



AL-QA'IDA IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT



Background

- In September 2014, al-Qa'ida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri and his son-in-law, Uthamn Basha, announced the establishment of al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). The group has sought to expand al-Qa'ida's global presence, increase supporters, establish an Islamic state, and collaborate with local jihadist groups throughout South Asia to fight the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Burma, and Bangladesh.
- The group's first leader, Asim Umar, was killed in September 2019 in a joint US-Afghan counterterrorism operation in Helmand, Afghanistan. In July 2016, the US State Department designated Umar, a former Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan commander, a specially designated global terrorist. He fought alongside several Kashmir-focused terror groups, such as Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and Jaish-e-Mohammad.
- Among AQIS's efforts to incite Muslims to conduct lone offender attacks, supporters killed two LGBTQ activists in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, in 2016 and murdered Bangladeshi-American blogger Avijit Roy, an outspoken opponent of religious extremism, in 2015.



AQIS leader Asim Umar was killed in September 2019.

Threat to New Jersey: Low

While AQIS has not inspired an American to conduct an attack in the United States, the group has sought to inspire its supporters by acknowledging al-Qa'ida affiliate attacks.

- Since the group's formation, members have continued to publish its online magazine in Arabic, *Nawai Afghan Jihad*. In an issue released in December 2019, supporters eulogized Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani, a Saudi Air Force officer who killed three sailors and wounded eight others at a Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida.
- In June 2019, AQIS spokesman Usama Mahmoud recognized the Afghan Taliban's commitment to violent jihad during its negotiations with the United States to remove US troops from Afghanistan. AQIS has sought to capitalize on Afghanistan's agreement of peace, signed in February 2020, to motivate its supporters to remain committed to attacking Kashmiri and Indian targets.
- In April 2019, four suspected AQIS militants trained in Afghanistan were arrested in Karachi, Pakistan, on terrorism charges. They reportedly carried out reconnaissance of the city courthouse, police training center, intelligence agency offices, and the Karachi Stock Exchange, as well as stockpiled firearms, remote receivers, and improvised explosive devices.

Additional Resources

[2020 Terrorism Threat Assessment](#)

[Al-Qa'ida Leader Calls for Attacks on 9/11 Anniversary](#)

[Al-Qa'ida Affiliates Merge With Regional Extremists](#)

US Nexus

AQIS continues to collaborate with jihadists in the Indian subcontinent, threatening US interests and regional allies.

- AQIS and several Pakistani militant groups remain committed to overthrowing India's government for administering the Kashmir region, populated by a Muslim majority. In July 2019, Zawahiri incited violence against India by releasing a video message titled, "Don't Forget Kashmir." Zawahiri advised supporters to establish stronger lines of communication, share terrorist tactics, and recognize successful attacks by violent extremists in Kashmir.
- AQIS's collaboration with regional extremists also included the Afghan Taliban, which has sheltered and supported al-Qa'ida's leaders and operatives. In September 2019, the Afghan National Army Commando Corps discovered a Taliban warehouse containing explosives that would be used by AQIS to conduct attacks in Afghanistan and major cities.
- In October 2019, Mahmoud incited violent extremists to support the group's efforts to aid jihadists physically, financially, and intellectually to target Indian government and military personnel.



AQIS's flag