# Al-Qa'ida Core



**Homebase: NW Pakistan & N Afghanistan**

## Key Leaders/Members

**Ayman al-Zawahiri**
Emir (Leader)

**Saif al-Adel**
Military Committee

**Nasir al-Wuhayshi**
Deputy, "General Manager"

**Adnan el Shukrijumah**
External Operations

**Abd al-Rahman al-Maghrebi**
Media Committee

**Said Bahaji**
External Operations/Media

**Adam Gadahn**
Spokesperson

## History

Al-Qa'ida, or "the base," was formally founded in August 1988 by Osama bin Laden out of the mujahideen fighting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Throughout the 1990s al-Qa'ida provided financial and training support to various jihadist conflicts around the globe. In 1996, bin Laden released a fatwa entitled "Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places" declaring war on the "Zionist-Crusader alliance" of the United States and Israel, promising to expel them from Muslim lands. In February 1998 a second fatwa encouraging Muslims to kill Americans when and wherever possible was released. This fatwa was released under the banner of the World Islamic Front for Combat Against the Jews and Crusaders and signed by Osama bin Laden and four other jihadist leaders - including then head of Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) Ayman al-Zawahiri. Later that year al-Qa'ida launched the twin bombings against US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania killing approximately 223 people, including 12 Americans. The October 2000 bombing of the USS Cole at port in Aden, Yemen resulted in 17 American deaths. The partnership established between bin Laden and Zawahiri with the 1998 fatwa developed into a formal merger of EIJ into al-Qa'ida in June 2001. On September 11, 2001 al-Qa'ida launched attacks using hijacked airplanes as missiles against NYC and Washington DC resulting in nearly 3,000 deaths. In response to the 9/11 attacks, the US launched a "global war on terror" against al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan.

## Current Intent & Capability

Al-Qa'ida has continued to demonstrate both the intent and capability to strike the US both in the homeland and abroad. Examples of attempted attacks against the US homeland include the December 2001 Shoe Bomber Plot , August 2006 Liquid Explosives Plot, January 2009 Long Island Railroad Plot, December 2009 Denver/NYC Plot, and April 2013 Toronto-NY Via Train Plot.

Al-Qa'ida's capabilities have steadily declined in recent years due to a series of factors including: death of Osama bin Laden during a US raid in Abbottabad, Pakistan in May 2011; a sustained drone campaign in Northwest Pakistan that has decimated remaining leadership; loss of financial resources; and inability to provide direct training for external operations. Nevertheless, al-Qa'ida's intent to attack US interests remains high.

## Future Outlook

Al-Qa'ida remains a significant—although degraded—threat to US interests in the homeland and abroad. In particular it will be important to monitor the ability of al-Qa'ida to gain back capabilities once US and NATO forces complete their drawdown in Afghanistan.