inside France.¹⁵⁰
- **November 17, 2020:** A suicide bomber detonates an explosive outside a police academy in Mogadishu. The attack kills at least five and injures 10 others. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for the attack.¹⁵¹
- **November 30, 2020:** Al Qaeda-linked militants fire rockets toward French military bases in Kidal, Menaka and Gao in northern Mali. There are no reported casualties.¹⁵²
- **January 1, 2021:** A car bomb explodes at a Russian military base in the Tal Saman area in Raqa province in Syria, wounding several. Al-Qaeda-affiliated Hurras al-Din claims responsibility.¹⁵³
- **January 2, 2021:** An IED strikes a French military vehicle in Menaka, Mali, killing two and wounding one. Al-Qaeda’s North African branch, Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM), claims responsibility.¹⁵⁴
- **March 18, 2021:** Suspected al-Qaeda gunmen, armed with machine guns and grenades, attack a checkpoint in Yemen’s Abyan province, killing at least 12, including four civilians. The attackers escape. The checkpoint is administered by the separatist militia Security Belt, which is overseen by the Southern Transitional Council (STC), part of an anti-Houthi unity government in Yemen.¹⁵⁵

⁷⁴ “Osama Bin Laden: A Chronology of His Political Life,” PBS Frontline, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/etc/cron.html>.

⁷⁵ “Al-Qaeda Timeline: Plots and Attacks,” NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.

⁷⁶ “Al-Qaeda Timeline: Plots and Attacks,” NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.

⁷⁷ Andrew Wander, “A History of Terror: Al-Qaeda 1988-2008,” *Guardian* (London), July 12, 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/13/history.alqaida>.

⁷⁸ “Al-Qaeda Timeline: Plots and Attacks,” NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.

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⁸⁰ “Al-Qaeda Timeline: Plots and Attacks,” NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.

⁸¹ “Osama Bin Laden: A Chronology of His Political Life,” PBS Frontline, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/etc/cron.html>.

⁸² “Suicide Bombers Attack USS Cole.”

⁸³ “Timeline: Al-Qaeda,” BBC News, September 4, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3618762.stm>.

⁸⁴ “Timeline: Al-Qaeda,” BBC News, September 4, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3618762.stm>.

⁸⁵ “U.S. Journalist Daniel Pearl is Dead, Officials Confirm,” CNN.com, February 22, 2002, <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/south/02/21/missing.reporter/>.

⁸⁶ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Terrorist Attacks by Al Qaeda,” Congressional Research Service, March 31, 2004, 4, <http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/033104.pdf>.

⁸⁷ “Al-Qaeda Timeline: Plots and Attacks,” NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.

⁸⁸ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Terrorist Attacks by Al Qaeda,” Congressional Research Service, March 31, 2004, 4, <http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/033104.pdf>.

⁸⁹ “Al-Qaeda Timeline: Plots and Attacks,” NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.

⁹⁰ “Al-Qaeda Timeline: Plots and Attacks,” NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.

⁹¹ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Terrorist Attacks by Al Qaeda,” Congressional Research Service, March 31, 2004, 4, <http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/033104.pdf>.

⁹² Ty McCormick, “Al Qaeda Core: A Short History,” *Foreign Policy*, March 17, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/03/17/al_qaeda_core_a_short_history.

⁹³ “The 2004 Madrid Bombings,” *Guardian* (London), October 31, 2007, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/oct/31/spain.menezes>.

⁹⁴ Ian Fisher and Christine Hauser, “The Struggle for Iraq: Political Violence; Suicide Bomber Kills President of Iraqi Council,” *New York Times*, May 18, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/18/world/struggle-for-iraq-political-violence-suicide-bomber-kills-president-iraqi.html>.

⁹⁵ “Al-Qaeda Timeline: Plots and Attacks,” NBC News, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.U4idFpwqRdg.

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Al-Qaeda

Designations:

Designations by the U.S. Government:

October 8, 1999: The Department of State designates Al-Qa'ida (AQ) as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (under section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act).¹⁵⁶

The Department of State designates Al-Qa'ida as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).¹⁵⁷

The Office of Foreign Assets Control, U.S. Treasury Department designates Al-Qa'ida as a Specially Designated Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).¹⁵⁸

In addition to designating hundreds of terrorist groups affiliated with al-Qaeda, the U.S. Department of the Treasury has formally designated dozens of Islamic charities and front companies tied to al-Qaeda.¹⁵⁹

Designations by Foreign Governments and Organizations:

Australia—listed Al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization on October 21, 2002.¹⁶⁰

Canada—listed Al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization on July 23, 2002.¹⁶¹

EU—listed Al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization on May 27, 2002.¹⁶²

France—designated Al-Qaeda according to rule (CE) n° 881/2002 of May 27, 2002.¹⁶³

India—listed Al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization on April 9, 2002.¹⁶⁴

Israel—listed Al-Qaeda as an Unlawful organization on April 10, 2001.¹⁶⁵

New Zealand—listed Al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization on October 17, 2002.¹⁶⁶

United Arab Emirates—listed Al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization on November 15, 2014.¹⁶⁷

United Nations—listed Osama bin Laden as a terrorist on October 15, 1999.¹⁶⁸

United Kingdom—listed Al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization in March 2001.¹⁶⁹

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Al-Qaeda

Associations:

Ties to Extremist Entities:

Khorsan

The terrorist cell exposed in September 2014 as “the Khorsan Group” is a conglomerate of al-Qaeda fighters integrated or fully embedded within al-Qaeda’s affiliate in Syria, the Nusra Front. President Obama introduced Khorsan to the American public as “seasoned al Qaeda operatives in Syria.”¹⁷⁰ Reports indicate that U.S. internal documents refer to the group as the Khorsan Shura,¹⁷¹ essentially the leadership council of core al-Qaeda. Khorsan is considered by some to be a reallocation of a portion of al-Qaeda’s core leadership to Syria and, by others, to be an externally directed arm of al-Qaeda’s affiliate in Syria. Both of these claims hold that Khorsan’s purpose is to recruit Western jihadists in Syria and redirect them to carrying out attacks against the U.S. and Europe.

Hamas

In 2002, the Washington Post quoted official U.S. government sources as confirming a loose alliance “between al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Hizbullah.”¹⁷⁴ In 2003, Israel arrested three Hamas fighters returning from al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan.¹⁷⁵ That same year, Jordanian security officials confirmed to Time that two Hamas members went on a recruiting mission in Afghanistan in the hopes of bringing al-Qaeda fighters back to the Palestinian territories.¹⁷⁶

ISIS

ISIS was originally an al-Qaeda affiliate in Iraq. Under al-Qaeda’s auspices from October 2004¹⁷⁷ ¹⁷⁸ until February 2014, ISIS, formerly al-Qaeda in Iraq, was responsible for a score of terrorist bombings that resulted in the death of thousands. In February 2014, the two groups split over a leadership dispute when ISIS’s leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, refused to obey al-Qaeda’s leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Muslim Brotherhood

In response to Egypt’s crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, Ayman al-Zawahiri released a video condemning the crackdown and saying, “We call on the people to put their revolution on the right track and undertake slogans calling for Islamic Sharia, the path of freedom, social justice and human dignity.”¹⁷² The Egyptian outlet El-Watan has exposed conversations between Egypt’s former president and member of the Muslim Brotherhood Mohammed Morsi and Ayman al-Zawahiri’s brother, Muhammad al-Zawahiri. According to these conversations, Morsi allegedly colluded with Zawahiri to release terrorists from Egyptian prisons in order to garner support for the Brotherhood.¹⁷³

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is the union of al-Qaeda’s branches in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. AQAP has carried out violent jihadist attacks both domestically and internationally in service of al-Qaeda’s ideology. AQAP is most known for its terrorist plots on U.S. soil, including the Christmas Day Bomber of 2009 and the Times Square Bomber of 2010, as well as its brutal war against the Yemeni government.

Al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab publicly praised al-Qaeda between 2006 and 2008, condemning U.S. oppression of Muslims worldwide. In 2010, the group announced that it sought to “connect the horn of Africa jihad to the one led by al-Qaeda.”¹⁷⁹ Al-Shabaab officially announced its union with al-Qaeda in February 2012. Following Godane’s death in September 2014, the group and its new leader reaffirmed the alignment.¹⁸⁰

Al-Qaeda

Nusra Front

The Nusra Front has a long and proven history of serving as al-Qaeda's loyal affiliate in Syria. In July 2016, however, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri released an audio statement giving the Nusra Front formal permission to break ties with al-Qaeda if the link was "conflicting with [the Nusra Front's] unity and working as one body."¹⁸¹ Hours later, Nusra Front leader Abu Muhammad al-

Golani formally severed ties with al-Qaeda's central command.

¹⁸² Analysts have long surmised that a formal, or at least artificial, break from al-Qaeda could allow the Nusra Front the opportunity to attract more funding from Gulf states, consolidate local support, and present itself as a legitimate insurgent group in Syria.¹⁸³ Even as the Nusra Front formally declared its

independence from al-Qaeda, the group thanked al-Qaeda's leadership for giving "priority to the interests of the people of Al-Sham, their Jihad, [and] their revolution."¹⁸⁴

For years before the announcement, the Nusra Front had reaffirmed its allegiance to al-Zawahiri, even in the face of competing claims to its leadership. In April 2013, after al-Baghdadi unilaterally claimed that the Nusra Front answered to his al-Qaeda in Iraq group (now ISIS), Nusra Front leader Abu Muhammad al-Golani broke ties with ISIS and affirmed its allegiance to al-Qaeda central.¹⁸⁵

Jemaah Islamiyah

Ji's experiences with al-Qaeda jihadists in Afghanistan significantly influenced its doctrine and also served to solidify a connection between Ji and al-Qaeda core.¹⁸⁸ Al-Qaeda core had initially provided a bulk of revenue to Ji also, though Ji members are able to raise their own funds. Some analysts believe the group is still financially connected.¹⁸⁹ Some members of Ji associate with al-Qaeda's formal affiliate in Syria, the Nusra Front, and have joined the group there.¹⁹⁰

Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS)

Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) is al-Qaeda's fifth official chapter.¹⁸⁶ The group was founded in September 2014 at the behest of al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, who appointed Asim Omar as emir (leader) of the new affiliate. Like its parent group, AQIS seeks to wage jihad in order to establish governance by sharia (Islamic law). The affiliate allegedly operates in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Burma, Bangladesh, and Kashmir. Al-Zawahiri stated that AQIS seeks to "rescue" the subcontinent's Muslim population from "injustice, oppression, persecution, and suffering."¹⁸⁷

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)

LeT has had long-standing relationships with al-Qaeda members since the 1980s. In August 1998, LeT fighters were killed when training camps run by Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan were hit by U.S. cruise missiles.¹⁹¹ After 9/11, LeT provided safe havens to al-Qaeda militants, including senior AQ member Abu Zubaydah. Abu Zubaydah was eventually captured by the Pakistani government in 2002.¹⁹² LeT member David Headley, conspired with AQ operative Ilyas Kashmiri in 2009 to plan attacks on a Danish newspaper and other targets in Copenhagen.¹⁹³ Like the Afghan Taliban, al-Qaeda reportedly learned some of its outreach and media techniques from LeT.¹⁹⁴ According to reports, al-Qaeda has tried to poach members from Pakistani-backed jihadist groups such as LeT. Despite cooperating with LeT, al-Qaeda seeks to create an independent jihadist presence in Jammu and Kashmir that operates outside of Pakistan's political interests.¹⁹⁵

Al-Qaeda

Ansar al-Sharia in Libya

ASL is the union of two smaller groups, the Ansar al-Sharia Brigade in Benghazi (ASB) and Ansar al-Sharia Derna (ASD). U.K. Foreign Secretary Phillip Hammond stated that both ASD and ASB “have links with Al Qaeda and are responsible for acts of terror in Libya, including bomb attacks, kidnappings, and murder.”¹⁹⁶ In November 2014, the United Nations sanctioned ASL as an entity associated with al-Qaeda.¹⁹⁷ Many members of ASL are personally connected to al-Qaeda, including former Guantanamo detainee and founder of ASD, Abu Sufyan Bin Qumu. Following the capture of Abu Anas al-Libi, ASL called for the release of the al-Qaeda militant “by all possible means.”¹⁹⁸ The emir of the organization, Mohamad al-Zahawi, has spoken favorably about al-Qaeda. Officially, however, ASL denies any connections to al-Qaeda.

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Ansar al-Islam

Ansar al-Islam is an al-Qaeda affiliate operating in Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula. Hisham Ashmawy, a former captain in the Egyptian special forces, founded the group after defecting from Ansar Bait al-Maqdis when it declared allegiance to ISIS in November 2014.²⁰⁰ Ashmawy is responsible for the May 2013 attempted assassination of former Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim and the June 2015 assassination of Egypt’s top public prosecutor with a car bomb.²⁰¹

Al-Qaeda

Taliban

The Taliban provided a safe haven for al-Qaeda insurgents in Afghanistan prior to the September 11, 2001, terror attacks. In 1996, Osama bin Laden met with Taliban leader Mullah Omar and formally pledged his allegiance and financial backing in exchange for protection from the Taliban.²⁰² During this time, bin Laden established al-Qaeda's 55th Arab Brigade to fight alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan.²⁰³ Leaked memos from the U.S. military Joint Task Force Guantanamo describe the brigade as bin Laden's "primary battle formation supporting Taliban objectives," with bin Laden "participating closely in the command and control of the brigade."²⁰⁴

Following the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, al-Qaeda and the Taliban fled to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, where both organizations began to regroup and retool.²⁰⁵ Al-Qaeda maintained a close relationship with the Taliban following the U.S. invasion. A U.S. intelligence report acquired by Bill Roggio and Thomas Joscelyn from Guantanamo Bay described "a newly-conceived 'unification' of Al Qaeda and Taliban forces within Afghanistan."²⁰⁶ The same report indicated that Mullah Omar and bin Laden "envisioned this new coalition" during a meeting in Pakistan in early spring 2003.²⁰⁷

Following the death of bin Laden in 2011, Ayman al-Zawahiri repeatedly renewed his oath of allegiance to the leader of the Taliban.²⁰⁸ Al-Qaeda leaders have also been featured in Taliban propaganda videos, confirming the continued alliance between the two groups.²⁰⁹

In February 2020, the Taliban reached an agreement with the United States for a U.S. troop drawdown in Afghanistan. Among other commitments, the Taliban agreed to renounce al-Qaeda and prevent al-Qaeda and other groups from using Afghanistan as a base for terrorism against the United States.²¹⁰ Nonetheless, a February 2021 U.S. Department of Defense report found the Taliban were maintaining their links to al-Qaeda.²¹¹

Ties to Other Entities:

Al-Qaeda

Iran

The United States accuses Iran of providing safe haven to al-Qaeda members and knowingly permitting al-Qaeda members, including several of the September 11, 2001, attackers, to travel through its territory. According to the U.S. 9/11 Commission, senior al-Qaeda operatives and trainers traveled to Iran in late 1991 or 1992 to receive explosives training. In 1993, another delegation traveled to Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, a Hezbollah stronghold, for explosives training.²¹²

The 9/11 Commission found that Iran "made a concerted effort to strengthen relations with Al-Qaeda after the October 2000 attack on the USS Cole," but bin Laden did not want to further alienate his supporters in Saudi Arabia.²¹³ While the 9/11 Commission found no evidence that Iran was aware of the plans for the September 11 attacks, the commission reported that Iran had allowed al-Qaeda members to transit through its territory in 2000 and 2001 on their way to Afghanistan.²¹⁴

In 2016, the United States identified and sanctioned three senior al-Qaeda operatives residing in Iran, Faisal Jassim Mohammed al-Amri al-Khalidi, Yisra Muhammad Ibrahim Bayumi, and Abu Bakr Muhammad Ghumayn.²¹⁵ On August 7, 2020, al-Qaeda deputy leader Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah, a.k.a. Abu Muhammad al-Masri, was killed in Tehran, Iran, with his daughter, Miriam, the widow of Hamza bin Laden. Masri was allegedly one of the masterminds of the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Africa. Unidentified intelligence officials alleged that the Iranian government had provided Abdullah with a false identity and cover story.²¹⁶

On January 12, 2021, the United States sanctioned Iran-based al-Qaeda leaders Muhammad Abbatay, a.k.a. Abd al-Rahman al-Maghrebi, and Sultan Yusuf Hasan al-'Arif. The United States also designated three leaders of the al-Qaeda Kurdish Battalions (AQKB), an al-Qaeda-linked group operating on the border between Iran and Iraq. According to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Iran is al-Qaeda's new "home base" and "gives sanctuary to the terror group's senior leaders as they plan attacks against America" and its allies.²¹⁷

The Iranian leadership has denied that there are any al-Qaeda leaders residing in the country or that the regime has any ties to al-Qaeda.²¹⁸

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Al-Qaeda

Media Coverage:

Al-Qaeda's Arab Spring: Decimated or Expanding?

Among the contentious debates that have surrounded al-Qaeda for years is the current state of al-Qaeda's core leadership. Even during the Bush administration in 2005 and 2006, U.S. intelligence said that Al Qaeda's core leadership was "cut off from their foot soldiers," only to reverse that analysis one year later.²¹⁹

The outbreak of mass protests across the Arab world in January 2011, seemingly spontaneous, peaceful and devoid of Islamist underpinnings, caused many analysts to judge that the "Arab Spring" would mark the downfall of al-Qaeda. On May 2, 2011, the *Guardian's* Ian Black wrote that "None of the uprisings...has involved significant Islamist activity – let alone the violent, extremist *jihadi* ideas promoted by Bin Laden...Al-Qaida had already looked marginal and on the back foot for several years. But the dawn of largely peaceful change in the Middle East and North Africa this year rendered it irrelevant."²²⁰

Fawaz Gerges, writing in the *Daily Beast*, asserted that, "Only a miracle will resuscitate a transnational *jihad* of the al-Qaeda variety...the Arab Spring represents a fundamental challenge to the very conditions that fuel extremist ideologies. Time will tell if the Arab revolts will manage to fill the gap of legitimate political authority. If this happens, Arab opinion will deliver the final blow to al Qaeda and its local branches."²²¹

Perhaps the staunchest advocate of this view has been Peter Bergen, an expert on al-Qaeda and terrorism analyst for CNN who was part of the crew that interviewed Bin Laden in 1997. In 2006, he took issue with Bush administration officials who used the terms "on the run" and "decimated" to refer to the state of al-Qaeda at the time, preferring to say that, "Yes, al-Qaeda as an organization is severely impaired, but it has been replaced by a broader ideological movement...motivated by a doctrine that can be called "Binladenism."²²²

But by June 2012, Bergen wrote, "Time to declare victory: al Qaeda is defeated."²²³ Bergen pointed to the assassination of 28 al-Qaeda leaders in Pakistan and Yemen during the Obama administration, and to the fact that al-Qaeda had failed to *successfully* attack the West since the London Underground bombing in July 2005. In Bergen's estimation, Ayman al-Zawahiri "inherited the Blockbuster Video of global *jihad* and has done nothing to resuscitate it."²²⁴

On the other side of the debate are those who say that, despite the assassination of Bin Laden and many other high-level al-Qaeda operative, the organization's expansive affiliate network might make it even more potent. According to Thomas Joscelyn, a terrorism analyst for the *Long War Journal*, "al Qaeda's expansion in recent years has led to more threats against the U.S. Homeland, not less."²²⁵ Joscelyn pointed to numerous plots against the U.S. and Canada since 2009 that nearly succeeded, including the attempted December 25, 2009, bombing of a commercial airline traveling to Detroit, and the May 2010 attempted Times Square car-bombing which proved failed when the explosives failed to detonate.²²⁶

In *Foreign Policy*, Marc Lynch argued in August 2013 that the Arab Spring actually benefitted al-Qaeda. Lynch noted that, "Had the revolutions led to successful democratic transitions, the blow to al Qaeda could well have been fatal," but transitions in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia proved disastrous, and al-Qaeda has been a major player in the Syrian civil war. Rather than marking the end of al-Qaeda, Lynch pointed out that, "The failure of most of the Arab uprisings has therefore been an extraordinary gift to al Qaeda."²²⁷

One month later, after al-Shabab's attack on the Westgate shopping mall in Nariobi, Kenya, the *Economist* published a scathing critique of the Obama administration's counterterrorism strategy that focused on limiting terrorist attacks to local, soft targets away from the homeland. "Mr Obama might argue that the assault on the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi by al-Qaeda's Somali affiliate, the Shabab, was just the kind of thing he was talking about...Yet the inconvenient truth is that, in the past 18 months...al-Qaeda and its jihadist allies have staged an extraordinary comeback. The terrorist network now holds sway over more territory and is recruiting more fighters than at any time in its 25-year history. Mr Obama must reconsider."²²⁸

Osama Bin Laden's Demise

Western media reported on the raid that killed Bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan on May 2, 2011, with relief and jubilation. *Fox News* described the actions of the Navy SEALs team that killed Bin Laden as "heroic."²²⁹ CNN noted that President Obama's announcement of Bin Laden's death "drew cheering crowds to the streets of New York and the gates of the White House." The network interviewed numerous people who lost family members in the 9/11 attacks, including the father of a New York firefighter who praised it as a "win for the United States of America."

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Many outlets also covered the details of how the raid on Bin Laden's compound occurred, the planning that led up to it, as well as the potential backlash from it.²³¹ The *Washington Post* reported reactions from jihadist web sites that threatened attacks on Americans. One user "warned that those who celebrate the killing will face men 'who do not fear death and who will reap your souls,' and another said that "Americans should expect to see 'hell.'"²³²

Days after the raid, many papers also television networks also carried reports on the SEAL Team Six that performed the operation. According to the *Washington Post*, "The team was formed in response to the 1980 American hostages rescue attempt in Iran...They exist outside military protocol and engage in operations that are at the highest level of classification and often outside the boundaries of international law."²³³ CNN interviewed former SEALs who described what it means to be part of the elite unit. One former SEAL said, "Be a quiet professional...There is no room for braggarts in the SEALs. Talking hurts missions and gets people killed." Brandon Webb, former SEAL and author of "The 21st Century Sniper," said that, "They need to go far beyond just being a skilled warrior...The guys behind this mission [to capture or kill bin Laden] have never given anyone a reason to doubt that they are trustworthy and very focused. They are the best of the best."²³⁴

The Western Media and al-Qaeda's Messages

For years, videotapes and audio recordings released by Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri have been gold mines of information about al-Qaeda for Western media outlets. As the manhunt for Bin Laden unfolded after the September 11 attacks, al-Qaeda's tapes served to update the media on the status of key leaders, the group's reaction to certain events, and plans for future operations.

In June 2002, the *New York Times* reported on an al-Qaeda audio tape, broadcast by Al Jazeera, which claimed responsibility for a synagogue bombing in Tunisia and "dismissed reports that Mr. bin Laden and his main lieutenant, Ayman al-Zawahiri, had been killed or wounded during the American-led assault on the Tora Bora area of Afghanistan."²³⁵

In March 2004, Al Jazeera broadcast an audio recording of al-Zawahiri just days after Pakistan thought it was closing in on his location along the Afghanistan border. The *Guardian* noted that, while the voice had not been authenticated as al-Zawahiri's, "Its appearance yesterday suggested a deliberate taunting of the Pakistani government and military over their failure to capture him."²³⁶

Another video from al-Zawahiri in February 2005 criticized the U.S. for trying to spread democracy, warning that it "will end with your defeat, the killing of your sons and the destruction of your economy." Trying to determine when al-Zawahiri recorded the message, CNN reported on his comment that it had been about three years the U.S. began detaining prisoners in the war on terrorism at Guantanamo Bay. According to CNN, "It could not be determine when or where the Ayman al-Zawahiri tape was recorded, but...The United States did move Taliban detainees early in 2002 from Afghanistan to [Guantanamo Bay], where there have been allegations that some of them were tortured."²³⁷

In April 2008, another audio message from al-Zawahiri suggested to media outlets that al-Qaeda may have been changing its tactics and public relations strategy. According to the *Christian Science Monitor*, the fact that al-Zawahiri answered critical questions from users on al-Qaeda internet forums "suggested that dissent among its supporters may be forcing Al Qaeda to change tactics..." Another signal that the group was changing tactics was al-Zawahiri's denials about targeting innocent civilians. When a web user asked him who was killing innocent people in "Baghdad, Morocco, and Algeria," al-Zawahiri responded that, "If there is any innocent who was killed in the Mujahideen's operations, then it was either an unintentional error or out of necessity."²³⁸

In August 2011, months after Osama Bin Laden was killed, a video message from al-Zawahiri telling his followers to, "Hunt [America] down wherever you may encounter her," prompted ABC News to wonder if the tape was intended as a 9/11 message.²³⁹

Finally, CNN described an April 2014 video released by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula as "unsettling" after it showed deputy emir Nasir al-Wuhayshi being greeted by followers. The report warned that the U.S. has "good reason to worry," because as Peter Bergen noted, "The main problem about this group is that it has a bomb maker who can put bombs on to planes that can't be detected."²⁴⁰

Broadcasting al-Qaeda's Message on Arab Satellite Television

Beginning in 1999, Arabic satellite network Al Jazeera became the preferred media outlet for al-Qaeda to broadcast its interviews and video tape

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messages. In a January 1999 interview on the network, Bin Laden praised the bombings of U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.²⁴¹ In September 2000, Al Jazeera broadcast a videotape that showed Bin Laden, three Egyptian clerics, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and others demanding the release of Omar Abdul Rahman, the “blind sheikh” who is serving a life sentence for planning the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and several other unsuccessful attacks.²⁴²

The network continued broadcasting al-Qaeda’s videotapes for years after September 11, 2001, including on subsequent anniversaries of the attacks, allowing the group to claim responsibility for attacks, threaten future attacks, and provide proof to millions of viewers that its leaders were still alive.²⁴³

However, the network did not simply act as a propaganda machine for al-Qaeda. As Marc Lynch, a professor at George Washington University, noted in 2006, Al Jazeera would bring in experts to discuss the tapes issued by Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri on air, which in one instance “transformed Zawahiri’s lecture into a dialogue and denied him the monopoly on political discourse he so craved.” In another instance when Bin Laden released a tape, the network “invited the able, Arabic-speaking American diplomat Alberto Fernandez to respond.”²⁴⁴

The London Underground Bombing

On the day of the July 7, 2005 bombings in London, *The Guardian* reported on the events with minute-by-minute updates. During its coverage on that day, the paper refrained from drawing conclusions about links to Islamic extremism.²⁴⁵ The only piece of reporting that attributed the attacks to al-Qaeda was a quote from then-Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, who said that the bombings bore the “hallmarks of an [al-Qaeda] related attack.”²⁴⁶

According to the *International Herald Tribune*, British media reacted cautiously while reporting the bombings. The BBC London talk-radio station reportedly urged callers to the station “not to speculate wildly, but to report only what they had seen.” The paper also noted that BBC News, “in order to report fairly what [was] happening,” also waited almost two and a half hours after the initial bomb exploded to report on “the possibility that the bombings might be the work of [al-Qaeda].” According to the BBC’s then head of television, “It was a terrible, dreadful event, but it wasn’t like 9/11, where you had this sense of all of America under attack...the fact is that much of London was functioning normally.”²⁴⁷

The day after the bombing, the *New York Times* ran an op-ed piece by Peter Bergen, an expert on al-Qaeda and CNN terrorism analyst, who warned that “one of the greatest terrorist threats to the United States emanates not from domestic sleeper cells or, as is popularly imagined, from the graduates of Middle Eastern madrassas, but from some of the citizens of its closest ally, Britain.”²⁴⁸ The same day, another op-ed in the paper from Thomas Friedman discussed the likely fall out from the attacks. “When jihadist-style bombings happen in Riyadh, that is a Muslim-Muslim problem...But when Al-Qaeda-like bombings come to the London Underground, that becomes a civilizational problem. Every Muslim living in a Western society suddenly becomes a suspect, becomes a potential walking bomb.”²⁴⁹

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Al-Qaeda

Rhetoric:

Al-Shabaab Propaganda Video, August 2019

“One of Harakat Al-Shabaab Al-Mujahideen’s main objectives is to topple the apostate Somali regime and destroy its foundations in order to liberate the country and its people and cleanse the land from the filth of crusaders and apostates so that the Muslims of East Africa can once again regain their freedom and dignity under the shade of Islamic Shari’ah.”²⁵⁰

Hamza bin Laden, April 5, 2018

“Oh Muslim merchants, this is a chance for he who wants to obtain the honor of preparing an army to protect the Two Holy Mosques, and oh young Muslims, go forth lightly and heavily to your mujahidin brothers in Yemen the Land of Faith, to prepare the equipment and gain the necessary experience from them.”²⁵¹

Hamza bin Laden, January 2018

Excerpt from a video where he denounces Saudi Arabia’s alliance with the West and uniting with the British Empire against the Ottoman Empire:

“So look—may Allah have mercy on you—how Ibn Saud made himself an obedient representative to the British occupant power, and an agent to it, where he surrendered everything that he can surrender in return for receiving money and weapons from it to fight the allies of the Ottomans. So would it be right after all this for him to become an idol for the Islamic Ummah? Through this, Ibn Saud terminated his loyalty to the Islamic Ummah outside his borders, and made himself a delegate for the Crusaders and a representative for them.”²⁵²

Hamza bin Laden, December 2017

Excerpt from a video in which bin Laden calls for the overthrow of the Saudi Arabian regime following President Trump’s decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel:

“Indeed, the duty towards this family that betrayed the religion, the Ummah and the sanctities, is to remove and eradicate them, and establish in their place the law of Allah the Great and Almighty.”²⁵³

Hamza bin Laden, November 2017

“I invite Muslims generally to take revenge on the Americans, the murderers of the Sheikh [Bin Laden], specifically from those who participated in this heinous crime.”²⁵⁴

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