



Document #2101667

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Country Report on Terrorism 2022 - Chapter 5 - Al-Qa'ida (AQ)

Aka al-Qa'eda; al Qaida, al Qaeda, Islamic Army; Islamic Salvation Foundation; the Base; the Group for the Preservation of the Holy Sites; the Islamic Army for the Liberation of the Holy Places; the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders; Usama Bin Laden Network; Usama Bin Laden Organization; al-Jihad; the Jihad Group; Egyptian al-Jihad; Egyptian Islamic Jihad; New Jihad; International Front for Fighting Jews and Crusades; Islamic Army for the Liberation of Holy Sites.

Description: Al-Qa'ida was designated as an FTO on October 8, 1999. Established in 1988, al-Qa'ida helped finance, recruit, transport, and train fighters for the Afghan resistance against the former Soviet Union. Al-Qa'ida strives to eliminate western influence from the Muslim world, topple "apostate" governments of Muslim countries, and establish a pan-Islamic caliphate governed by its own interpretation of Sharia that would ultimately be at the center of a new international order. These goals remain essentially unchanged since the group's 1996 public declaration of war against the United States. Al-Qa'ida leaders issued a statement in 1998 under the banner of "The World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders," saying it was the duty of all Muslims to kill U.S. citizens — civilian and military — and their allies everywhere. Al-Qa'ida merged with al-Jihad (Egyptian Islamic Jihad) in 2001. Although numerous al-Qa'ida leaders have been killed in recent years, including Usama bin Laden in 2011 and Ayman al-Zawahiri in 2022, al-Qa'ida's likely acting leader remains at large in Iran.

Activities: In the 1990s, al-Qa'ida conducted three bombings targeting U.S. troops in Aden, Yemen; claimed responsibility for shooting down U.S. helicopters and killing U.S. soldiers in Somalia; and carried out the 1998 bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam,

Tanzania, killing up to 300 people and injuring more than 5,000. Two of the individuals wanted for the embassy bombings, Sayf al-Adl and Abu Mohammed al-Masri, were released from Iranian custody in exchange for an Iranian diplomat who had been kidnapped in Yemen and held hostage since 2015. In 2000, al-Qa'ida conducted a suicide attack on the *USS Cole* in the Port of Aden with an explosive-laden boat, killing 17 U.S. Navy sailors and injuring 39 others.

On September 11, 2001, 19 al-Qa'ida members hijacked and crashed four U.S. commercial jets — two into the World Trade Center in New York City, one into the Pentagon, and the last into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Nearly 3,000 civilians, police, and first responders were killed. The dead included U.S. and foreign citizens from at least 77 countries.

In a 2011 video, al-Zawahiri claimed al-Qa'ida was behind the kidnapping of U.S. aid worker Warren Weinstein in Pakistan. Weinstein was held captive until his death in 2015. In 2017, al-Zawahiri released a video calling for jihadists around the world to conduct attacks against the United States. Al-Zawahiri also released multiple recordings and videos in 2018 in which he continued to call for jihad against the United States after the U.S. Embassy in Israel moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. In 2019, Zawahiri called for extremists in the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir to attack Indian forces and appealed to Muslims to attack U.S., European, Israeli, and Russian military targets in a video recording.

Several individuals supporting or inspired by al-Qa'ida have been convicted or arrested. In 2017 a U.S. citizen was convicted in New York of charges related to abetting al-Qa'ida's 2009 attack on a U.S. military base in Afghanistan using two truck bombs. In 2019 a man from Cleveland, Ohio, was arrested for allegedly making plans for an al-Qa'ida-inspired bomb attack on the city's downtown Independence Day parade.

In 2022 the United States conducted a counterterrorism operation in Kabul, Afghanistan, that killed Ayman al-Zawahiri. While al-Qa'ida did not claim responsibility for any attacks, it remained active in 2022.

Strength: Fewer than a dozen al-Qa'ida core members with legacy ties to the group remain in Afghanistan. The deaths or arrests of dozens of mid- and senior-level al-Qa'ida operatives, including Usama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, have disrupted communication, financial support, facilitation nodes, and several terrorist plots. Al-Qa'ida leaders, including those located in Iran, oversee a network of affiliated groups. In addition, supporters and associates worldwide who are motivated by the group's ideology may operate without direction from al-Qa'ida central leadership.

Location/Area of Operation: Afghanistan, Iran, North Africa, West Africa, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, Yemen.

Funding and External Aid: Al-Qa'ida depends primarily on donations from likeminded supporters, and from individuals who believe that their money is supporting a humanitarian cause. Some funds are diverted from Islamic charitable organizations.

Associated documents

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Afghanistan

Annual report on terrorism (covering 2022)

[Country Report on Terrorism 2022 - Chapter 1 - Afghanistan](#)
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Brief description of the Al-Qaeda (AQ) (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2022)

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