

## *AQAP (Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula)*

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**Name:** AQAP (Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula)

**Type of Organization:**

- Insurgent
- non-state actor
- religious
- terrorist
- transnational
- violent

**Ideologies and Affiliations:**

- Al-Qaeda affiliated group
- Islamist
- jihadist
- Qutbist
- Salafist
- Sunni
- takfiri

**Place of Origin:**

Saudi Arabia and Yemen

**Year of Origin:**

2009

**Founder(s):**

Nasir al-Wuhayshi, Said al-Shihri, Qasim al-Raymi, Mohamad al-Awfi

**Places of Operation:**

Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Abroad

**Overview**

*Executive Summary:*

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. Although the group carries out most of its attacks inside Yemen, AQAP is widely known for carrying out the fatal shooting at the Paris offices of French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015, as well as for its involvement in terrorist plots on U.S. soil, including the "Christmas Day Bomber" in 2009 and the "Times Square Bomber" in 2010.

After Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh's removal from office in early 2012, AQAP took advantage of the fractured political scene by establishing an insurgency in southern Yemen. Since Yemen descended into civil war in 2015, AQAP has benefited from the political vacuum by attempting to develop its own pseudo-state in the southern region. The civil war has coincidentally strengthened AQAP by causing Western forces to withdraw and the Yemeni and Saudi Arabia forces to focus on the opposing [Houthi](#) rebels.<sup>1</sup> AQAP has been further strengthened by the material support its affiliates have received from the anti-Houthi coalition, as the coalition often turns a blind-eye to AQAP and its affiliates and regularly enters into alliances with the group.<sup>2</sup> In fact, three associates of the Saudi-backed President Mansour al-Hadi have appeared on a U.S. Treasury list of global terrorists for allegedly providing financial support to, and acting on behalf of, AQAP.<sup>3</sup> The United States responded with an expanded counterterrorism campaign, consisting primarily of drone strikes against AQAP leaders. An Associated Press investigation in August 2018 accused both the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia of integrating former AQAP fighters into their allied Yemeni forces. The

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report found that the UAE had paid local tribes, whose members were at the time allied with AQAP, in order to convince them to switch sides and help force out AQAP militants from those areas.<sup>4</sup> Senior UAE commanders further confirmed that they recruited “many AQAP ‘fighters’ [who] were just young men under their [AQAP] control who were coerced or persuaded to take up arms.”<sup>5</sup>

AQAP operates throughout Yemen, primarily in the country’s southern and central regions.<sup>6</sup> In many of these provinces, AQAP governs small pockets of territory with sharia (Islamic law) courts and a heavily armed militia. AQAP attempts to appeal to the Yemeni people by meeting their basic needs and integrating into the local population, including by conforming to the local governance structures. According to a February 2017 report by the International Crisis Group, AQAP has successfully presented itself as “part of a wider Sunni front against Houthi expansion,” further providing the organization with local allies and room to operate in the country.<sup>7</sup> In addition to controlling territory in Yemen, AQAP is believed to pose a major terrorist threat to the United States.<sup>8</sup> AQAP has also targeted the forces of the Southern Transitional Council (STC), the United Arab Emirates-backed faction fighting against Yemen’s Houthi rebels.<sup>9</sup>

### *Doctrine:*

In the group’s inaugural video in 2009, AQAP’s former leader [Nasir al-Wuhayshi](#) announced the merging of al-Qaeda affiliates in Saudi Arabia and Yemen to form AQAP. In the video, Wuhayshi formally declared the group’s intention to avenge its enemies “with blood and destruction,” in order to establish an Islamic Caliphate and implement Sharia law.<sup>10</sup>

Wuhayshi ended his opening speech with prayers tailored to AQAP’s goals:

“O Allah! Bring conquest over the Holy Mosque and the Haramain [highway from Mecca to Medina] by our hands! O Allah Give us the honor by establishing the Islamic State with our hands!”<sup>11</sup>

An AQAP document from 2012 expanded on these objectives. According to the document, AQAP’s primary goals are to “[e]xpel the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula” and “[e]stablish the Islamic Caliphate and Shari’ah rule which the apostate governments have suspended.”<sup>12</sup>

In pursuing these ends, AQAP champions a violent interpretation of jihad and offers a number of ways Muslims can support its agenda, such as “[i]nform[ing] the Mujahideen [jihadists] about spies and the presence of Jews, Christians and the greatest criminals.” AQAP also encourages Muslims to “[b]e hostile to and hate the infidel” and “[r]aise children to love Jihad.”<sup>13</sup>

As a formal affiliate of al-Qaeda, AQAP’s ideology and practices fall in line with al-Qaeda’s broader goals of working towards global Islamist domination. AQAP seeks to execute its Islamist mission through violent jihad, and is believed to be the al-Qaeda affiliate most ideologically similar to al-Qaeda’s core.<sup>14</sup> Although the group is based in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, members have attempted to carry out terrorist plots worldwide.

### *Organizational Structure:*

According to a 2010 report from the think-tank New America, AQAP is “compartmentalized and hierarchical, with a distinct division of labor. It has a political leader who provides overall direction, a military chief to plan operational details, a propaganda wing that seeks to draw in recruits, and a religious branch that tries to justify attacks from a theological perspective while offering spiritual guidance.”<sup>15</sup>

Since mid-2017, however, AQAP has suffered from losses to its leadership and field commanders due to extensive Yemeni and international counterterrorism operations, according to the U.N. Analytical Support Sanctions Monitoring Team’s July 2018 report.<sup>16</sup> Notably in late 2017, AQAP’s chief bomb maker [Ibrahim al-Asiri](#) was killed, creating an operational vacuum, as well as senior propagandist Abu Hajar al-Makki, severely disrupting the group’s propaganda efforts. Additionally, when senior cleric [Ibrahim al-Rubaish](#) was killed in 2015, AQAP left his position vacant before eventually appointing Yemeni jihadist Abdullah Mubarak to serve as the “new sharia official” more than two years later.<sup>17</sup>

In 2011, AQAP created a domestic affiliate called Ansar al Sharia (AAS). According to the International Crisis Group, AAS serves as AQAP’s domestic insurgent arm, drawing in recruits who has been wary of AQAP, “which many Yemenis view as a regime instrument ... and likely to trigger a military backlash.”<sup>18</sup>

### *Political branch*

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AQAP was most recently headed by Khalid Batarfi, until his alleged arrest by Yemeni forces on October 2, 2020.<sup>19</sup> AQAP later refuted reports of Batarfi's arrest and featured him in a new video referencing events from January 2021.<sup>20</sup> Batarfi was named emir following the death of AQAP emir and co-founder, [Qasim al-Raymi](#), in a U.S. drone strike in January 2020.<sup>21</sup> Raymi filled this position on June 16, 2015, one day after former AQAP leader Nasir al-Wuhayshi died in a U.S. drone strike. Little is known about Raymi's specific role, but it is suspected that he has inherited Wuhayshi's responsibilities.<sup>22</sup> Wuhayshi was responsible for directing AQAP's entire program, as well as overseeing all of its individual branches. According to a classified U.S. State Department cable published by WikiLeaks, Wuhayshi's duties specifically included "approving targets, recruiting new members, allocating resources to training and attack planning, and tasking others to carry out attacks."<sup>23</sup>

### *Military branch*

The group's military branch plans all of AQAP's violent attacks, such as bomb and suicide missions, as well as guerilla attacks against the Yemeni government and military. It also organizes AQAP's kidnapping operations and robberies. Crucial to AQAP's military branch was its chief bomb maker, [Ibrahim al-Asiri](#). Asiri was responsible for AQAP's most high-profile bombing attempts, including the "Christmas Day Bomber" attempt in 2009 and the "Times Square Bomber" attempt in 2010. He was reportedly killed in a U.S. drone strike in late 2017.<sup>24</sup> U.N. experts consider his death a serious setback to AQAP's operational capabilities.<sup>25</sup> In 2018, AQAP appointed several regional leaders as well as a new "military commander," a lesser-known jihadist called Ammar al-San'ani.<sup>26</sup>

### *Propaganda branch*

AQAP relies heavily on its propaganda branch to attract recruits and build its base of support. This branch is also responsible for outreach beyond AQAP's base in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. One of AQAP's most notorious recruiters is [Anwar al-Awlaki](#), who directed the "Christmas Day Bomber" in 2009<sup>27</sup> and was linked to the Fort Hood shooter in 2009<sup>28</sup> and the "Times Square Bomber" in 2010.<sup>29</sup> AQAP has a media channel entitled "al-Malahem," which has been called AQAP's "official propaganda arm."<sup>30</sup> Al-Malahem publishes a bi-monthly magazine in Arabic directed at its Yemeni audience, as well as an English-language periodical called *Inspire* directed at its Western audience.<sup>31</sup>

AQAP also publishes *al-Masra*, a digital newsletter that is released several times per month. Though *al-Masra* is produced by AQAP, it includes news updates on the entire al-Qaeda network. For recruitment purposes, *al-Masra* also provides al-Qaeda's take on high-profile political developments in Western countries.<sup>32</sup>

According to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), in December 2017, the United States and its allies repeatedly targeted AQAP's propaganda officials in counterterrorism operations, disrupting and reducing the group's propaganda production capabilities. For example, al-Malahem lost its main propagandist, Abu Hajar al-Makki, in an airstrike in 2017, and *al-Masra* was unable to maintain its ability to produce three publications per month.<sup>33</sup> In an attempt to revitalize AQAP's media operations, al-Badr Media Foundation announced its presence online in May 2018. The media group aims to refute so-called rumors about AQAP—in particular those perpetuated by Western and Arab media, incite Muslims to join their cause, and increase "security awareness" among the group. On May 24, al-Badr released its first publication via Telegram, a collection of statements and tips on how to avoid detection by U.S. drones and surveillance measures.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, AQAP senior leader Khalid Batarfi, a prominent spokesperson, appears to have taken over the group's propaganda operations to strengthen AQAP's global portfolio.<sup>35</sup> On February 23, 2020, following the death of former AQAP leader Qasim al-Raymi in a U.S. drone strike, AQAP confirmed that Batarfi was the group's new leader.<sup>36</sup> On October 2, Batarfi allegedly turned himself over to Yemeni forces following a Saudi-led raid in al-Mahrah.<sup>37</sup> A February 2021 U.N. report noted Batarfi's arrest that October. However, U.S. military officials cast doubt on reports of Batarfi's arrest.<sup>38</sup> In February 2021, AQAP released a new video featuring Batarfi and referencing events in January 2021.<sup>39</sup> An April 2021 AQAP statement outright accused the United Nations of lying about Batarfi.<sup>40</sup> While AQAP has refuted news of Batarfi's capture, there are reports that AQAP is not united behind his leadership. AQAP's February 2020 statement announcing Batarfi's appointment also stated the decision came amid a U.S. drone assault on the group's leaders, preventing the group from consulting its entire leadership on the appointment. The inclusion of the statement suggests Batarfi may not have unanimous support.<sup>41</sup>

### *Religious branch*

AQAP's religious branch was headed by senior cleric and former Guantanamo detainee [Ibrahim al-Rubaish](#). As "mufti" of AQAP, Rubaish carried the authority within AQAP to issue fatwas (religious rulings). Rubaish also released public statements in response to prominent religious clerics from around the world in order to advocate for AQAP's behavior and seek to justify its violent ideology.<sup>42</sup> In this way, AQAP's religious

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branch serves as an extension of its propaganda branch. As AQAP anticipates the eventual institution of sharia (Islamic law), the group also maintains a designated religious expert. On April 13, 2015, AQAP confirmed that Rubaish was killed in a U.S. airstrike near the southern coastal city of Mukalla.<sup>43</sup> Nearly two years later, AQAP's emir Qasim al-Raymi appointed Abdullah Mubarak, a Yemeni jihadist, as AQAP's "new sharia official."<sup>44</sup>

### *Financing:*

According to the U.S. State Department, AQAP's funding comes primarily from "theft, robberies, oil and gas revenue, kidnap-for-ransom operations, and donations from like-minded supporters."<sup>45</sup>

In a 2012 letter to Algerian allies, AQAP founder Nasir al-Wuhayshi wrote that "most of the battle costs, if not all, were paid for through the spoils. Almost half the spoils [for a year-long operation in Yemen] came from hostages." Wuhayshi then called kidnapping "an easy spoil, which I may describe as a profitable trade and a precious treasure."<sup>46</sup> Between 2011 and 2013, AQAP received approximately \$30 million in ransom payments.<sup>47</sup>

In addition to taking hostages, AQAP relies heavily on heists and armed robberies. In August 2009, WikiLeaks revealed that suspected AQAP members stole an estimated \$500,000 in a single heist.<sup>48</sup> There have also been reports of AQAP partaking in gun and drug smuggling, as well as local sex trafficking through forced marriages.<sup>49</sup> According to Yemeni analyst Ahmad Abd Allah al-Sufi, the group has trafficked opium.<sup>50</sup>

AQAP held Yemen's third-largest port from April 2015 to April 2016, which allegedly generated millions of dollars for the group. The southeastern Yemeni port city of Mukalla purportedly housed 1,000 AQAP fighters, who controlled nearly 375 miles of the coastline. According to Yemeni officials and local tribal leaders, AQAP fighters patrolled the waters off its controlled coast and imposed taxes and tariffs on passing ships.<sup>51</sup> In this way, the terrorist group has reportedly generated between another two to five million a day from its port revenue.<sup>52</sup> The Mukalla port, which has since been seized by forces from the United Arab Emirates, also reportedly functions as a hub for smuggling fuel.<sup>53</sup>

AQAP has stolen from numerous banks across Yemen. While AQAP held Mukalla, the militants looted the city's central bank branch, netting an estimated \$100 million.<sup>54</sup> According to Yemeni security officials, the looting represented AQAP's "biggest financial gain to date" and was "enough to fund them at the level they have been operating at for at least another 10 years."<sup>55</sup> This access to additional sources of revenue discontinued when Yemeni government forces retook control of Mukalla in April 2016.<sup>56</sup>

As a result of AQAP's violent operations, the group is largely self-funded.<sup>57</sup> However, another source of AQAP funding is donations from fraudulent charities<sup>58</sup> and "like-minded supporters,"<sup>59</sup> most of whom are reportedly Saudi nationals.<sup>60</sup>

### *Recruitment:*

AQAP has turned to print, digital, and social media to bolster recruitment.

In 2010, AQAP launched an English online magazine, *Inspire*, to reach Western sympathizers and potential recruits. *Inspire* answers questions about AQAP and its mission and how to support them, from building homemade bombs to calls for lone wolf attacks in the United States. Analyst Gregory Johnsen has said that *Inspire* helps AQAP "reach, influence and inspire other like-minded individuals in the west. No longer do these individuals need to travel to Yemen or read Arabic in order to take instructions from AQAP. Now they can just download and read the magazine in English."<sup>61</sup>

*Inspire*'s first issue in July 2010 included an article titled, "Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom," which described how to make a bomb using everyday items.<sup>62</sup> The August 2014 issue contained a nine-page guide on how to make car bombs, and suggested terror targets in the United Kingdom and the United States.<sup>63</sup> Its December 2014 issue featured instructions on how to make a bomb that could evade airport security. The July 2017 issue elaborated on targeting public transportation as well as train derailing operations. It also analyzed recent lone jihad operations in Western countries—such as the 2016 Nice attack in France that killed 86 people—and referenced lessons learned. AQAP also highlighted these attacks in a series of five publications called "Inspire Guide."<sup>64</sup> In May 2017, AQAP released a video message of Qasim al-Raymi encouraging lone wolf attacks in the West—the first using the "Inspire Address" banner.<sup>65</sup>

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In 2012, AQAP released a recruitment guide called *Expectations Full*, primarily written by [Samir Khan](#), the late editor of *Inspire*. The guide calls on potential Western-based recruits to forgo traveling to the region and requests they instead target America.<sup>66</sup> According to the guide, “attacking the enemy in their backyard” is one of the most helpful missions recruits can undertake, even more than fighting together with AQAP in Yemen.<sup>67</sup>

AQAP turned to social media in 2012, posting messages on jihadist websites and forums to attract western recruits. One Arabic-language message on the Shumukh and al-Fidaa jihadist forums, posted by a user claiming to be a member of AQAP’s military committee, calls on recruits to launch suicide missions in their home countries. According to the post, “individual jihad or the so-called lone wolf has become popular.”<sup>68</sup> The messages provide email addresses for recruits to contact AQAP.

In recent years, AQAP has continued to exploit the opportunities for recruitment provided by social media sites. On Twitter, for example, as soon as an AQAP account is shut down, another emerges almost immediately, typically using a new name (“handle”) with one character amended. In November 2014, AQAP even launched its own “AMA” (Ask Me Anything) Twitter account, providing official answers to questions such as “Why haven’t there been further AQAP attacks inside the US? Why don’t you move the war from Yemen to US soil?” The job of resolving such queries from prospective jihadists falls to [Nasser bin Ali al-Ansi](#), the AQAP senior official who claimed responsibility for the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in January 2015.<sup>69</sup>

According to one spy who infiltrated AQAP, the group is increasingly demanding that prospective recruits coming to Yemen, Oman, Syria, and other Middle Eastern states have clean passports and clean names. Anyone who is suspected of being subject to government surveillance is excluded from the recruitment net.<sup>70</sup>

Since [ISIS](#) established its own affiliate branch in Yemen in November 2014, AQAP and ISIS have competed for recruits and influence, each seeking to dominate the Salafi-jihadist movement in Yemen.<sup>71</sup> According to Yemeni officials, a “real competition” developed between the groups in 2015, despite the fact that AQAP supporters numbered in the hundreds and ISIS supporters only in the dozens.<sup>72</sup> Some AQAP cells have reportedly switched allegiance to ISIS due to factors such as ISIS’s global reputation for victory and a higher pay rate.<sup>73</sup>

Since the start of 2015, AQAP has been seizing territory throughout southern Yemen and providing public services to the local population. As a result of the Yemeni insurgency, many of the southern regions’ security forces have left to fight alongside the coalition forces against the Houthi rebels in the north. AQAP has been attempting to fill the political vacuum to reportedly gain the trust of the southern population. In late March 2015, AQAP unveiled a new well in Yemen’s southern, arid Hadramaut region. According to Middle East analyst Thomas Joscelyn, AQAP attempts to embed itself in the local population as opposed to gaining their submission through brutal violence, as ISIS has done in its strongholds in Iraq and Syria.<sup>74</sup> AQAP has reportedly constructed bridges, dug wells, built roads, and provided humanitarian assistance throughout the southern region and has highlighted these efforts on its social media accounts and in its Arabic-language propaganda magazine, *al-Masra*.<sup>75</sup> According to Jamestown Foundation analyst Michael Horton, AQAP’s “more covert strategy” has enabled it “to expand its ties to local communities and to further enmesh itself within some forces battling the Houthis and their allies.”<sup>76</sup> Nonetheless, AQAP has also resorted to cash payments in exchange for support after the it seized control of Mukalla in April 2015.<sup>77</sup>

According to the U.N. experts, AQAP had an estimated 6,000 to 7,000 fighters in Yemen in 2018, representing an increase from U.S. estimates in 2017 of “the low thousands.”<sup>78</sup> Dr. Gregory Johnsen, member of the U.N. Security Council’s Panel of Experts on Yemen, notes that while the latest membership figures are accurate, they can be misleading. Even though AQAP’s domestic insurgency has recorded an influx of recruits, the terror group has not increased as a threat to the West. He stated: “Contrary to the picture painted by the numbers, AQAP is the weakest it has ever been. Decimated by drone strikes and challenged by rivals, its international terrorist side is a shadow of its former self. Only its domestic insurgency side—bolstered by Yemen’s messy war—is growing.”<sup>79</sup>

AQAP’s numbers depleted in the ensuing years after the 2018 report. A February 2022 report by the United Nations’ Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team to the U.N. Security Council estimated AQAP maintains approximately 3,000 fighters is suffering from internal disputes and military offensives but nonetheless continues to present a “significant threat.”<sup>80</sup> According to the monitoring team, there were no reports of significant numbers of foreign terrorist fighters arriving in Yemen to replenish AQAP’s ranks, with the exception of limited numbers of African migrants recruited to entry-level positions. The monitoring team reported AQAP is also reluctant to welcome largescale migrant recruitment because of prior infiltration attempts. The report noted AQAP retains its leading role in distributing al-Qaeda propaganda to supporters and potential recruits. Further, AQAP is consolidating its foothold in Yemen’s central and eastern provinces. The report charged AQAP is exploiting Yemen’s civil war to relocate its territorial base to the southern provinces of Abyan, Bayda, and Shabwa, as well as the eastern provinces of Hadramout and

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Mahrah.<sup>81</sup>

### *Training:*

AQAP's primary stronghold is located in the al-Mahfad area of the Abyan Province in southern Yemen.<sup>82</sup> In May 2014, a Yemeni official remarked that AQAP training camps were the "most active" in the al-Mahfad region.<sup>83</sup> AQAP training camps also operate in the governorates of Shabwa, Hadramawt, and Marib.<sup>84</sup>

On July 14, 2016, AQAP released a video showing its so-called special forces training at the Hamza al Zinjibari training camp in southern Yemen. The video depicts AQAP fighters conducting weapons training, physical workouts, live fire scenarios, and martial arts training. Senior AQAP member and former Guantanamo Bay detainee [Ibrahim al-Qosi](#) was highlighted in the film stating "thousands of" AQAP fighters have been trained in these types of camps, which has "had a clear impact in different jihadi fronts."<sup>85</sup> The video also exhibits the militants' abilities to conduct assaults and kidnappings using SUVs and motorcycles.

[Said Kouachi](#), one of the perpetrators of the January 2015 attack on *Charlie Hebdo's* offices in Paris, trained with AQAP in Yemen between 2009 and 2011.<sup>86</sup> According to a senior Yemeni security official, Kouachi trained in and around Dammaj, a town in northwest Yemen that is home to the country's largest Salafist school.<sup>87</sup> Kouachi is believed to have trained in camps in the surrounding area in which hundreds of foreigners would train in "unmonitored... AQAP-controlled areas."<sup>88</sup>

AQAP has also disseminated training guides amongst recruits and sympathizers. AQAP's largest guide, the "Encyclopedia of Jihad,"<sup>89</sup> is a collection of "textbooks" that includes information on "making explosives; first aid; use of pistols, grenades and mines; espionage; security precautions; acts of sabotage; secure communication; brainwashing; reconnaissance; infiltration; how to attack; the history and design of tanks; physical fitness; use of compasses; how to read maps; and use of artillery guns, machine guns and armor-piercing weapons."<sup>90</sup> There are only 30 copies of the "Encyclopedia." Trainees were required to write down the text as it was dictated to them. The "Encyclopedia" became available on the Internet, in Arabic, in 2003.<sup>91</sup>

### *Also Known As:*

- Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula<sup>92</sup>
- Al-Qaida al-Jihad in the Arabian Peninsula<sup>93</sup>
- Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula<sup>94</sup>
- Al-Qaida Organization in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)<sup>95</sup>
- Al-Quaida Organization in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)<sup>96</sup>
- Al-Qaida of Jihad Organization in the Arabian Peninsula<sup>97</sup>
- Al-Qaida of Jihad Organization in the Arabian Peninsula<sup>98</sup>
- Al-Qaida in Yemen (AQY)<sup>99</sup>
- Al-Qa'ida in Yemen (AQY)<sup>100</sup>
- Al-Qaida in the South Arabian Peninsula<sup>101</sup>
- Al-Qa'ida in the South Arabian Peninsula<sup>102</sup>
- Al-Quaida in the South Arabian Peninsula<sup>103</sup>
- Ansar al-Shari'a (AAS)<sup>104</sup>
- Ansar al-Sharia (AAS)<sup>105</sup>
- Ansar al Shariah<sup>106</sup>
- Ansar al-Shariah<sup>107</sup>
- Civil Council of Hadramawt<sup>108</sup>
- Jama'at Ansar al-Shari'a<sup>109</sup>
- National Hadramawt Council<sup>110</sup>
- Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi-Jazirat al-Arab<sup>111</sup>
- Sons of Abyan<sup>112</sup>
- Sons of Hadramawt<sup>113</sup>
- Sons of Hadramawt Committee<sup>114</sup>
- Supporters of Sharia<sup>115</sup>
- Partisans of Islamic Law<sup>116</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Katharine Zimmerman, "AQAP: A Resurgent Threat," Combating Terrorism Center, September 11, 2015, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/aqap-a-resurgent-threat>.

<sup>2</sup> "Yemen's al-Qaeda: Expanding the Base," International Crisis Group, February 2, 2017, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/174-yemen-s-al-qaeda-expanding-the-base.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> "Yemen's al-Qaeda: Expanding the Base," International Crisis Group, February 2, 2017, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/174-yemen-s-al-qaeda-expanding-the-base.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Maggie Michael, "US official says UAE paid Yemen tribes to push al-Qaida out," *Washington Times*, August 15, 2018, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/aug/15/us-official-says-uae-paid-yemen-tribes-to-push-al-/>.

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**Key Leaders**



**Qasim al-Raymi**

Emir (leader) of AQAP



**Ibrahim al-Asiri**

Chief bomb maker



**Khalid Batarfi**

Leader, media specialist,  
propagandist, military commander



**Ibrahim al-Qosi**

Foreign fighter, facilitator, Osama  
bin Laden's close aide



**Ammar al-San'ani**

Military commander



**Abdullah Mubarak**

Religious leader, "sharia official"

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### History:

- **February 26, 2023:** An alleged U.S. drone strike kills two AQAP operatives in Marib.  
According to a March 5 announcement by AQAP, the drone targeted a house in Marib where AQAP media chief Hamad al-Tamimi and another AQAP member were staying, killing them both. The CIA refused comment when questioned by the Associated Press. Three Yemeni tribal elders told the Associated Press the attack targeted a house where Tamimi was living in the Wadi Ubaydah area, near the location of January's alleged U.S. strike killed three suspected AQAP members. Source: Ahmed Al-Haj, "Al-Qaida says 2 operatives killed in drone strike in Yemen," Associated Press, March 6, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/yemen-alqaida-drone-strike-militants-killed-d347e33db607130b613a49306543b9e0>.
- **January 30, 2023:** An alleged U.S. airstrike kills three suspected AQAP members in the Wadi Ubaydah area of Marib.  
One of the suspects is identified as an AQAP bombmaker but the three men are reportedly not high-level members of the group. According to media and weapons experts' analysis of the wreckage, the strike employed the Hellfire R9X, a.k.a. the "flying Ginsu" or "knife bomb," which is used predominately by U.S. forces and typically for high-level targets. The White House declines comment on the strike. Source: Ahmed Al-Haj and Jon Gambrel, "Mystery Yemen drone strike renews questions over US campaign," Associated Press, February 10, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/al-qaida-ayman-zawahri-united-states-government-military-technology-yemen-860d86430603dc36ea786e72e09438c1>.
- **July 23, 2022:** Amid reports that AQAP is attempting a comeback, Yemeni special forces launch an offensive in the southern governorate of Abyan.  
The elite counterterrorism troops launched the campaign after learning from local residents that AQAP militants were gathering in remote valleys and mountains to resurge in Abyan. Source: Saeed Al-Batati, "Yemeni troops launch campaign against Al-Qaeda," Arab News, July 3, 2022, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2115966/middle-east>.
- **May 22, 2022:** AQAP's media outlet releases a video titled "Harvest of Spies 6" that threatens spies who collaborate with the U.S. and local government forces.  
Source: "Jihad and Terrorism Threat Monitor (JTTM) Weekly: May 21 - 28, 2022," Middle East Media Research Institute, May 26, 2022, <https://www.memri.org/reports/jihad-and-terrorism-threat-monitor-jttm-weekly-may-21-28-2022>.
- **May 20, 2022:** The U.S. Department of State revokes its designation of Ibrahim al-Rubaish as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT).  
Rubaish was a senior cleric, or mufti, of AQAP and he was responsible for issuing religious rulings and providing theological justifications for the group's acts of terror. Rubaish was killed in a U.S. drone strike in Yemen on April 12, 2015, according to AQAP. Sources: "Revocation of Five Foreign Terrorist Organizations Designations and the Delisting of Six Deceased Individuals as Specially Designated Global Terrorists," U.S. Department of State, May 20, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/revocation-of-five-foreign-terrorist-organizations-designations-and-the-delisting-of-six-deceased-individuals-as-specially-designated-global-terrorists>; "Rewards for Justice - Reward Offers for Information on Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) Leaders," U.S. Department of State, October 14, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/10/232932.htm>; Polly Mosendz, "Ibrahim al-Rubaish, Top Al-Qaeda Leader in Yemen, Killed in Drone Strike," Newsweek, April 14, 2015, <http://www.newsweek.com/ibrahim-al-rubaish-top-al-qaeda-leader-yemen-killed-drone-strike-322277>.
- **March 17, 2022:** AQAP announces the death of Ammar al-Sanani, a high-ranking military commander.  
Al-Sanani was allegedly killed in a U.S. airstrike in Marib governorate, central Yemen. Details of when the strike occurred were not released. Source: "Gulf of Aden Security Review," Critical Threats, March 18, 2022, <https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/gulf-of-aden-security-review/gulf-of-aden-security-review-march-18-2022>.
- **February 3, 2022:** A report on ISIS and al-Qaeda activities to the U.N. Security Council by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team notes AQAP is suffering from internal disputes and military offensives but nonetheless continues to present a "significant threat."  
According to the report, AQAP maintains its focus on foreign targets and plans for external operational capability but its priority to establish control over ports along the Gulf of Aden, as well as oil and gas infrastructure facilities. Further, the report finds AQAP is consolidating its foothold in Yemen's central and eastern provinces. The report charges AQAP is exploiting Yemen's civil war to relocate its territorial base to the southern provinces of Abyan, Bayda, and Shabwa, as well as the eastern provinces of Hadramout and Mahrah. The report estimates AQAP maintains approximately 3,000 fighters and retains its leading role in distributing al-Qaeda propaganda to supporters and potential recruits. Source: "Letter dated 3 February 2022 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, February 3, 2022, 13, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/83>.
- AQAP announces the death of Salih bin Salim bin Ubayd 'Abolan, a.k.a. Abu 'Umayr al-Hadhrami.  
'Abolan was a former associate of Osama bin Laden's. AQAP does not announce when or how he died, but media reports speculate he may have died in a November 14, 2021, U.S. airstrike that killed three AQAP fighters. Source: "Intelligence group says AQAP announces death of former Bin Laden associate in U.S. strike in Yemen," Reuters, January 20, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/intelligence-group-says-aqap-announces-death-former-bin-laden-associate-us-2022-01-20/>.
- AQAP releases two videos featuring Batarfi, who acknowledges AQAP is facing financial and other challenges.  
According to Batarfi, AQAP is regrouping and preparing fighters to launch operations to target the West. Source: "Letter dated 3 February 2022 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, February 3, 2022, 13, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/83>.
- **October 6, 2021:** AQAP's Al Malahem Media releases a new video featuring Ibrahim al-Qosi called "A Message to the American People: You Have Yet to Understand the Lesson."  
The video features news clips and a re-enactment of the September 11 attacks followed by Qosi praising the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan and threatening new attacks on the United States. Source: Thomas Joscelyn, "Ex-Guantánamo detainee praises Taliban's victory, threatens America in new AQAP video," Long War Journal, October 6, 2021, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2021/10/ex-guantanamo-detainee-praises-talibans-victory-threatens-america-in-new-aqap-video.php>.
- Following the completion of the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan on August 15, AQAP fighters in Yemen's Bayda and Shabwa provinces fire guns into the air upon learning of the Taliban takeover.  
On August 18, AQAP congratulates the Afghan militants and vows to mimic their success. According to an AQAP statement, the Taliban "victory and empowerment reveals to us that jihad and fighting represent the (Islamic law)-based, legal, and realistic way to restore rights (and) expel the invaders and occupiers." Sources: Agence France-Presse, "Al-Qaeda in Yemen congratulates Taliban, vows to continue jihad," *Hindu* (Chennai), August 19, 2021, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/al-qaeda-in-yemen-congratulates-taliban-vows-to-continue-jihad/article35992797.ece>.
- **July 19, 2021:** Al-Qaeda releases a propaganda video, entitled "America Burns," on the filesharing website Filelocker.

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The video portrays the United States as weakened and divided. The video refers to the “five cornerstones of America’s coffin”: the COVID-19 pandemic, racism, a declining economy, political divisions, and attacks by al-Qaeda fighters. The video labels Trump “the American Ghaddafi” and his supporters as the American Daesh (the Arabic acronym for ISIS). According to the narration, it was God’s will the fourth plane on September 11 failed to reach its target so that Americans could destroy their government with their own hands on January 6, 2021, when rioters stormed the U.S. Capitol Building. At the end of the video, Zawahiri asks “the blacks, people of color, the red Indians, and the Spanish” to rise up against white Americans as retribution for slavery and racism. The video goes on to tell Trump’s supporters they may be inspired by the mujahideen and should look toward AQAP’s Inspire magazine for resources. Sources: “Al-Qaeda Video ‘America Burns’ Asserts U.S. Is Collapsing And Is Headed Toward Civil War; Five Cornerstones Of America’s Coffin Are COVID-19, Declining Economy, Racism, Internal Political Divisions, Attack By Al-Qaeda,” MEMRI, July 20, 2021, <https://www.memri.org/tv/qaeda-video-america-burns-asserts-us-collapsing-civil-war>; Bridget Johnson, “Al-Qaeda Tells Parties in America’s ‘Impending Civil War’ to Use Islamist Terror Guides,” Homeland Security Today, August 10, 2021, <https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/al-qaeda-tells-parties-civil-war-to-find-what-they-need-in-islamist-terror-guides/>.

- **April 8, 2021:** AQAP issues a statement denying the February 2021 U.N. report of Batarfi’s arrest. AQAP accuses the United Nations of lying to the public and of bias toward the West. Source: Bridget Johnson, “AQAP Calls UN Claim of Leader’s Arrest ‘Miserable Attempt to Wage a Psychological War,’” Homeland Security Today, April 12, 2021, <https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/aqap-calls-un-claim-of-leaders-arrest-miserable-attempt-to-wage-a-psychological-war/>.
- As Houthi militants fight an offensive against the Yemeni government in Yemen’s Marib province, AQAP takes advantage of the security vacuum to reassert itself. According to Yemeni security officials, AQAP is training new fighters, rebuilding relationships with local tribes, and seeking out new forms of financial support. The officials warn the Houthis’ war in Marib could end the maximum-pressure campaign against AQAP that had previously nearly wiped it out. Source: Agence France-Presse, “Yemen’s Al-Qaeda regenerates amid battle for the north,” France 24, March 16, 2021, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210316-yemen-s-al-qaeda-regenerates-amid-battle-for-the-north>.
- As Houthi rebels fight the forces of the Saudi Arabia-backed Arab coalition and Yemen’s internationally recognized government in Marib, AQAP calls on Yemenis to take up arms against the Houthis. Source: Agence France-Presse, “Yemen’s Al-Qaeda regenerates amid battle for the north,” France 24, March 16, 2021, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210316-yemen-s-al-qaeda-regenerates-amid-battle-for-the-north>.
- On February 3, the United Nations releases a report stating Batarfi had been arrested in October 2020 and turned over to Saudi authorities. On February 4, U.S. military officials claim Batarfi had eluded capture and is still at large. AQAP further dispels reports of Batarfi’s arrest on February 10 with the release of a video featuring Batarfi called “America and the Painful Seizure.” Batarfi refers to the January 6, 2021, U.S. riot—during which protesters stormed the U.S. Capitol—and calls it “just the tip of the iceberg.” Sources: “Letter dated 21 January 2021 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, February 3, 2021, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/68>; “Yemen al-Qaeda leader’s video belies UN report of capture,” Arab Weekly, February 11, 2021, <https://thearabweekly.com/yemen-al-qaeda-leaders-video-belies-un-report-capture/>; Jared Szuba, “Updated: US disputes UN report on capture of Al-Qaeda’s top man in Yemen,” Al-Monitor, February 5, 2021, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/02/qaeda-yemen-capture-leader-un.html>.
- **November 5, 2020:** AQAP’s media wing, Al-Malahim, releases a video called, “And Incite the Believers.” In the video, AQAP senior official Ibrahim al-Qosi urges the people of Sudan to attack U.S. and Israeli targets in Sudan and east Africa. The video was a response to the U.S.-sponsored normalization agreement between Sudan and Israel. Source: “Al-Qaeda In The Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) Official Calls For The People Of Sudan To Rise Up Against Their Government And Attack U.S., Israeli Targets,” Middle East Media Research Institute, November 7, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/jtm/aqap-official-calls-people-sudan-rise-against-their-government-and-attack-us-israeli-targets>.
- AQAP’s leader in Abyan, Yemen, Al-Khadr al-Walidi, is reportedly killed as AQAP is defeated in Bayda’ Governorate. AQAP fighters from the region escape toward Shabwah, Marib, and Abya. Source: “Letter dated 21 January 2021 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, February 3, 2021, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/68>.
- **October 2, 2020:** A pro-ISIS Telegram channel claims that AQAP leader, Khalid Batarfi, turns himself into Yemeni forces following a Saudi-led raid in al Mahrah. Allegedly, two key AQAP commanders are also killed in the raid. A February 2021 U.N. report claims Batarfi was arrested in an operation in Ghayda City in Mahrah Governorate. The report further claims AQAP second-in-command Saad Atef al-Awlaki died during the operation. Sources: “Pro-ISIS Telegram Channel Alleges Al-Qaeda In The Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) Leader Khalid Batarfi Turned Himself In To Yemeni Forces In Al-Mahrah During Raid That Killed Two Key Al-Qaeda Commanders,” The Middle East Media Research Institute, October 7, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/jtm/pro-isis-telegram-channel-alleges-al-qaeda-arabian-peninsula-aqap-leader-khalid-batarfi-turned>; “Gulf of Aden Security Review,” Critical Threats, October 5, 2020, [https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/gulf-of-aden-security-review/gulf-of-aden-security-review-october-5-2020#\\_edn4528c5682c5f4a0d107d760023177f711](https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/gulf-of-aden-security-review/gulf-of-aden-security-review-october-5-2020#_edn4528c5682c5f4a0d107d760023177f711); Paul Cruickshank, “Al-Qaeda’s leader in Yemen under arrest, UN report reveals,” CNN, February 4, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/04/politics/al-qaeda-un-report/index.html>.
- **September 14, 2020:** A pro-AQAP media group releases a statement encouraging attacks in France in response to the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*’s republication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad. Brothers Chérif and Saïd Kouachi, who pledged allegiance to AQAP, killed 12 people in an attack on the *Charlie Hebdo* offices in 2015, allegedly in retaliation for the cartoons’ publication. The magazine republished the cartoons as a trial in France began for individuals allegedly tied to the attack. Source: “Extremist Content Online: Pro-Al-Qaeda Group Encourages Attacks Following Charlie Hebdo Comic Republication,” Counter Extremism Project, September 14, 2020, <https://www.counterextremism.com/press/extremist-content-online-pro-al-qaeda-group-encourages-attacks-following-charlie-hebdo-comic>.
- **February 25, 2020:** AQAP releases a video of 10 captured Saudi and Yemeni nations confessing to spying on AQAP from within its ranks on behalf of the United States. Accused spy Othman Bin Ali, a.k.a. Abu Omar Al-Shehri, is shot three times in the chest. The fates of the other accused are not determined. AQAP calls on other spies to surrender in exchange for amnesty. Source: “AQAP members appear to confess spying for US in new video,” Almasdar Online, February 28, 2020, <https://almasdaronline.net/national/402>.
- **February 23, 2020:** AQAP announces that Khalid Batarfi is the group’s new leader. Source: “Al-Qaida Confirms Death of AQAP Leader,” Voice of America, February 23, 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/al-qaeda-confirms-death-aqap-leader>.

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- **January 25, 2020 - January 31, 2020:** On January 25, local media reports that the U.S. launched a drone strike in Yemen's Marib province. On January 31, the U.S. announced that it launched a drone strike against Qasim al-Raymi—the leader of AQAP. Officials have expressed confidence that the AQAP leader was killed in the strike, however they are still waiting on confirmation of his death before making a public announcement. The drone strike against Raymi was not carried out by the U.S. military, and instead was orchestrated by the C.I.A., following months of tracking Raymi through aerial surveillance and other intelligence. The State Department previously offered a \$10 million reward for information leading to Raymi's capture. Sources: Gordon Lubold and Warren P. Strobel, "U.S. Targets Yemen Al Qaeda Leader in Drone Strike," *Wall Street Journal*, January 31, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-targets-yemen-al-qaeda-leader-in-drone-strike-11580511550>; Rukmini Callimachi, Eric Schmitt and Julian E. Barnes, "U.S. Strikes at Leader of Qaeda in Yemen," *New York Times*, January 31, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/31/world/middleeast/qaeda-yemen-alrimi.html>.
- **January 20, 2020:** According to a report published by the United Nations, Houthi and ISIS militants have begun to engage in limited cooperation against AQAP in central Yemen. In a short-term alliance, Houthi forces have provided ISIS fighters with access to its military camps as a way to repel their shared adversary. Source: "Twenty-fifth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities," United Nations, January 20, 2020, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/53>.
- **November 7, 2019:** The U.S. Department of State offers a \$4 million reward for information on Ibrahim al-Qosi, a Sudanese member of AQAP's leadership team who was convicted of war crimes at Guantanamo and later repatriated in 2012. Qosi pled guilty at Guantanamo in 2010 to providing support for terrorism and al-Qaeda in exchange for his repatriation. Three years after his repatriation, Qosi began appearing in videos and other publications for AQAP, encouraging lone-wolf attacks against the United States in online propaganda. Source: Carol Rosenberg, "U.S. Offers Up to \$4 Million for Location of Freed Guantanamo Convict," *New York Times*, November 7, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/07/us/politics/gitmo-reward.html>.
- **October 10, 2019:** U.S. President Donald Trump confirms reports from August 2018 claiming the death of Ibrahim Hassan al-Asiri, a bomb-maker from al-Qaeda who built the explosives for several high-profile terrorist plots. Trump's announcement states that it was likely that al-Asiri was killed in a drone strike in Yemen in 2017. Source: Michael Crowley, "Trump Confirms 2017 Killing of Feared Bomb Maker for Al Qaeda," *New York Times*, October 10, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/10/world/middleeast/qaeda-bomber-death-trump.html>.
- **August 9, 2019:** A federal grand jury charges a Yemeni national living in Arkansas for providing support to a terrorist organization. Bilal al-Rayanni was charged with supporting al-Qaeda between October and December of 2014 while he was in Yemen. He was initially charged on July 11 with making a false statement on a passport application in May. If found guilty, al-Rayanni will face 20 years in prison and up to 15 years for lying on a passport application. Source: "Arkansas man charged with helping al-Qaida," Associated Press, August 9, 2019, <https://apnews.com/42833112924d456db8351f80c8eab055>; "Helena-West Helena Resident Indicted for Supporting a Terrorist Organization," U.S. Department of Justice, August 9, 2019, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edar/pr/helena-west-helena-resident-indicted-supporting-terrorist-organization>.
- **July 31, 2019:** AQAP members release a video featuring four detained ISIS fighters in Yemen. The hostages are heard criticizing ISIS for betraying its soldiers and refusing to negotiate prisoner swaps with AQAP. One detainee states that he has been held for over a year. Source: "Jihad and Terrorism Threat Monitor (JTTM) Weekend Summa," Middle East Media Research Institute, August 3, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/reports/jihad-and-terrorism-threat-monitor-jttm-weekend-summary-365>.
- **June 25, 2019:** U.S. forces launch drone airstrikes in al-Bayda. The strikes kill at least five members of AQAP. Source: "3 U.S. drone airstrikes kill 5 al-Qaida members in central Yemen," Xinhua, June 25, 2019, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-06/25/c\\_138172653.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-06/25/c_138172653.htm).
- **May 18, 2019:** Yemeni security forces arrest Bilal al-Wafi in the mountain area of Habashi. Al-Wafi was a key leader in AQAP and helped carry out the 2012 bombing of a Yemeni military parade that killed dozens of troops. Source: "Yemen's government forces arrest key al-Qaeda leader," Al Arabiya, May 20, 2019, <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/gulf/2019/05/20/Yemen-s-government-forces-arrest-key-al-Qaeda-leader.html>.
- **May 7, 2019:** A U.S. drone strike kills four AQAP militants in central Yemen. The strike targeted the rebels' vehicle as they were heading to a farm in Marib province. Source: "Drone strike 'kills 4 Qaeda suspects' in Yemen," Gulf Times, May 7, 2019, <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/630902/Drone-strike-kills-4-Qaeda-suspects-in-Yemen>.
- **April 26, 2019:** AQAP releases statements on militant-linked websites vowing to avenge the 37 beheadings of AQAP members carried out by Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia reports to have executed 37 suspects convicted of terrorism-related charges and claims that most were Shiites, but one was a Sunni militant. Source: "Yemen's al-Qaida branch vows to revenge over Saudi executions," Associated Press, April 26, 2019, <https://www.apnews.com/194be9830310414caad611a786e40e79>.
- **April 7, 2019:** Yemeni security forces carry out anti-terror raids to clear a number of AQAP hideouts in the mountains and valleys of Mahfad town, Abyan province. While numbers are unconfirmed, the security forces reportedly capture a number of insurgents and seize a variety of arms and ammunition. Source: "UAE-backed Yemeni security forces raid al-Qaida hideouts in south Yemen," Xinhua, April 8, 2019, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-04/08/c\\_137958029.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-04/08/c_137958029.htm).
- **April 2, 2019:** U.S. Central Command reports to have targeted AQAP eight times in the months of January and March 2019. The strikes took place in Al Bayda and Marib, with one strike in January killing veteran al Qaeda member Jamal al-Badawi. Source: Bill Roggio, "US targets AQAP 8 times in past 3 months," Long War Journal, April 2, 2019, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2019/04/us-targets-aqap-8-times-in-past-3-months.php>.
- **April 1, 2019:** Yemeni security forces launch an anti-terror raid and arrest Abdul-Qadir al-Mut in Abyan. Al-Mut was the explosives expert for AQAP. Source: Mu Xuequan, "UAE-backed Yemeni security forces arrest al-Qaida explosives expert," Xinhua, April 1, 2019, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-04/01/c\\_137938906.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-04/01/c_137938906.htm).
- **January 7, 2019:** U.S. Central Command confirms that at least 26 airstrikes were conducted against AQAP in 2018. The strikes were targeted in the governorates of Abyan, al Bayda, Hadramawt, Shabwah and Zamakh. Source: Rebecca Kheel, "Central Command: US conducted 36 strikes against al Qaeda, ISIS in Yemen in 2018," The Hill, January 7, 2019, <https://thehill.com/policy/defense/424196-central-command-us-conducted-36-strikes-against-al-qaeda-isis-in-yemen-in-2018>.

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- **January 2, 2019:** U.S. forces confirm that Jamal Al Badawi was killed in an air raid in Marib province the day prior. Al Badawi was the mastermind behind the bombing of the USS Cole in 2000 which killed 17 and injured a further 39. Source: Dan Cancian, "Jamal Al Badawi, Terrorist Behind USS Cole Bombing, Reportedly Killed in Airstrike in Yemen," *Newsweek*, January 5, 2019, <https://www.newsweek.com/jamal-al-badawi-terrorist-behind-2000-uss-cole-bombing-reportedly-killed-1280332>.
- **December 16, 2018:** French authorities arrest Peter Cherif, also known as Abou Hamza, a high-ranking member of AQAP who has been on the run for seven years. Djibouti authorities arrested Cherif after he arrived from Yemen carrying a fake ID. Cherif was placed on the U.S. blacklist of foreign terrorists in 2015. Source: "Key French jihadist Peter Cherif set to return behind bars," December 27, 2018, <https://www.france24.com/en/20181227-key-french-jihadist-peter-cherif-set-return-behind-bars>.
- **December 12, 2018:** Security Belt Forces launch a military operation in Abyan province. Two AQAP commanders, Abu al-Darda al-Baydhani and Abu Qusai al-Adeni, are killed in the operation. Source: Ali Mahmood, "Al Qaeda commanders killed in clashes with UAE-backed forces in Yemen," *The National*, December 12, 2018, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/al-qaeda-commanders-killed-in-clashes-with-uae-backed-forces-in-yemen-1.802128>.
- **December 10, 2018:** The U.S. Department of Justice announces that Damon M. Joseph, also known as Abdullah Ali Yusuf, has been arrested for allegedly planning to open fire at a synagogue in Toledo, Ohio. He was inspired by the teachings of Anwar al-Awlaki, the AQAP cleric who espoused individual jihad while also plotting more professional attacks. Sources: Thomas Joscelyn, "Ohio man allegedly inspired by Anwar al-Awlaki, Islamic State," *Long War Journal*, December 11, 2018, <https://longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/12/ohio-man-allegedly-inspired-by-anwar-al-awlaki-islamic-state.php>; "Ohio man arrested and charged in federal court after planning an attack on a synagogue in the Toledo area," U.S. Department of Justice, December 10, 2019, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndoh/pr/ohio-man-arrested-and-charged-federal-court-after-planning-attack-synagogue-toledo-area>.
- **November 26, 2018:** The U.S. launches a drone strike in Al Bayda. Six AQAP fighters and two commanders are killed in the attack. Source: Ali Mahmood, "Al Qaeda militants killed by drone strike in Yemen," *The National*, November 26, 2018, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/al-qaeda-militants-killed-by-drone-strike-in-yemen-1.796068>.
- **September 4, 2018:** AQAP releases a video titled, "The Preliminary Introduction [to] Demolishing the Espionage," in which they claim that a Saudi spy network has infiltrated their network leading to the death of senior leaders including Nasir al-Wuhayshi, al Qaeda's former deputy emir. They claim to have neutralized the suspects, and further lambast Saudi Arabia for their "clear loyalty" to Americans. Source: Thomas Joscelyn, "AQAP claims Saudi spy network targeted its leaders," *Long War Journal*, September 4, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/09/aqap-claims-saudi-spy-network-targeted-its-leaders.php>.
- **August 26, 2018:** Yemeni officials confirm that a senior AQAP leader has been killed during an altercation between the Houthis and AQAP. The exact date of his death is unconfirmed, but was expected to be around a week prior to confirmation of his death. Source: "Yemen tribal leaders say senior Al-Qaeda leader killed in Marib clash," *Arab News*, August 26, 2018, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1362031/middle-east>.
- **August 6, 2018:** The Associated Press reports that the Saudi-backed coalition has been paying some AQAP commanders to leave key cities and towns while letting others retreat with weapons, equipment, and money. The report also claims that hundreds of AQAP members were recruited to join the coalition as soldiers. Key figures in the deal-making said the United States was aware of the arrangements and held off on drone attacks against the armed group. U.S. officials deny this claim as Navy Commander Sean Robertson, a Pentagon spokesman, stated, "since the beginning of 2017, we have conducted more than 140 strikes to remove key AQAP leaders and disrupt its ability to use ungoverned spaces to recruit, train and plan operations against the U.S. and our partners across the region." Sources: "Report: Saudi-UAE coalition 'cut deals' with al-Qaeda in Yemen," *Al Jazeera*, August 6, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/08/report-saudi-uae-coalition-cut-deals-al-qaeda-yemen-180806074659521.html>; Maggie Michael, Trish Wilson, and Lee Keath, "Yemen: U.S. Allies Spin Deals with al-Qaida in War on Rebels," August 6, 2018, Pulitzer Center, <https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/yemen-us-allies-spin-deals-al-qaeda-war-rebels>.
- **June 28, 2018:** AQAP religious judge Abu Bishr Muhammad Darama is killed in a U.S. drone strike. Source: "Jihadists Report Death of AQAP Judge in U.S. Airstrike in Yemen," *Site Intel Group*, June 28, 2018, <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/jihadists-report-death-of-aqap-judge-in-us-airstrike-in-yemen.html>.
- **June 20, 2018:** In a press release, AQAP leader Khalid Batarfi claims that the group has uncovered a Saudi Arabian spy network in Yemen. In the same press release, Batarfi referenced ISIS, stating "we have not spared any effort to open channels of communication with these groups [ISIS], whom we still invite to work with us to fight this Crusader-[Shia] campaign against Muslims." Source: "Al-Qaeda in Yemen says group will strike hard when time is right," *BBC*, June 20, 2018, <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/c1dpdb8k>.
- **April 15, 2018:** AQAP claims that 18 of its fighters have escaped from a political security prison in Bayda. Sources: "AQAP Reports 18 Fighters Escaping from Prison in al-Bayda", Claims Attacks on Houthis and SBF," *Site Intel Group*, April 15, 2018, <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/aqap-reports-18-fighters-escaping-from-prison-in-al-bayda-claims-attacks-on-houthis-and-sbf.html>; 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>.
- **January 23, 2018:** The U.S. Department of State designates AQAP leader Khalid Batarfi as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist the day after AQAP releases a propaganda video featuring Batarfi. Source: 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>.
- **- :** The United States conduct 36 airstrikes in Yemen, all but one of which targeted AQAP. Throughout 2017 and 2018, airstrikes against the al-Qaeda affiliate in Yemen have decreased significantly to roughly a quarter of the previous year's record high of 131 strikes. Source: Bill Roggio and Alexandra Gutowski, "Yemen strikes wane, but AQAP still poses 'a significant threat'," *Long War Journal*, November 7, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/11/yemen-strikes.php>.

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- - : AQAP celebrates the defection of “many brothers” from ISIS in Yemen to AQAP.  
Throughout the month of December, U.S. airstrikes kill six AQAP commanders. On December 15, Miqdad al Sana’ani, an external operations facilitator, is killed in the Bayda governorate. On December 19, Habib al-Sana’ani, a deputy arms facilitator, is killed in Marib governorate. On December 20, Abu Umar al-Sana’ani, a member of AQAP’s dawah, Mujahid al-Adani (a.k.a. Mohammad Shukri), and Abu Layth al-Sanaani are killed in Marib. On December 20, a U.S. airstrike kills Abu Hajar al-Makki, an AQAP propaganda official who had reportedly previously fought in Afghanistan. AQAP fails in an attempt to rob banks in Mukalla in December 2017. Sources: Elisabeth Kendall, “What’s next for jihadists in Yemen?” *Washington Post*, February 23, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/02/23/whats-next-for-jihadists-in-yemen/?utm\\_term=.799167411639](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/02/23/whats-next-for-jihadists-in-yemen/?utm_term=.799167411639); Bill Roggio and Alexandra Gutowski, “US killed three ‘key’ AQAP leaders in Yemen,” *Long War Journal*, January 11, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/01/us-killed-three-key-aqap-leaders.php>; Thomas Joscelyn, “AQAP propaganda official reportedly killed in US drone strike,” *Long War Journal*, December 22, 2017, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/12/aqap-propaganda-official-reportedly-killed-in-us-drone-strike.php>; U.N. Security Council, “Twenty-second report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities,” July 27, 2018, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2018/705&referer=/english/&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2018/705&referer=/english/&Lang=E).
- **October 10, 2017:** A U.S. airstrike kills AQAP commander Mohammed Ammar al Adani and four of his fighters.  
Source: Bill Roggio, “US kills local AQAP commander in airstrike,” *Long War Journal*, October 11, 2017, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/10/us-kills-local-aqap-commander-in-airstrike.php>.
- **August 3, 2017:** Yemeni troops, backed by the U.S. and the UAE, conduct raids against AQAP in Shabwa province.  
The number of casualties and injuries is unreported. Source: “U.S.-backed Yemeni troops attack al Qaeda in southern state,” *Reuters*, August 3, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-usa-emirates-idUSKBN1AJ2UW>.
- U.S. officials report that Ibrahim al-Asiri, AQAP’s chief bomb maker, is killed in a U.S. drone strike.  
The U.S. designated Asiri, 36, as a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist” in 2011. Before joining AQAP, al-Asiri was part of an al-Qaeda cell in Saudi Arabia and was allegedly involved in planned bombings of oil facilities in the kingdom. Source: “Chief al-Qaeda bomb maker ‘killed in Yemen strike’ - US reports,” *BBC News*, August 21, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-45257631>.
- - : A U.S. airstrike in June kills the AQAP emir of Shabwah province, Abu Khattab al Awlaqi, in Yemen.  
In late June, the U.S. Department of State amends its classification of AQAP to include the aliases “Sons of Abyan, Sons of Hadramawt, Sons of Hadramawt Committee, Civil Council of Hadramawt, and National Hadramawt Council,” reflecting AQAP’s continued ability to govern parts of southern Yemen. During July and August, AQAP renews attacks on Houthi positions in the Bayda governorate and attacks government troops in the Shabwah and Abyan governorates. On August 4, U.S. air and ground forces assist Yemeni and UAE troops in pushing AQAP militants out of the Shabwah governorate. A week later, AQAP releases a guide on how to derail trains in the United States and Europe. Sources: Bill Roggio, “US kills AQAP provincial emir in Yemen airstrike,” *Long War Journal*, June 22, 2017, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/06/us-kills-aqap-provincial-emir-in-yemen-airstrike.php> “State Department Amendments to the Terrorist Designations of Hizballah and al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula,” U.S. Department of State, June 21, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/06/272090.htm> “Yemen troops killed in suspected Qaeda attack: army,” *Al-Monitor*, July 16, 2017, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/afp/2017/07/yemen-conflict-qaeda.html> “AQAP Video Shows Attacks on Houthi Positions in Six Areas in al-Bayda,” *Site Intelligence Group*, July 2, 2016, <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/aqap-video-shows-attacks-on-houthi-positions-in-six-areas-in-al-bayda.html> Maher Farrukh, Coy Ozias and Tyler Parker, “Yemen Situation Report,” *Critical Threats*, August 11, 2017, <https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/yemen-situation-report-2017-yemen-crisis-situation-report-august-11> “US-backed Yemeni troops ‘push al-Qaeda’ out of Shabwa,” *BBC News*, August 4, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-40833914> Thomas Joscelyn, “AQAP publishes guide for derailing trains in the US, Europe,” *Long War Journal*, August 13, 2017, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/08/aqap-publishes-guide-for-derailing-trains-in-the-us-europe.php>.
- - : The United States conducts 30 air strikes in the first days of March, matching its previous yearly average of airstrikes in Yemen.  
The United States launches 20 airstrikes in early April as well, bringing 2017’s total to 75. On May 8, Raymi reiterates calls for lone-wolf attacks on Western targets. On May 23, a U.S. raid in Marib kills seven AQAP militants. Sources: Bill Roggio, “US blitzes AQAP in Yemen with an unprecedented 30 airstrikes,” *Long War Journal*, March 4, 2017, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/03/us-blitzes-aqap-in-yemen-with-more-than-30-airstrikes.php> Bill Roggio, “US military hits AQAP with more than 20 airstrikes,” *Long War Journal*, April 4, 2017, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/04/us-military-hits-aqap-with-more-than-20-airstrikes.php> Thomas Joscelyn, “AQAP leader calls for ‘simple’ attacks in the West,” *Long War Journal*, May 8, 2017, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/05/aqap-leader-calls-for-simple-attacks-in-the-west.php> Bill Roggio, “US special forces raid al Qaeda compound in central Yemen,” *Long War Journal*, May 23, 2017, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/05/us-special-forces-raid-al-qaeda-compound-in-central-yemen.php>.
- - : Despite losing its major territorial holdings in southern Yemen, AQAP continues to exert control over civilian populaces due to the inroads it made the previous year.  
During this period, the United States conducts nine anti-AQAP strikes and raids in Yemen—seven of them in the Bayda province—killing dozens of militants, including high ranking members Sultan al-Dhahab and Abdulrauf al-Dhahab. After these raids, Raymi releases an audio message taunting U.S. President Donald Trump. Sources: “Yemen’s al-Qaeda: Expanding the Base,” *International Crisis Group*, February 2, 2017, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/174-yemen-s-al-qaeda-expanding-the-base.pdf> Bill Roggio, “US military says AQAP leaders killed in Yemen raid,” *Long War Journal*, February 3, 2017, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/02/us-military-says-aqap-leaders-killed-in-raid.php> Luis Martinez, “US military conducts ground raid in Yemen on AQAP compound,” *ABC News*, May 22, 2017, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/us-military-conducts-ground-raid-yemen-aqap-compound/story?id=47572579> Euan McKirdy, Jim Sciutto, Eli Watkins, and Ryan Browne, “Al Qaeda leader mocks Trump after Yemen raid,” *CNN*, February 8, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/07/politics/yemen-raid-al-qaeda/index.html>.
- - : In February, AQAP finishes expanding into five more towns in Yemen’s southern provinces.  
In the following months, however, AQAP loses territory as it is attacked by a Saudi-led Arab coalition and its leaders are targeted by several U.S. airstrikes. In February, a U.S. airstrike kills AQAP senior member Jalal Belaydi and two others in the southwestern region of Abyan. In March, U.S. airstrikes target major AQAP locations, including its intelligence center and a training camp. Coalition-backed operations carried out during these two months also diminish AQAP’s presence in Aden. On April 26, a U.S. airstrike kills AQAP chief financial officer Hossam al-Zanjibari in Yemen’s southwest region of Abyan. Also in April, a UAE-led force captures the group’s major port stronghold in Mukalla. U.S. airstrikes target AQAP throughout July. Sources: Katherine Zimmerman, “AQAP Expanding behind Yemen’s Frontlines,” *Critical Threats*, February 17, 2016, <http://www.criticalthreats.org/yemen/zimmerman-aqap-expanding-behind-yemens-frontlines-february-17-2016> “Strikes kill at least 50 at Qaeda Yemen camp; medics, official,” *Reuters*, March 23, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-yemen-strike-idUSKCN0W037I> Katherine Zimmerman and Jon Diamond, “Challenging the Yemeni State: ISIS in Aden and Al Mukalla,” *Critical Threats*, June 9, 2016, <http://www.criticalthreats.org/yemen/zimmerman-diamond-challenging-yemeni-state-isis-in-aden-al-mukalla-june-9-2016> Ahmed Alwly, “Despite Arab, US attacks, AQAP still holding out in Yemen,” *Al-Monitor*, May 13, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/05/yemen-al-qaeda-us-terrorism-hadi-mukalla-drones.html> Thomas Joscelyn, “Arab coalition enters AQAP stronghold in port city of Mukalla, Yemen,” *Long War Journal*, April 25, 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/04/arab-coalition-enters-aqap-stronghold-in-port-city-of-mukalla-yemen.php> Bill Roggio, “US targeted AQAP operatives in 4 airstrikes in July,” *Long War Journal*, August 2, 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/08/us-targeted-aqap-operatives-in-4-airstrikes-in-july.php>.
- - : AQAP expands its territorial control in southern and central Yemen again.  
In April, militants seize the southern city of Mukalla, Yemen’s fifth largest city, and free 270 inmates from government security facilities. AQAP governs Mukalla for one year before being expelled. In May, Shihr falls to AQAP and in December the group takes control of Ja’ar and Zinjibar. On June 16, AQAP confirms that Wuhayshi was



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killed in a U.S. drone strike, and that he has been succeeded by military chief Qasim al-Raymi. In July, Raymi releases a video message calling for attacks on the United States. Sources: Katherine Zimmerman, "AQAP Expanding behind Yemen's Frontlines," *Critical Threats*, February 17, 2016, <http://www.criticalthreats.org/yemen/zimmerman-aqap-expanding-behind-yemens-frontlines-february-17-2016> Saeed al-Batati and K. Faheem, "Affiliate of Al Qaeda Seizes Major Yemeni City, Driving Out the Military," *New York Times*, April 3, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/04/world/middleeast/al-qaeda-al-mukalla-yemen.html> "Yemen's al-Qaeda: Expanding the Base," International Crisis Group, Middle East Report N°174, February 2, 2017, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/174-yemen-s-al-qaeda-expanding-the-base.pdf> Thomas Joscelyn, "Arab coalition enters AQAP stronghold in port city of Mukalla, Yemen," *Long War Journal*, April 25, 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/04/arab-coalition-enters-aqap-stronghold-in-port-city-of-mukalla-yemen.php> "AQAP Fast Facts," CNN, September 1, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/16/middleeast/aqap-fast-facts/index.html> Dana Ford, "New AQAP chief calls for attacks on U.S.," CNN, July 10, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/09/middleeast/aqap-leader-message/index.html>.

- - : December 2014 marks the end of a three-month AQAP campaign against Houthi forces during which AQAP conducted 149 attacks, mostly in the Bayda.  
AQAP calls for attacks against U.S. airliners in the 13th issue of its English-language magazine, *Inspire*. The day before, AQAP threatened the French oil company Total. On January 7, gunmen kill 12 at the Paris offices of the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, in an attack claimed by AQAP. Sources: Oren Adaki, "AQAP claims 149 attacks in Yemen since late September," *The Long War Journal*, December 19 2014, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/12/aqap\\_attack\\_map.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/12/aqap_attack_map.php) "Extremism and Terrorism," Anti-Defamation League, December 24, 2014, <http://blog.adl.org/extremism/aqap-al-qaeda-inspire-english-magazine-13> "AQAP Threatens French Oil Company," *Al Bawaba News*, December 23, 2014, <http://www.albawaba.com/news/aqap-threatens-french-oil-company-635760> "AQAP Fast Facts," CNN, September 1, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/16/middleeast/aqap-fast-facts/index.html>.
- - : In early November, Yemeni security forces kill AQAP leader Turki al-Asiri, also known as Marwan al-Mekki, a local commander in Lahj province.  
Following this loss, AQAP military commander Qassim al-Raymi accuses the Houthis of acting as a proxy for the United States. One week later, Houthi rebels push AQAP out of one of its strongholds in central Yemen. In late November, AQAP cleric Harith al-Nadhari rejects ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's November 13 declaration of ISIS-controlled provinces in Yemen and reiterates AQAP's loyalty to al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri. Throughout November and December, U.S. and Yemeni forces attempt to free Luke Somers, an American hostage held in Yemen. The first raid succeeds in freeing eight hostages, but Sommers and four other hostages remain captive. A second attempt is made on December 5, but Sommers and a South African hostage die of their gunshot wounds. Sources: "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-idUSKBN01R620141107> "Yemen's AQAP says Houthis will pay for push into country," Reuters, November 21, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/21/us-yemen-qaeda-warning-idUSKCN0J518B20141121> Mohammed Ghobari, "Yemen Shi'ites capture key district from al Qaeda, 35 people dead," Reuters, November 14, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/14/us-yemen-security-idUSKCN0IY1Q120141114> Vasudevan Sridharan, "Yemeni Al-Qaeda Derides ISIS's Islamic Caliphate Announcement," *International Business Times*, November 22, 2014, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/yemeni-al-qaeda-derides-isis-islamic-caliphate-announcement-1476027> Ahmed al-Haj and Robert Burns, "American among hostages targeted in Yemen raid," *Associated Press*, November 26, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/803e9c0f3b1e4905984f3ce1005f3045/6-killed-rebel-attack-house-yemen-leader> "U.S. Discloses failed attempt to rescue American in Yemen," Reuters, December 4, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/04/us-mideast-crisis-yemen-usa-idUSKCN0J0Y320141204> Jeff Mason and Mohammed Ghobari, "Yemen Rescue Failed as Captors Alerted to Approaching U.S. Commandos: Officials," Reuters, December 6, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/07/us-yemen-usa-hostage-forces-idUSKBN0JK0Q720141207>.
- In early October, AQAP launches four major attacks against government and Houthi targets, including three bombings.  
On October 14, the U.S. government offers rewards of up to \$10 million for information on the whereabouts of AQAP's leader, Nasir al-Wuhayshi, and up to \$5 million for seven of his deputies. Sources: "Explosion Kills Two Soldiers in Yemen's Hadramawt Region," Reuters, October 11, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/11/us-yemen-security-idUSKCN0100BV20141011> Mohammed Ghobari, "Suicide Bombings in Yemen Kill 67 after Premier Quits," Reuters, October 9, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/09/us-yemen-security-idUSKCN0HY0FR20141009> "Al Qaeda Attacks South Yemen Town of Al-Bayda, Four Soldiers Killed," Reuters, October 8, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/08/us-yemen-security-attacks-idUSKCN0HX0KU20141008> Lee, "US Offers \$45 Million for Info on AQAP Leaders," *Associated Press*, October 14, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/798b2a2de69145dea2bdb3c916780dce/us-offers-45-million-info-aqap-leaders>.
- Yemeni security officials announce the beginning of a "massive and unprecedented" offensive against "high-level AQAP targets" in the provinces of Abyan and Shabwa.  
Three days after the offensive begins, CNN reports that the operation has killed at least 65 suspected AQAP-linked militants, among them chief bomb maker Ibrahim al-Asiri. However, DNA tests on the remains, conducted by Saudi Arabia several days after the operation, conclude that Asiri was not one of the people killed. Sources: Mohammed Jamjoom, "Source: 'Massive' Attack Targets Al Qaeda in Yemen," CNN, April 20, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/04/20/world/meast/yemen-drone-strike/>, Mohammed Jamjoom, Barbara Starr and Holly Yan, "Did Yemen, U.S. Kill Al Qaeda's Chief Bomb Maker?" CNN, April 23, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/04/23/world/meast/yemen-terror-operation/>, Paul Cruickshank, Mohammed Jamjoom and Nic Robertson, "DNA Test: Remains from Airstrike in Yemen not those of Al Qaeda Bomb-Maker," CNN, April 28, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/04/28/world/meast/yemen-dna-al-qaeda/>.
- - : AQAP confirms that deputy leader Said al-Shihri is killed in a drone strike carried out by the United States.  
Al-Shihri had been reported killed on numerous occasions, including in December 2009, February 2010, and September 2012. Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri names AQAP leader Nasir al-Wuhayshi his deputy in August and reportedly gives him "clear orders" to carry out an attack, prompting the United States to temporarily shut down its embassies and consulates in the Middle East and North Africa. On December 6, AQAP militants launched a suicide car bombing and assault on the defense ministry in Sanaa, killing 52 people and wounding at least 167 others. Sources: Bill Roggio, "AQAP Confirms Deputy Emir Killed in US Drone Strike," *Long War Journal*, July 17, 2013, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/07/aqap\\_confirms\\_deputy.php#Eli](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/07/aqap_confirms_deputy.php#Eli) Lake, "Meet al Qaeda's New General Manager: Nasser al-Wuhayshi," *Daily Beast*, August 9, 2013, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/08/09/meet-al-qaeda-s-new-general-manager-nasser-al-wuhayshi.html> 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 5, 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](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) "Al-Qaida claims responsibility for Yemen car bomb attack," *Guardian* (London), December 6, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/06/al-qaeda-claims-yemen-car-bomb-attack-sanaa-52-killed>.
- - : Militants abduct Saudi envoy Abdullah al-Khalidi in Yemen's southern port city of Aden in March, demanding a ransom and the release of prisoners from Saudi jails.  
In May, 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. On May 6, AQAP senior leader Fahd al-Quso, wanted by the U.S. for his involvement in the 2000 attack on the U.S.S. Cole and the 2009 Christmas Day airliner plot, is killed by a U.S. drone strike in Yemen's Shabwa province. On May 21, a suicide bomber kills over 100 soldiers and wounds more than 300 others in Sanaa in an attack claimed by AAS. By mid-June, government forces force AQAP out of its Abyan stronghold of Zinjibar. Sources: Kristin Deasy, "Abdullah Al-Khalidi, Saudi Diplomat, Abducted in Yemen," *Global Post*, March 28, 2012, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/saudi-arabia/120328/abdullah-al-khalidi-saudi-diplomat-abducted-ye> Scott Shane and Eric Schmitt, "Qaeda Plot to Attack Plane Foiled, U.S. Officials Say," *New York Times*, May 7, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/08/world/middleeast/us-says-terrorist-plot-to-attack-plane-foiled.html> Bill Roggio, "USS Cole Bomber Killed in US Drone Strike in Yemen," *Long War Journal*, May 6, 2012, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/05/uss\\_cole\\_bomber\\_kill.php#](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/05/uss_cole_bomber_kill.php#) "AQAP Fast Facts," CNN, September 1, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/16/middleeast/aqap-fast-facts/index.html> Hakim Almasmari and Mohammed Jamjoom, "Huge suicide blast kills more than 100 troops in

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Yemen,” CNN, May 21, 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/05/21/world/meast/yemen-violence/>“Yemeni army drives fighters from Zinjibar,” Al-Jazeera, June 12, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/06/201261271339613508.html>.

- - : In May 2011, Ansar al-Sharia, a newly formed local branch of AQAP in Yemen, captures territory in the Abyan governorate, including the capital of Zinjibar.  
AQAP governs these towns until mid-2012 when Yemeni forces expel them. In September 2011, 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.” Sources: “Yemen’s al-Qaeda: Expanding the Base,” International Crisis Group, Middle East Report N°174, February 2, 2017, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/174-yemen-s-al-qaeda-expanding-the-base.pdf> Bill Roggio, “Al Qaeda seizes more territory in southern Yemen,” Long War Journal, February 11, 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/02/al-qaeda-seizes-more-territory-in-southern-yemen.php> 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>.
- - : On November 5, Army Major Nidal Hasan kills 13 soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas, in an attack linked to AQAP recruiter Anwar al-Awlaki.  
On December 25, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab attempts to bomb a commercial airliner in Detroit, on behalf of AQAP. On January 19, 2010, the U.S. Department of State classifies AQAP as a foreign terrorist organization. Source: “AQAP Fast Facts,” CNN, September 1, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/16/middleeast/aqap-fast-facts/index.html>.
- - : In early November 2007, Said al-Shihri and Mohamed al-Awfi are transferred from Guantanamo Bay prison to Saudi Arabia’s custody, where they enter into the government sponsored rehabilitation program.  
In January 2009, after separately launching terror attacks against Western and Arab targets for six years, Nasir al-Wuhayshi and Qasim al-Raymi, along with the recently released Said al-Shihri and Mohamed al-Awfi, announce that the Saudi and Yemeni branches of al-Qaeda have merged, forming al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Sources: “The Guantanamo Docket: Said Ali al Shihri,” New York Times, accessed January 18, 2015, <http://projects.nytimes.com/guantanamo/detainees/372-said-ali-al-shihri> “The Guantanamo Docket: Muhammad Al Awfi,” New York Times, accessed January 18, 2015, <http://projects.nytimes.com/guantanamo/detainees/333-muhammad-al-awfi> Jane Novak, “Arabian Peninsula Al Qaeda Groups Merge,” Long War Journal, January 26, 2009, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/01/arabian\\_peninsula\\_al.php#](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/01/arabian_peninsula_al.php#).
- **February 3, 2006:** 23 alleged al-Qaeda militants in Yemen escape from prison, including Qasim al-Raymi and Nasir al-Wuhayshi, who becomes the leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula when it officially opens operations in Yemen in January 2009.  
Source: Gregory D. Johnsen, “Tracking Yemen’s 23 Escaped Jihadi Operatives – Part 2,” *Terrorism Monitor* 5, no. 19, October 24, 2007, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=4466#.VBxQ0Z3D-P8](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4466#.VBxQ0Z3D-P8).
- - : Said al-Shihri is captured in Afghanistan and transferred to U.S. custody at the Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba.  
Source: Gregory D. Johnsen, “A Profile of AQAP’s Upper Echelon,” *CTC Sentinel* 5, no. 7 (2012): 7.
- - : The men who eventually create AQAP in 2009—Nasir al-Wuhayshi, Said al-Shihri, Qasim al-Raymi, and Mohamed al-Awfi—travel to Afghanistan and spend time at al-Qaeda–sponsored training camps there.  
Al-Wuhayshi serves as Osama bin Laden’s personal secretary in Afghanistan between 1998 until late 2001, when the two are separated during the U.S.-led Battle of Tora Bora. Source: Gregory D. Johnsen, “A Profile of AQAP’s Upper Echelon,” *CTC Sentinel* 5, no. 7 (2012): 6-8.

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**Violent history:**

- **August 10, 2023:** A military commander and three soldiers from the Security Belt Forces are killed in an explosion targeting a security convoy in Abyan, Yemen. The Security Belt Forces are loyal to the STC, which blames AQAP for the explosion but provides no further details of the attack.<sup>117</sup>
- **August 1, 2023:** Suspected AQAP militants, armed with mortars and RPGs, attack a Southern Armed Forces position in Wadi Omran in Yemen's Abyan province, killing at least five and wounding four. The attackers escape to a mountainous area between Abyan and neighboring Bayda province.<sup>118</sup>
- **June 14, 2023:** AQAP claims an IED attack on an STC water tanker in Abyan, Yemen. AQAP publishes before and after photos showing damage to the vessel.<sup>119</sup>
- **June 12, 2023:** A drone attack targets a Shabwani Defense Forces 1st Brigade post in al Musayniah in Yemen's Shabwa province. On June 14, AQAP claims credit and publishes photos of the drone dropping and detonating explosives on the post.<sup>120</sup>
- **June 10, 2023:** AQAP militants attack a Shabwani Defense Forces 1st Brigade post in al Musayniah in Yemen's Shabwa province.<sup>121</sup>
- **May 16, 2023:** A drone attacks a Shabwani Defense Forces 1st Brigade post in al Musayniah in Yemen's Shabwa province.<sup>122</sup>
- **May 5, 2023:** An IED targets an STC-backed military ambulance in al Mudiyah in Yemen's Abyan province, killing one and wounding three. AQAP is suspected.<sup>123</sup>
- **May 4, 2023:** AQAP fires mortars at a Southern Transitional Council (STC)-backed military compound in the al Mahfad district of Yemen's Abyan governorate. No casualties are reported. AQAP claims the STC-backed soldiers "escaped."<sup>124</sup>
- **April 18, 2023:** Shabwani security forces dismantle an IED on a road leading to a Shabwani Defense Forces Brigade outpost in Ataq, Shabwa. Authorities accuse AQAP of planting the device.<sup>125</sup>
- **February 23, 2023:** An IED wounds an unreported number of UAE-backed infantry soldiers in the Musanyah district in Yemen's Shabwa province. AQAP is suspected.<sup>126</sup>
- **November 26, 2022:** An IED targets 5th Giants Brigade fighters near al Nasara in Shabwa's Ataq district, killing one and wounding one. AQAP is suspected.<sup>127</sup>
- **November 26, 2022:** An IED targets the 1st Shabwani Defense Forces Brigade in Yemen's Shabwa province, killing three and wounding three others. AQAP is suspected.<sup>128</sup>
- **September 6, 2022:** AQAP militants, armed with RPGs, light and medium weapons, and military vehicles, ambush a security checkpoint in Ahwar district in Abyan province, killing at least 20 Yemeni security force members.<sup>129</sup>
- **June 23, 2022:** Suspected AQAP militants launch two separate attacks in Abyan and Shabwa provinces, southern Yemen. In Abyan, a convoy belonging to Saudi-backed forces was attacked by armed men using roadside bombs. Five soldiers are killed. In Shabwa, assailants ambush a military checkpoint also killing five soldiers.<sup>130</sup>
- **February 24, 2022:** AQAP claims responsibility for a bombing and sniper attack on Houthi militants in Bayda, Yemen.<sup>131</sup>
- **February 11, 2022:** Suspected al-Qaeda militants kidnap five U.N. workers in Abyan, Yemen. The militants reportedly demand a ransom and the release of some militants imprisoned by the internationally recognized government. Tribal leaders in Yemen are reportedly negotiating for the release of the hostages. Among the five hostages are four Yemeni nationals and one foreign national.<sup>132</sup>
- **December 7, 2020:** AQAP gunmen attack a security checkpoint in Lawdar in Yemen's Abyan province, killing at least six members of the Security Belt Forces and wounding four.<sup>133</sup>
- **November 2, 2020:** AQAP militants attack Houthi fighters with mortar, gunfire, and IEDs in Shawkan, al-Bayda province.<sup>134</sup>
- **October 16, 2020:** AQAP launches attacks targeting Houthi militants in al-Bayda province. The attacks included firing mortar at the Houthis and detonating an IED near Houthi vehicles.<sup>135</sup>
- **August 25, 2020:** AQAP militants detonate a bomb in the Soma district of al-Bayda province. The attack destroys a health center where alleged al-Qaeda dissident Mottar al-Yousoufi, was killed and crucified days earlier.<sup>136</sup>

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- **August 15, 2020:** AQAP militants shoot Motthar al-Youssoufi in al-Bayda province. They crucify his body and leave it outside a health clinic. The jihadists claimed al-Youssoufi guided U.S. drone strikes against the militants.<sup>137</sup>
  - **April 23, 2020:** AQAP militants ambush a security checkpoint in Abyan province. The attack kills one Yemeni security member and another was kidnapped.<sup>138</sup>
  - **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.<sup>139</sup>
  - **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 Abdelqau 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.<sup>140</sup>
  - **August 27, 2019 – September 11, 2019:** According to the Long War Journal, AQAP and Islamic State in Yemen (ISIS-Y) have engaged in more than 29 attacks against one another in Yemen's Qayfa region. The attacks occurred in a period from August 27 through September 11, 2019. AQAP allegedly carried out the majority of the attacks (23 out of the reported 29).<sup>141</sup>
  - **August 2, 2019:** AQAP militants attack the al-Mahfad army base in southern Abyan province. The insurgents killed at least 19 soldiers.<sup>142</sup>
  - **August 1, 2019:** A suicide bomber drives his explosive-laden car into a police station in Aden. The attack kills 13 policemen. No one claims responsibility for the attack, although AQAP often uses such attacks to target military bases and police stations.<sup>143</sup>
  - **July 19, 2019:** AQAP members attack a military checkpoint in Abyan. At least five soldiers are killed. The soldiers were newly recruited security forces backed by the United Arab Emirates. It is reported that AQAP has been intensifying their armed attacks against the pro-government Yemeni forces over the past couple of months.<sup>144</sup>
  - **June 18, 2019:** Suspected AQAP gunmen open fire and kill a security member in Hadramout. It is unreported if there were any other casualties or injuries.<sup>145</sup>
  - **June 11, 2019:** A security vehicle strikes a roadside bomb in Abyan province. The explosion kills at least three soldiers and injures an additional four. It is suspected that AQAP is responsible for the attack as roadside bombs heavily feature throughout their insurgent strategy.<sup>146</sup>
  - **May 4, 2019:** An ISIS militant detonates a bomb in Bayda province. The suicide attack kills four suspected AQAP members.<sup>147</sup>
  - **May 3, 2019:** A roadside bomb planted by AQAP detonates in Hadramaut. The blast kills six civilians.<sup>148</sup>
  - **February 13, 2019:** Yemeni security forces strike a roadside bomb in Abyan province. Three personnel are killed and several others injured. The bomb was planted to target the newly recruited Yemeni troops backed by the UAE.<sup>149</sup>
  - **August 4, 2018:** AQAP conducts a suicide bombing on Security Belt Forces in Abyan governorate.<sup>150</sup>
  - **August 3, 2018:** Suspected AQAP members attack a military base of newly recruited Yemeni troops in Abyan. The gunmen possessed rocket-propelled grenades. An unconfirmed number of soldiers are killed.<sup>151</sup>
  - **July 12, 2018:** A recently formed pro-AQAP group has its first clashes with ISIS.<sup>152</sup>
  - **July 2, 2018 – July 11, 2018:** AQAP claims it has killed 8 Houthis, including a commander, in the Bayda governorate over the past 10 days.<sup>153</sup>
  - **June 26, 2018:** AQAP bombs and ambushes UAE-backed forces in the Shabwa governorate.<sup>154</sup>
  - **June 15, 2018:** AQAP carries out a suicide bombing and raid on Security Belt Forces in Abyan Governorate.<sup>155</sup>
  - **May 29, 2018:** AQAP releases footage of a rocket attack on a Houthi camp in Handramawt.<sup>156</sup>
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- **May 13, 2018:** AQAP claims five separate attacks on Houthi fighters and UAE-backed Security Belt Forces in al-Bayda and Abyan governorates.<sup>157</sup>
  - **April 23, 2018:** AQAP releases a video of a raid on a UAE-backed Shabwani Elite forces barracks in Ataq, Shabwa governorate.<sup>158</sup>
  - **April 11, 2018:** AQAP detonates a car bomb in Handramawt killing 10 Houthi fighters.<sup>159</sup>
  - **March 28, 2018:** Twelve UAE-backed fighters are killed, including several who were beheaded, in Mukalla. No group claims responsibility but AQAP is suspected.<sup>160</sup>
  - **March 15, 2018:** AQAP captures five Houthi fighters in a raid on Houthi position in Radaa, al-Bayda governorate.<sup>161</sup>
  - **February 2018:** On February 13, AQAP conducts a bombing and raid on a Houthi headquarters in al-Bayda governorate. AQAP also carries out four attacks between February 11 and February 19 using explosives, rockets, and “silenced weapons” in Abyan, Ibb, and Hadramawt governorates.<sup>162</sup>
  - **January 2018:** AQAP wounds 20 Yemeni fighters in a car bombing in Shabwa governorate and detonates two car bombs in al-Bayda targeting Houthi fighters on January 11. On January 22, AQAP targets Security Belt Forces, Houthis, and Elite forces in al-Bayda, Abyan, and Hadramawt governorates.<sup>163</sup>
  - **December 2017:** AQAP claims nine attacks in Abyan, al-Bayda, and Shabwa governorates between November 30 and December 20. On December 26, AQAP claims five attacks on Elite Forces, Houthi fighters, and Security Belt Forces in Hadramawt, al-Bayda, and Abyan governorates, respectively.<sup>164</sup>
  - **November 2017:** AQAP carries out seven attacks on Security Belt Forces in Abyan governorate between November 15 and November 23 and five attacks on Houthi fighters in Ibb and al-Bayda’ governorates between November 18 and November 27, as well as again targeting Security Belt Forces in Abyan.<sup>165</sup>
  - **October 2017:** AQAP carries out two bombings in Handramawt and attacks Houthi and UAE-backed Security Belt Forces in Abyan and al-Bayda on October 4. On October 7, AQAP conducts two separate car bombings targeting Security Belt Forces and rapid intervention forces in Abyan governorate. On October 23, AQAP carries out a raid on UAE-backed forces in Abyan governorate, as well as targeting Houthi fighters in al-Bayda.<sup>166</sup>
  - **August 26-29, 2017:** AQAP claims responsibility for four attacks on Houthi fighters in al-Bayda governorate between August 26 and August 29.<sup>167</sup>
  - **August 20, 2017:** AQAP claims to have killed 25 Houthi fighters in clashes in Rada’a, Abyan governorate.<sup>168</sup>
  - **August 8, 2017:** AQAP carries out a suicide bomb attack on a Yemeni army camp in Abyan governorate. The terrorist group hit the camp with mortars two days prior.<sup>169</sup>
  - **July 18, 2017:** AQAP carries out a suicide bombing on a Saudi-backed pro-Hadi military base in Shabwa governorate’s Belhaf area.<sup>170</sup>
  - **July 16, 2017:** AQAP militants kill five government troops in an attack in the Shabwah governorate. This attack follows a series of raids on government checkpoints throughout Yemen.<sup>171</sup>
  - **July 2, 2017:** AQAP releases footage of six attacks on Houthi positions across the Bayda governorate.<sup>172</sup>
  - **April 2017:** Twenty U.S. airstrikes target AQAP militants early in the month, bringing the total number of airstrikes for 2017 to an unprecedented 75. Later in April, AQAP militants assassinate a Houthi commander in Yarim, northern Yemen.<sup>173</sup>
  - **March 31, 2017:** AQAP claims responsibility for the SVBIED attack on a government building in Lahj, southern Yemen, which left 10 people dead, including four civilians.<sup>174</sup>
  - **January 2017 - February 2017:** AQAP continues to attack Houthi and Saleh-aligned forces across the country, detonating at least two IEDs and using grad rockets to attack rebel positions.<sup>175</sup> A U.S. Navy SEAL is killed in a firefight between U.S. armed forces and AQAP militants in central Yemen on January 29.<sup>176</sup>
  - **November 8, 2016 - November 17, 2016:** AQAP claims a series of near-daily attacks on Security Belt Forces (SBF) in Yemen’s Abyan governorate.<sup>177</sup>
  - **September 2016:** September 2016: AQAP targets Yemeni officials in southern Yemen. On September 1, AQAP militants kill a total of 31 Yemeni Security Belt Forces in Yemen’s southwest province of Abyan. On September 4, a U.S. airstrike kills six AQAP militants and wounds
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one more in southern Yemen.<sup>178</sup>

- **August 2016:** AQAP targets Houthi rebels in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa. On August 19, militants kill three Houthi officials in Sanaa. AQAP claims responsibility. The group is targeted by U.S. airstrikes later in the month.<sup>179</sup>
- **July 2016:** U.S. airstrikes target AQAP throughout the month.<sup>180</sup>
- **April 2016:** AQAP suffers territorial losses to UAE forces, including losing control of the group's major port stronghold in Mukalla. On April 26, a U.S. airstrike kills AQAP chief financial officer Hossam al-Zanjibari in Yemen's southwest region of Abyan.<sup>181</sup>
- **March 2016:** U.S. airstrikes target major AQAP locations, including its intelligence center and a training camp.<sup>182</sup>
- **February 2016:** AQAP militants seize five towns throughout Yemen's southern provinces, including Azzan, Habban, Mahfad, Saqra, and Ahwar. On February 4, a U.S. airstrike kills AQAP senior member Jalal Belaidy and two others in the southwestern region of Abyan.<sup>183</sup>
- **December 2015:** AQAP fighters take control of Ja'ar and Zinjibar in the southwestern region of Abyan.<sup>184</sup>
- **June 16, 2015:** AQAP confirms that its leader Nasir al-Wuhayshi was killed in a U.S. drone strike.<sup>185</sup>
- **May 2015:** AQAP militants seize control of al Shihr in Yemen's southeastern region of Hadramawt.<sup>186</sup>
- **April 2, 2015:** AQAP militants seize the southern city of Mukalla, Yemen's fifth largest city, and free 270 inmates from government security facilities. AQAP governs Mukalla for one year before being expelled.<sup>187</sup>
- **March 2, 2015:** AQAP militants attack a Yemeni army base in Mahfad in the southwestern Abyan province, killing two soldiers.<sup>188</sup>
- **February 12, 2015:** AQAP fighters seize Yemeni army based located in Yemen's southern province of Shabwa, killing an undetermined number of troops and imprisoning others.<sup>189</sup>
- **January 26, 2015:** AQAP militants attack a military checkpoint in southern Yemen, killing one soldier and wounding two others.<sup>190</sup>
- **January 7, 2015:** A car bomb detonates outside a police college in Sanaa, killing 40 and wounding 71. AQAP is suspected.<sup>191</sup>
- **January 7, 2015:** Said and Cherif Kouachi attack the offices of French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris, killing 12. They claimed to act in the name of AQAP, according to witnesses.<sup>192</sup> On January 14, AQAP officially claims responsibility for the attack.<sup>193</sup>
- **December 31, 2014:** An AQAP bomb attack kills 26 people in a street celebration.<sup>194</sup>
- **December 24, 2014:** AQAP calls for attacks against U.S. airliners in the 13<sup>th</sup> issue of its English-language magazine, *Inspire*.<sup>195</sup>
- **December 16, 2014:** AQAP launches attack in Radaa. Two simultaneous car bombs kill 31, including 20 schoolgirls.<sup>196</sup>
- **December 9, 2014:** Two AQAP suicide bombers attempt to drive explosive-laden cars into a military compound in east Yemen, killing five soldiers.<sup>197</sup>
- **December 8, 2014:** Five roadside bombs target Shiite Houthi fighters and wound several people in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa. AQAP is believed to be behind the attacks.<sup>198</sup>
- **December 3, 2014:** AQAP militants detonate a car bomb outside of the Iranian ambassador's residence in Yemen, killing three.<sup>199</sup>
- **October 17, 2014:** At least 15 are killed in fighting between Houthi rebels and Sunni Muslim tribesman in and around the Yemeni city of Ibb.<sup>200</sup>
- **October 15:** AQAP fighters storm the town of Odein, killing three soldiers. AQAP holds the town for nine hours before it withdraws.<sup>201</sup>
- **October 11, 2014:** An explosion near a military checkpoint in Yemen's Hadramaout province kills two soldiers and injures four others. AQAP and its local wing, Ansar al-Sharia, are suspected.<sup>202</sup>
- **October 9, 2014:** Suicide bombers kills at least 67 people in two separate attacks. A suicide bomber detonates at a Houthi checkpoint in Sanaa, killing at least 47, including four children. A suicide car bombing and a gun attack on an army outpost in eastern Yemen kills at least 20 soldiers. AQAP does not immediately claim responsibility, but the bombings mirror past AQAP attacks.<sup>203</sup>
- **October 8, 2014:** AQAP fighters attack security and government buildings in southern Yemen with guns and rocket-propelled grenades, killing at least four soldiers before they are forced to retreat.<sup>204</sup>

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- **October 1, 2014:** AQAP conducts three attacks against the Yemeni military and Shiite rebels, killing at least four soldiers and wounding five.<sup>205</sup>
  - **September 29, 2014:** AQAP claims credit for at least four attacks against the Yemeni military and Shiite rebels, killing at least 20.<sup>206</sup>
  - **September 28, 2014:** An AQAP suicide bomber detonates a car bomb at a hospital-turned-Houthi base, killing 15. Five more die in an AQAP ambush in the south of Yemen.<sup>207</sup>
  - **September 25, 2014:** AQAP executes a Yemeni intelligence officer and four other Yemeni officials.<sup>208</sup>
  - **September 1, 2014:** AQAP kills 13 Yemeni soldiers and wounds 40 in an attack in Shabwa.<sup>209</sup>
  - **September 1, 2014:** AQAP executes three local men suspected of aiding U.S. drone strikes in Yemen’s Hadramout province.<sup>210</sup>
  - **August 2014:** On August 7, AQAP tries to attack an army facility and briefly gains control over several government buildings. On August 8, alleged AQAP militants kidnap and kill 14 Yemeni soldiers.<sup>211</sup>
  - **July 15, 2014:** Suspected al-Qaeda members rob a post office and kill a police officer in Hadramout.<sup>212</sup>
  - **June 2014:** On June 5, al-Qaeda militants kill at least 14 soldiers and government-allied tribesmen at an army checkpoint in southern Shabwa.<sup>213</sup> On June 26, AQAP carries out simultaneous attacks in Seyoun. Militants reportedly kill three soldiers at Seyoun Airport, while a suicide car bomber detonates himself at the entrance of an army base, killing five Yemeni soldiers.<sup>214</sup>
  - **May 2014:** On May 14, AQAP militants carry out simultaneous attacks in Azzan and Gol al Rayda, killing 10 soldiers.<sup>215</sup> On May 23, al-Qaeda militants kill 12 Yemeni troops and wound 11 in southern Hadramout.<sup>216</sup>
  - **April 24, 2014:** Two suspected AQAP kidnappers attempt to abduct two Americans—one Special Operations commando and one CIA officer—from a barbershop in Sanaa. The Americans reportedly shoot and kill both suspects and flee in an SUV parked nearby.<sup>217</sup>
  - **April 8, 2014:** Militants from AQAP attack a military checkpoint in Hadramout, Yemen, killing 8 soldiers.<sup>218</sup>
  - **February 13, 2014:** AQAP militants carry out an attack on the central prison in Sanaa, freeing 29 prisoners, including 19 suspected of affiliation with AQAP. A suicide bomber reportedly detonates a car outside the prison, followed by two units of fighters, one that engages security guards outside the prison, and another that battles with guards inside. At least 7 soldiers are killed in the attack.<sup>219</sup>
  - **December 16, 2013:** After AQAP militants slam a vehicle packed with explosives into the hospital at the Yemeni Defense Ministry complex in Sanaa, a group of gunmen engage security forces in a shootout that leaves 52 people dead.<sup>220</sup> AQAP senior leader Qasim al-Raymi later apologizes for the attack, saying, “We offer our apologies and condolences to the families of the victims... We did not want your lost ones; we did not target them on purpose.”<sup>221</sup>
  - **August 2013:** Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri names AQAP leader Nasir al-Wuhayshi his deputy,<sup>222</sup> and 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.<sup>223</sup>
  - **May 21, 2012:** A suicide bomber dressed in a Yemeni army uniform detonates himself during rehearsals for a military parade in Sanaa, killing 90 soldiers and injuring more than 200.<sup>224</sup>
  - **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.<sup>225</sup>
  - **March 2012:** Militants abduct Saudi envoy Abdullah al-Khalidi in the Yemeni southern port city of Aden, demanding a ransom and the release of prisoners from Saudi jails.<sup>226</sup>
  - **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 make their way from Yemen to Britain and Dubai before a last minute tip from Saudi intelligence alerts officials in each country to the cargo and foils the plot.<sup>227</sup>
  - **June 20, 2010:** Four gunmen break into the Yemeni intelligence headquarters in Aden, killing several security guards and freeing suspected al-Qaeda detainees. The attack leaves 11 people dead.<sup>228</sup>
  - **May 1, 2010:** Faisal Shahzad, a naturalized American citizen from Pakistan who was allegedly inspired by Anwar al-Awlaki, attempts to detonate a car bomb in Times Square. The plot collapses when the explosives fail to detonate.<sup>229</sup>
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- **April 26, 2010:** A suicide bomber targets the British ambassador’s convoy as it travels to the British embassy in Sanaa, narrowly missing the ambassador while killing himself and wounding two security guards.<sup>230</sup>
  - **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 is subdued by passengers after setting his pants on fire. Abdulmutallab allegedly received training and explosives from AQAP in Yemen.<sup>231</sup>
  - **November 5, 2009:** Nidal Hasan, a U.S. Army psychiatrist who exchanged dozens of emails with U.S.-born cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, embarks on a shooting rampage at an army base in Fort Hood, Texas, killing 12 and wounding 31.<sup>232</sup>
  - **August 27, 2009:** Al-Qaeda operative Abdullah Asiri meets with Saudi Arabia’s Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, then Assistant Minister of Interior for Security Affairs, ostensibly to turn himself in and repent for joining al-Qaeda. Instead, Asiri detonates a bomb that is hidden in his underwear, killing himself and injuring the Saudi minister.<sup>233</sup>
  - **March 16, 2009:** A suicide bomber detonates himself in Yemen’s historic old city of Shibam, killing 4 South Korean tourists.<sup>234</sup>
  - **September 17, 2008:** Militants from an al-Qaeda-affiliated group called Islamic Jihad disguise themselves as soldiers and detonate two car bombs outside of the U.S. embassy in Sanaa, killing 18.<sup>235</sup>
  - **March 18, 2008:** Militants fire three mortar rounds at the U.S. embassy in Sanaa, missing and hitting a high school for girls next to it. The attack kills one security guard and wounds 18 people.<sup>236</sup>
  - **January 19, 2008:** Gunmen in Hadramout fire on a convoy of tourists, killing 2 Belgians and 2 Yemenis.<sup>237</sup>
  - **July 2, 2007:** A suicide bomber detonates himself at a tourist site in Maarib, Yemen, killing 7 Spaniards and two Yemenis.<sup>238</sup>
  - **February 3, 2006:** 23 alleged al-Qaeda militants in Yemen escape from prison, including Qasim al-Raymi and Nasir al-Wuhayshi, who becomes the leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula when it officially opens operations in Yemen in January 2009.<sup>239</sup>
  - **December 2004:** On December 6, al-Qaeda launches an attack against the U.S. Consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, killing 5 non-American employees.<sup>240</sup> Then on December 29, militants attack Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Interior in Riyadh. Saudi forces kill seven of the assailants.<sup>241</sup>
  - **June 2004:** Al-Qaeda militants kidnap and behead Paul Johnson, an American defense contractor for Lockheed Martin.<sup>242</sup> Days after Johnson’s body is found dumped outside of Riyadh, Saudi security forces kill Abdulaziz al-Muqrin, who is—at the time—the purported leader of al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia and the kingdom’s most wanted man. Muqrin is thought to be behind the kidnapping and several other attacks, including the November 8, 2003 residential compound attack in Riyadh that kills 17, as well as the May 2004 attacks on the al-Khobar Petroleum Center and Oasis residential compound that leave 22 dead.<sup>243</sup>
  - **November 8, 2003:** Suicide bombers driving vehicles disguised as police cars attack another residential compound in Riyadh, killing 17 and injuring 122.<sup>244</sup>
  - **May 2003:** On May 12, al-Qaeda militants in Saudi Arabia attack Western housing compounds in Riyadh, killing 35 people.<sup>245</sup>
  - **October 2002:** Al-Qaeda reportedly carries out attacks on a French oil tanker in Yemen on October 6, killing one crewmember. On October 8, the group claims responsibility for attacking and killing two U.S. Marines on Faylaka Island in Kuwait.<sup>246</sup>
  - **October 12, 2000:** Suicide bombers driving an inflatable raft packed with explosives ram into the U.S.S. Cole as it is mooring a U.S. Navy destroyer to a buoy in the Port of Aden, killing 17 U.S. service members 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.<sup>247</sup>
  - **Late 1990s-Early 2000s:** The men who eventually create AQAP in 2009—Nasir al-Wuhayshi, Said al-Shihri, Qasim al-Raymi, and Mohamed al-Awfi—all travel to Afghanistan and spend time at al-Qaeda-sponsored training camps there.<sup>248</sup> Al-Wuhayshi serves as Osama Bin Laden’s personal secretary in Afghanistan between 1998 until about late 2001, when the two are separated during the U.S.-led Battle of Tora Bora.<sup>249</sup>
  - **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.<sup>250</sup>

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**Designations:**

*Designations by the U.S. Government:*

- ○ **January 19, 2010:** The Department of State designates Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act).<sup>251</sup>
- **January 19, 2010:** The Department of State designates Said al-Shihri as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>252</sup> He is delisted on November 26, 2014.<sup>253</sup>
- **January 19, 2010:** The Department of State designates Nasir al-Wuhayshi as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>254</sup> He is delisted on November 17, 2015.<sup>255</sup>
- **May 11, 2010:** The Department of State designates Qasim al-Raymi as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>256</sup>
- **May 11, 2010:** The Department of State designates Nayif al-Qahtani as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>257</sup> He is delisted on June 27, 2013.<sup>258</sup>
- **July 6, 2010:** The Department of the Treasury designates Anwar al-Awlaki as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>259</sup>
- **December 7, 2010:** The Department of State designates Fahd Mohamed Ahmed al-Quso as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>260</sup> He is delisted on September 26, 2013.<sup>261</sup>
- **July 6, 2010:** The Department of State designates Ibrahim Hassan Tali al-Asiri as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>262</sup>
- **March 24, 2011:** The Department of State designates Ibrahim Hassan Tali Al-Asiri as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>263</sup>
- **June 16, 2011:** The Department of State designates Othman al-Ghamdi as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>264</sup>
- **October 7, 2013:** The Department of the Treasury designates Muhammed Jamal Abd-al Rahim Ahmad as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>265</sup>
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- **December 18, 2013:** The Department of the Treasury designates Abd al-Wahhab Abd Muhammad Abd al-Rahamn Humayqani as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>267</sup>
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- **December 18, 2014:** The Department of State designates Ibrahim al-Rubaysh as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>270</sup>
- **September 29, 2015:** The Department of State designates Peter Cherif as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>271</sup>
- **January 5, 2017:** The Department of State designates Ibrahim al-Banna as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>272</sup>
- **January 4, 2018:** The Department of State designates Muhammad al-Ghazali as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>273</sup>
- **January 23, 2018:** The Department of State designates Khalid Batarfi as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).<sup>274</sup>

*Designations by Foreign Governments and Organizations:*

- ○ United Kingdom—listed Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) as an Asset Freeze Target on January 20, 2010.<sup>275</sup>
- United Kingdom—listed Abdul Mohsen Abdallah Ibrahim al Charekh (Sanafi al-Nasr) as an Asset Freeze Target on January 20, 2010.<sup>276</sup>
- United Kingdom—listed Nasir Abd-al-Karim Abdullah al-Wahishi as an Asset Freeze Target on January 20, 2010<sup>277</sup> and eventually delisted him.<sup>278</sup>
- United Kingdom—listed Qasim Yahya Mahdi al-Rimi as an Asset Freeze Target on May 26, 2010.<sup>279</sup>
- United Kingdom—listed Anwar Nasser Abdulla al-Aulaqi as an Asset Freeze Target on July 30, 2010.<sup>280</sup>
- United Kingdom—listed Ibrahim Hassan Tali al-Asiri as an Asset Freeze Target on April 1, 2011.<sup>281</sup>
- United Kingdom—listed Othman Ahmed Othman al-Ghamdi as an Asset Freeze Target on June 27, 2011.<sup>282</sup>

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- United Kingdom—listed Muhammad Jamal Abd-al Rahim Ahmad al-Kashif as an Asset Freeze Target on November 5, 2013.<sup>283</sup>
- United Kingdom—listed Abdullah al-Zaidi Ghalib as an Asset Freeze Target on February 25, 2017.<sup>284</sup>
- United Kingdom—listed Salih Salim al-Qaysi Nayif as an Asset Freeze Target on February 25, 2017.<sup>285</sup>
- ○ United Nations—listed Aiman Muhammed Rabi al-Zawahri as an Individual associated with Al Qaida on October 6, 2001.<sup>286</sup>
- United Nations—listed Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) under the category "Entities and other groups and undertakings associated with Al Qaida" on January 19, 2010.<sup>287</sup>
- United Nations—listed Nasir ‘abd-al-Karim ‘Abdullah al-Wahishi as an Individual associated with Al Qaida on January 19, 2010.<sup>288</sup> He was delisted on October 11, 2016.<sup>289</sup>
- United Nations—listed Said Ali al-Shihri as an Individual associated with Al Qaida on January 19, 2010.<sup>290</sup> He was delisted on March 16, 2015.<sup>291</sup>
- United Nations—listed Qasim Yaha Mahdi al-Rimi as an Individual associated with Al Qaida on May 11, 2010.<sup>292</sup>
- United Nations—listed Anwar Nasser Abdulla al-Aulaqi as an Individual associated with Al Qaida on July 20, 2010.<sup>293</sup>
- United Nations—listed Ibrahim Hassan Tali al-Asiri as an Individual associated with Al Qaida on March 24, 2011.<sup>294</sup>
- United Nations—listed Othman Ahmed Othman al-Ghamdi as an Individual associated with Al Qaida on June 16, 2011.<sup>295</sup>
- United Nations—listed Muhammad Jamal Abd-Al Rahim Ahmad Al-Kashif as an Individual associated with Al Qaida on October 21, 2013.<sup>296</sup>
- United Nations—listed Anders Cameroon Ostensvig Dale as an Individual associated with Al Qaida on September 23, 2014.<sup>297</sup>
- United Nations—listed Abd Al-Aziz Aday Zimin al-Fadhil as an Individual associated with Al Qaida on September 21, 2015.<sup>298</sup>
- United Nations—listed Mu’tassim Yahya ‘Ali Al-Rumaysh as an Individual associated with Al Qaida on September 29, 2015.<sup>299</sup>
- United Nations—listed Peter Cherif as an Individual associated with Al Qaida on September 29, 2015.<sup>300</sup>
- United Nations—listed Ghalib Abdullah Al-Zaidi as an Individual associated with Al Qaida on February 22, 2017.<sup>301</sup>
- United Nations—listed Nayif Salih Salim al-Qaysi as an Individual associated with Al Qaida on February 22, 2017.<sup>302</sup>
- Australia—listed Al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) as a terrorist organization on November 26, 2010; re-listed in 2013 and 2016.<sup>303</sup>
- Canada—listed Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) as a terrorist entity on December 23, 2010.<sup>304</sup>
- Israel—listed Anwar Nasser Abdulla al-Aulaqi as a declared individual.<sup>305</sup>
- European Union—listed Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) as an entity associated with the ISIL (Da’esh) and Al-Qaida organizations on January 19, 2010.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> “Designations of Al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Senior Leaders,” U.S. Department of State, January 19, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/143208.htm>.

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### **Associations:**

#### *Ties to Extremist Entities:*

- **ISIS**

In August 2014, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula announced its support for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria via Twitter,<sup>307</sup> and made operative recommendations to ISIS in a statement published on its website.<sup>308</sup> Although al-Qaeda distanced itself from the brutal group based in Iraq and Syria, no break has since been reported between al-Qaeda and its affiliate in the Arabian Peninsula as a result of AQAP's support for ISIS.

In August 2018, AQAP fought against ISIS in Yemen for the first time in four years. Dr. Gregory Johnsen, member of the U.N. Security Council's Panel of Experts on Yemen, therefore believes that the relationship between AQAP and ISIS has shifted from its previous "tacit non-aggression pact" into a direct conflict with one another.<sup>309</sup>

In November 2014, AQAP chief cleric Harith al-Nadhari accused ISIS of "planting... disunity" among Islamic factions fighting in Syria.<sup>310</sup> In an official AQAP statement, al-Nadhari criticized ISIS of "extending the caliphate to a number of countries in which [it has] no power." Al-Nadhari's criticism came one week after a November 13 declaration by ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in which Baghdadi claimed the 'caliphate' to have spread to Libya, Yemen, Algeria, Egypt and Qatar.<sup>311</sup>

- **Khorasan**

Khorasan is a Syria-based al-Qaeda offshoot considered in September 2014 an "imminent threat" to U.S. national security.<sup>312</sup> According to then-Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper Jr., "in terms of threat to the homeland, Khorasan may pose as much of a danger as the Islamic State [in Iraq and al-Sham]."<sup>313</sup> Khorasan's connection to AQAP runs deep. The U.S. described Khorasan as a "network of seasoned al Qaeda veterans."<sup>314</sup> U.S. Representative Adam Schiff (D-CA), a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, indirectly referred to Khorasan as "an unholy mix of people... some who come from AQAP."<sup>315</sup> Khorasan has plotted with AQAP members, including chief bomb maker Ibrahim al-Asiri, to plan concealed bombs for terrorist plots against the United States. According to CNN, al-Asiri plotted three strikes against American aviation between 2009 and 2012, after which he was supposedly "transferred" to the Khorasan Group.<sup>316</sup>

- **Al-Shabab**

Al-Shabab is al-Qaeda's Somali-based branch. According to Somali Foreign Minister Abdisalam Omer, the chaos of the Yemeni insurgency has enabled terrorists and weapons to flow between Yemen and Somalia.<sup>317</sup> According to Omer, al-Shabab fighters have been able to obtain new weapons and develop tactics from AQAP, including the use of laptop explosives and more destructive car bombs. Ties between AQAP and al-Shabab reportedly existed before the Somali-based group pledged its allegiance to the al-Qaeda network in 2012. In 2010, AQAP deputy leader Said Al Shihri released a statement calling for the two groups to target the United States together.<sup>318</sup> U.S. intelligence officers have also claimed AQAP was training al-Shabab fighters and providing them with weapons since 2011.<sup>319</sup>

- **Taliban**

Prior to the September 11, 2001, terror attacks, the Taliban provided al-Qaeda with safe havens in Afghanistan in the 1990s.<sup>320</sup> More recently, al-Qaeda leaders have been featured in Taliban propaganda videos. AQAP senior official Sheikh Khalid Bartafi appeared in a Taliban video released in 2016, affirming his support and praise for the Taliban.<sup>321</sup>

#### *Prominent Leaders:*

### **Abdullah bin Khalid al-Thani**

The royal family of Qatar has been tied to al-Qaeda central command as well as its branch in the Arabian Peninsula. Qatar's former interior minister and royal family member Abdullah bin Khalid al-Thani tipped off the 9/11 attacks mastermind, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, before he could be captured by the U.S.<sup>322</sup> In 2010, an arm of the Qatari government made a \$1.2 million donation to help build a Yemeni mosque for Abdel Wahab al-Humayqani, who was already a designated fund-raiser for AQAP.<sup>323</sup>

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### **Media Coverage:**

#### *On Deaths of AQAP Leaders*

In covering the death of AQAP's leaders, Al Jazeera tends to direct attention at authorities responsible for the strike.

In its initial reporting of the strike that killed Anwar al-Awlaki and Samir Khan in 2011, Al Jazeera directed its attention at Yemen's Ministry of Defense, which reported on the death "without specifying the date, or the location of [al-Awlaki's] death, or the manner in which he was killed." Simultaneously, the network noted a Reuters report that al-Awlaki was killed in an airstrike that struck two cars in Mareb province in eastern Yemen. The network focused on the perceived incompetency of Yemeni authorities, mentioning that they had announced al-Awlaki's demise in December 2010, only to clarify later that he had not been killed.<sup>324</sup>

In the aftermath of Said al-Shihri's death in 2013, Al Jazeera's Yemen director, Saeed Thabet, described al-Shihri as a "charismatic personality, [who had] gained great fame, and played an important role in assembling al-Qaeda members."<sup>325</sup> Thabet also noted that al-Shihri was number 36 on the Saudi's 85 most wanted list, and that he had been declared [dead] more than once.<sup>326</sup>

#### *Initial Coverage on AQAP-Driven Attacks on U.S. Soil*

After Nidal Hasan's shooting rampage at the Fort Hood U.S. army base on November 6, 2009, Al Jazeera carried a report focusing on "US Islamic groups [that] were bracing themselves for a public backlash against the faith."<sup>327</sup> The article quoted Salam al-Marayati, executive director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, who said, "We are concerned about backlash against Muslim Americans, because the culprit happens to be of Arab and apparently Muslim background. As a result, there is probably going to be some scapegoating because of his background against the Muslim American community."<sup>328</sup>

Several days later, the network finally reported that U.S. intelligence agencies "first started investigating [Nidal] Hasan in December" 2008 because of his email contact with Anwar al-Awlaki. The article noted that al-Awlaki was the imam at the Dar al-Hijrah Islamic Center in Falls church, Virginia, "where Hasan worshipped until 2002," and where "two 9/11 hijackers worshipped" as well.<sup>329</sup>

Two days after the Christmas Day Bomber incident, Al Jazeera English offered little detail about Abdulmutallab's background, noting only that he was "reported to have claimed he was trained by al-Qaeda in Yemen," and that Abdulmutallab "says that he got the equipment that he allegedly used as the flight was approaching Detroit from contacts in Yemen."<sup>330</sup> The next day, the network noted that while investigators were "probing any suspected links" to al-Qaeda, there was "no evidence to suggest any links to a wider plot." The report cited U.S. then-Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, who said, "Right now, we have no indication that [the plot] is part of anything larger."<sup>331</sup>

In covering the cargo plane bomb plot, Al Jazeera reported that Yemen had arrested a female engineering student suspected of mailing explosives from Sanaa to synagogues in Chicago, but the article did not explicitly connect her to al-Qaeda. The article did note that Yemeni authorities were "engaged in a hunt for al-Qaeda fighters in Yemen, where Anwar al-Awlaki, a U.S.-born Muslim religious leader, is named as being linked to the plot."<sup>332</sup>

#### *Qatar's Al Jazeera*

In its initial coverage of AQAP-affiliated attacks on U.S. soil, Al Jazeera downplayed any links to al-Qaeda. When covering the death of AQAP leaders, the network directed attention at authorities responsible for the strike.

#### *Arab Media Examines Legacy, Expresses Sympathy for Said al-Shihri*

When AQAP announced the death of its deputy leader, Said al-Shihri, on July 17, 2013, the Saudi outlet *al-Eqtisadiyah* uncharacteristically referred to al-Shihri as a "terrorist." The outlet printed the eulogy given by Ibrahim al-Rubaish, a senior AQAP cleric, which confirmed that al-Shihri was killed by an American drone strike. Like other media reports, *al-Eqtisadiyah* noted that Yemeni authorities had declared al-Shihri dead on January 24, saying that he died from injuries sustained in a counter-terrorism operation in November 2012. However, al-Qaeda had not officially confirmed the

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news. <sup>333</sup>

In *Al-Hayat*, Walid al-Ahmad wondered about the fate of al-Shihri's widow in Yemen. Al-Ahmad wrote that while news of al-Shihri's absence was exciting for people who follow the war on terror, the most interesting question, "especially in Saudi Arabia...[is about] which fate awaits al-Shihri's Saudi widow, Wafa al-Shihri, who fled to Yemen with her children in 2009, will she remain where she is, or will you see her returning to her homeland?" <sup>334</sup> Al-Ahmad wrote that when Abdullah Asiri called to arrange a meeting with Mohamed bin Nayef—the meeting where Asiri tried to assassinate bin Nayef by detonating a bomb in his underwear—Asiri appealed to bin Nayef by relaying a supposed message of despair from Wafa al-Shihri about the living conditions that she and her children faced in Yemen and their yearning to go home. <sup>335</sup>

*Arab Media Focus on Target Specificity in Al-Awlaki Strike*

An article in Saudi Arabia's *al-Riyadh* quoted a Yemeni tribal leader in Jouf who said 6 people were killed in the drone strike, including Anwar al-Awlaki, Salim Saleh Oreifej, Mohamed Muhsin al-Na'aj, and Samir Khan. The same tribal leader said the strike occurred around 10:30 a.m. as the men were about to eat a meal "in the desert about 600 meters from house where they were living." <sup>336</sup>

Al Arabiya's version of events differed slightly from the tribal leader's alleged eyewitness account. The network reported that al-Awlaki left his house in a pickup truck, accompanied by two other cars. At "exactly 9:55 [a.m.] Yemen Time" the drone allegedly fired three missiles – aimed only at the car carrying al-Awlaki – exploding it upon impact. <sup>337</sup>

<sup>324</sup> "Al-Yemen Ya'lan Muqatal Al-Awlaki," Al Jazeera, September 30, 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/3528ae8d-5dd8-4684-8f92-7d089d01f732>.

<sup>325</sup> "Al-Qaeda bi Al-Yemen Ta'alan Muqatal Al-Shihri," Al Jazeera, July 17, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/ee5ebda4-e2a9-41f7-81c7-23916da3ddb8>.

<sup>326</sup> "Al-Qaeda bi Al-Yemen Ta'alan Muqatal Al-Shihri," Al Jazeera, July 17, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/ee5ebda4-e2a9-41f7-81c7-23916da3ddb8>.

<sup>327</sup> "Muslim Groups Fear Backlash," Al Jazeera English, November 6, 2009, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2009/11/20091116102644523243.html>.

<sup>328</sup> "Muslim Groups Fear Backlash," Al Jazeera English, November 6, 2009, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2009/11/20091116102644523243.html>.

<sup>329</sup> "Military to Try Fort Hood Suspect," Al Jazeera English, November 10, 2009, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2009/11/2009111034348196436.html>.

<sup>330</sup> "US charges Plane Bombing Suspect," Al Jazeera English, December 27, 2009, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2009/12/20091226204548241893.html>.

<sup>331</sup> "Jet Bomb 'Not Part of Larger Plot,'" Al Jazeera English, December 28, 2009, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2009/12/200912283820592544.html>.

<sup>332</sup> "Yemen Makes Bomb-Plot Arrest," Al Jazeera English, October 31, 2010, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2010/10/2010103017926499781.html>.

<sup>333</sup> "Al-Qaeda Tu'akid Halak Al-Irhabi Said Al-Shihri fi Al-Yemen," *Al-Eqtisadiyah*, July 17, 2013, [http://www.aleqt.com/2013/07/17/article\\_771082.html](http://www.aleqt.com/2013/07/17/article_771082.html).

<sup>334</sup> Walid Al-Ahmad, "Nihaya Al-Shihri Tu'ajij Al-Tasa'ulat hawla Mustaqbal Armlatihi fi Al-Yemen," *Al-Hayat*, July 19, 2013,

<http://www.alhayat.com/OpinionsDetails/534383>.

<sup>335</sup> Walid Al-Ahmad, "Nihaya Al-Shihri Tu'ajij Al-Tasa'ulat hawla Mustaqbal Armlatihi fi Al-Yemen," *Al-Hayat*, July 19, 2013,

<http://www.alhayat.com/OpinionsDetails/534383>.

<sup>336</sup> "Sana'a wa Washinton Tu'akidan Muqatal Anwar Al-Awlaki fi Gara Jawiya," *Al-Riyadh*, October 1, 2011, <http://www.alriyadh.com/671505>.

<sup>337</sup> "Al-Arabiya' Tukashif Tafasil Al-Daqa'iq Al-Akhira fi Hayat Anwar Al-Awlaki," Al Arabiya, October 2, 2011,

<http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/10/02/169845.html>.

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### **Rhetoric:**

*Ibrahim al-Qosi, October 6, 2021*

*Speaking in an AQAP video about the Taliban's August 2015 takeover of Afghanistan:*

"They are men whose hands by the grace of Allah alone, buried a third empire in the soil of Afghanistan, and restored the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to rule by the Shari'ah of Allah, even if America and its allies hate it."<sup>338</sup>

*AQAP statement, August 18, 2021*

*Statement after the Taliban complete their takeover of Afghanistan on August 15, 2021:*

"This victory and empowerment reveals to us that jihad and fighting represent the (Islamic law)-based, legal, and realistic way to restore rights (and) expel the invaders and occupiers. As for the game of democracy and working with simple pacifism, it is a deceptive mirage, a fleeting shadow, and a vicious circle that starts with a zero and ends with it."<sup>339</sup>

*AQAP statement, April 8, 2021*

*Statement denying a February 2021 U.N. report on the arrest of Khalid Batarfi:*

"The matter in this organization is not limited to its bias in favor of the West in its decisions only, but even in falsification of facts, counterfeiting, and lies, even at the expense of losing its credibility in front of the world. As it was proven to use before, we hope that this false report will be a reason to reveal the truth about this organization, and its biased decisions and reports before the Muslim masses and those remaining neutral."<sup>340</sup>

*Khalid Batarfi, February 10, 2021*

*Video entitled "America and the Painful Seizure":*

"Storming the Congress is only the tip of the iceberg of what will come to them, God willing."<sup>341</sup>

*Qasim al-Raymi, May 7, 2017*

*Addressing lone jihadists in Western countries:* "We don't view you as an individual – even though it is referred to as Individual Jihad. We rather view you as a group, a brigade, or even an army in itself. A single operation that you execute, we wish we had an army that would carry it out. However, you are that army ..."<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> Thomas Joscelyn, "Ex-Guantánamo detainee praises Taliban's victory, threatens America in new AQAP video," Long War Journal, October 6, 2021, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2021/10/ex-guantanamo-detainee-praises-talibans-victory-threatens-america-in-new-aqap-video.php>.

<sup>339</sup> Agence France-Presse, "Al-Qaeda in Yemen congratulates Taliban, vows to continue jihad," *Hindu* (Chennai), August 19, 2021, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/al-qaeda-in-yemen-congratulates-taliban-vows-to-continue-jihad/article35992797.ece>.

<sup>340</sup> Bridget Johnson, "AQAP Calls UN Claim of Leader's Arrest 'Miserable Attempt to Wage a Psychological War,'" Homeland Security Today, April 12, 2021, <https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/aqap-calls-un-claim-of-leaders-arrest-miserable-attempt-to-wage-a-psychological-war/>.

<sup>341</sup> "Yemen al-Qaeda leader's video belies UN report of capture," Arab Weekly, February 11, 2021, <https://thearabweekly.com/yemen-al-qaeda-leaders-video-belies-un-report-capture>.

<sup>342</sup> "New video message from al-Q?idah in the Arabian Peninsula's Shaykh Q?sim al-Raym?: 'An Inspire Address #1: A Lone Muj?hid or An Army By Itself'" Jihadology, May 7, 2017, <https://jihadology.net/2017/05/07/new-video-message-from-al-qaidah-in-the-arabian-peninsulas-shaykh-qasim-al-raymi-an-inspire-address-1-a-lone-mujahid-or-an-army-by-itself/>.