

Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)



OVERVIEW

AS OF MAY 2026

AQAP, one of al-Qa'ida's most capable affiliates, was formed in 2009 in Yemen by al-Qa'ida members from Saudi Arabia and Yemeni violent extremists. It seeks to support al-Qa'ida's overall goal to establish a global caliphate guided by al-Qa'ida's interpretation of Islamic law. AQAP advocates the overthrow of the Saudi Arabian and Yemeni Governments and supports al-Qa'ida's goal of attacking the United States. Its last attack in the United States was in December 2019, when an associate of the group killed three US servicemembers and injured eight other people at Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida.

AQAP often calls for attacks against the United States and our allies through its media releases. It pursues English-speaking audiences through messaging, most notably through its Inspire publications, which began in 2010. In June 2025, AQAP released a video of its leader, Sa'd Atif al-Aulaqi, calling for attacks against senior US officials, including the President and members of Congress.

Operating Areas

Primarily in southern and central Yemen

Members

2,000 to 3,000 fighters

Tactics And Targets

Outside of Yemen, AQAP has a history of attempting attacks against cargo and passenger planes and targeting the United States and other Western countries. In Yemen, AQAP employs ambushes, assaults, assassinations, bombings, kidnappings, and suicide attacks against Yemeni Government officials, military and security forces, and infrastructure, as well as against the Huthis and ISIS-Yemen. AQAP members who are involved in localized fighting are equipped with small arms, artillery, rockets, landmines, anti-tank missiles, MANPADS, IEDs, and UAS.

Terrorist Group Designation

The State Department designated AQAP as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity in January 2010.



Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) *(continued)*

KEY LEADERS



Sa'd Atif al-Aulaqi

a.k.a. Sa'd Muhammad Atif

Overall AQAP leader; has publicly called for attacks against the United States and has kidnapped Americans in Yemen

[*The State Department's Rewards for Justice Program offers up to \\$10 million for information leading to his arrest*](#)



Ibrahim al-Banna

Founding AQAP member; has served as AQAP's chief of security; has provided military and security guidance to AQAP leaders

[*The State Department offers up to \\$5 million for information leading to his arrest*](#)



Ibrahim Ahmed Mahmoud al-Qosi

AQAP spokesperson; joined AQAP in 2014 but has long been active in al-Qa'ida; worked directly for Usama bin Ladin; a former Guantanamo Bay detainee

[*The State Department offers up to \\$4 million for information leading to his arrest*](#)

NOTABLE ATTACKS

6 December 2019

Pensacola, Florida

A Saudi military officer attending training at US Naval Air Station Pensacola kills three US servicemembers and wounds eight others. AQAP claims responsibility for the attack in February 2020. The perpetrator had been in contact with AQAP for years up until the attack.

7 January 2015

Paris, France

Two violent extremists kill 12 people and wound 11 at the office of the Charlie Hebdo magazine in Paris. AQAP claims responsibility for the attack two days later.

29 October 2010

Chicago, Illinois; Dubai, UAE; Nottingham, England

AQAP tries to send two packages containing explosives concealed as printer cartridges on US-bound cargo planes. The packages are interdicted in the UK and the UAE, respectively.



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NOTABLE ATTACKS *(continued)*

25 December 2009

Detroit, Michigan

A Nigerian AQAP operative attempts to detonate a nonmetallic bomb concealed in his underwear on a commercial flight from Amsterdam to Detroit with 289 people on board.

12 October 2000

Aden, Yemen

An al-Qa'ida cell in Yemen—one of AQAP's predecessors—uses a small explosives-laden boat to bomb the USS Cole while the ship is anchored in Aden harbor, killing 17 US sailors and injuring another 39.

