



AL-QA'IDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA



Background

- Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is an Islamist extremist organization based in Yemen and was at one time al-Qa'ida's most influential global affiliate.
- Three separate AQAP plots to blow up airliners over the United States failed in 2009, 2010, and 2012. The chief architect of those plans, bomb-maker Ibrahim al-Asiri, was killed in 2017 in Yemen. Asiri trained other AQAP operatives to build new non-metallic explosives that can evade airport security detection.
- AQAP continues to direct attacks within Yemen against both the Iranian-backed Shia Huthis and ISIS.
- On February 6, 2020, the White House announced that Qasim al-Rimi, the leader of AQAP, was killed in a US drone strike in Yemen. On February 23, 2020, AQAP religious official Hamid bin Hamoud al-Tamimi confirmed Rimi's death in a 16-minute video produced by the group's al-Malahem Media Foundation. Longtime AQAP member Khalid bin Umar Batarfi was named successor during the speech.
- Drone strikes in Yemen decreased overall last year, from approximately 35 in 2018 to eight in 2019. According to US Central Command, "despite a decline in counterterrorism air strikes against AQAP, they continue to pose a significant threat."



Khalid bin Umar Batarfi, new emir of AQAP

Threat to New Jersey: Low

- AQAP has demonstrated the intent and capability to act outside its primary area of operations in Yemen and has attempted to strike the United States on three occasions since 2009.
- In 2019, the group failed to release its English-language magazine, *Inspire*, or any other propaganda directed at English-speaking audiences for the second year in a row.
- AQAP continues to focus on local issues within Yemen, and drone strikes have nearly decimated much of the group's command staff. AQAP has not successfully executed an attack in the West since its operation in January 2015 targeting the offices of the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris.



Map of Yemen

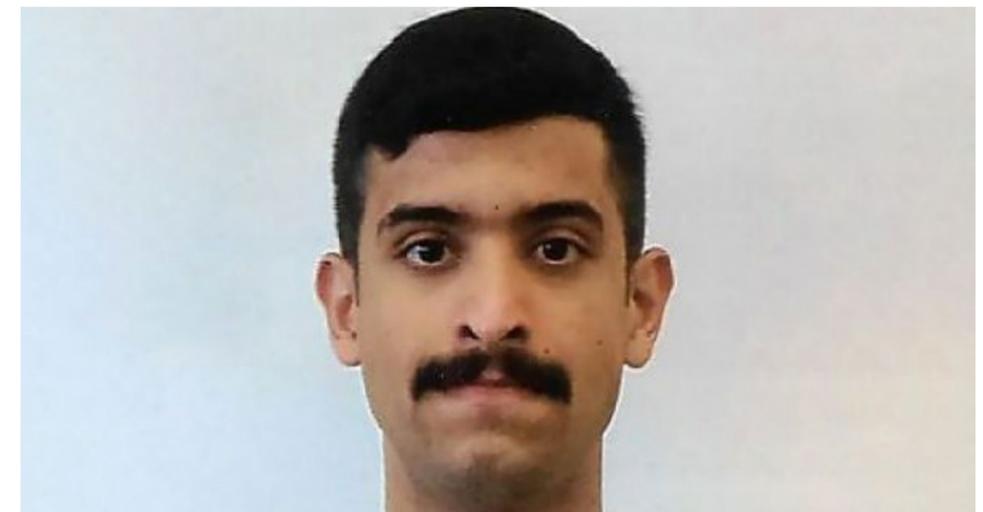
Additional Resources

[2020 Terrorism Threat Assessment](#)

[Undeterred: International Terror Groups Encourage Attacks Amid Losses](#)

US Nexus

- In August 2019, Yemeni national and Arkansas resident Bilal Al-Rayanni, also known as Bilal Kassim Alawdi, was charged with providing and attempting to provide material support to Ansar al-Shari'a, a branch of AQAP, and making a false statement on a passport application.
- In November 2019, the US State Department offered a reward of up to \$10 million for information on two senior leaders of AQAP who have encouraged attacks against the United States.
- In December 2019, AQAP claimed "full responsibility" for the shooting at Naval Air Station Pensacola on December 6, 2019. The attack was carried out by Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani, a member of the Saudi military training in the United States. Local authorities shot and killed Alshamrani after he killed three people and wounded several more.
- On February 6, 2020, the White House announced that Rimi, the emir of AQAP, was killed in a US drone strike in Yemen. On March 19, 2020, al-Qa'ida distributed a new audio message via its social media outlets from Batarfi, the new emir of AQAP. Batarfi vowed retribution in the aftermath of Rimi's death, swearing that jihadists will avenge his death, making America and its allies "miserable."



Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani, a Royal Saudi airman accused of killing three people at a US Navy base in Pensacola, Florida