



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on May 3, 2017

Al-Qaeda Claims It Is Fighting Alongside U.S.-backed Coalition in Yemen

Qasim al-Rimi, the leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP — al-Qaeda’s branch in Yemen, shown) told the group’s media arm, al-Malahem, on April 30 that his followers are now allied to the U.S. and Yemeni government-backed forces fighting against Shia rebels known as Houthis.



The Iranian-aligned Houthis (officially called Ansar Allah) are fighting against forces loyal to President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi. “We fight alongside all Muslims in Yemen, together with different Islamic groups,” al-Rimi said in the interview. These include “the Muslim Brotherhood and also our brothers among the sons of [Sunni] tribes,” he said.

Britain’s the *Independent* explained in a report:

While al-Rimi did not elaborate on what he meant by “alongside,” many Sunni tribal militias, as well as the pan-Arab Muslim Brotherhood movement and conservative Salafis, are allied to the exiled Yemeni government fighting against Shia rebels known as Houthis who seized control of the capital Sanaa in 2014.

The militias receive extensive funding and arms from the U.S.-backed Saudi-led coalition, which has supported President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi with air strikes and ground troops since March 2015.

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Hadi has been the president of Yemen since February 27, 2012. He resigned his position on January 22, 2015, and afterward, the Houthis seized the presidential palace and placed him under virtual house arrest. The following month, he escaped to his hometown of Aden, rescinded his resignation, and denounced the Houthi takeover as an unconstitutional coup d’état. The Houthis then named a Revolutionary Committee to assume the powers of the presidency and the General People’s Congress, Hadi’s own political party.

Hadi fled Yemen in a boat on March 25, 2015, as Houthi forces advanced on Aden, and he arrived in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the next day. The Saudi military then began a bombing campaign in support of his government. In September 2015, Hadi returned to Aden as Saudi-backed government forces recaptured the city.

The *Independent* noted that the branch of the global jihadist movement in Yemen — AQAP — was formed in 2009 after mergers of smaller militant groups. The group has strong alliances with Sunni tribes across the country.



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The report also said that since full-scale civil war erupted in Yemen in 2015, al-Qaeda and other extremist movements such as ISIS have exploited the chaos to greatly increase their presence in the country, especially particularly in the lawless southern provinces.

The *Independent* noted that the United States has significantly increased its bombing of extremist targets in Yemen since Donald Trump assumed the presidency.

The Pentagon has confirmed that more than 70 drone strikes have been carried out since February 28 — more than double the number of such strikes in 2016.

The report continued by noting that the accelerated drone campaign follows the Navy SEAL raid on an AQAP base in January that resulted in civilian deaths, including an eight-year-old U.S. citizen. We wrote about that raid on February 8 in an article headlined: "[What Is the U.S. Military Doing in Yemen? Is It Worth the Cost?](#)"

Our article reported that the commando raid by U.S. Navy SEALs in Yemen on January 29 reportedly killed 14 al-Qaeda operatives — but at least 15 civilians including an eight-year-old girl were also killed, as was one Navy Seal.

We quoted a statement from Yemeni Foreign Minister Abdul-Malik al-Mekhlafi, stating that earlier reports that the government of Yemen had withdrawn permission for the United States to launch any more Special Operations ground missions inside the country were "not true." Mekhlafi told the Associated Press: "Yemen continues to cooperate with the United States and continues to abide by all the agreements," he said.

In our February article, we noted that the conflict in Yemen that has prompted U.S. intervention has been years in the making, so it is difficult to provide all of its background concisely. However, as [we noted in an article in 2015](#), our intervention in the beleaguered nation has only aggravated the situation. We observed in that previous article:

Much of this counterproductive intervention came under the leadership of [temporarily] exiled President [Abed Rabbo Mansour] Hadi.... An [article posted by The New American in 2012](#) noted that since 2002, 358 people had died in Yemen in U.S. drone strikes. In a statement made to the *Washington Post* in an interview published September 29, 2012, President Hadi said he "personally approves every U.S. drone strike in his country." The *Post* noted that it was likely this support of President Obama's drone war that had influenced U.S. officials to consider Hadi "one of the United States' staunchest counterterrorism allies."

Also referring back to the 2012 article, we wrote that the Houthi rebels, who are fighting against forces loyal to Hadi, are allied with forces loyal to President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was president of Yemen from 1990 to 2012. Furthermore, Saleh's loyalists are al-Qaeda's most powerful opponents, but the Saudi-led bombing threatens to weaken them. Therefore, the Saudi bombing of the rebels, which is supported by the United States, will have the effect of helping al-Qaeda!

While the above-cited history of the conflict in Yemen is admittedly very involved, it may explain the curious turn of events reported at the beginning of this article.

We noted that the leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula said that his followers are now allied to the U.S. and exiled Yemeni government-backed forces fighting against Shia rebels known as Houthis. If the Houthis are allied with forces loyal to former president Saleh, and Saleh's loyalists are al-Qaeda's most powerful opponents, then both the United States and Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni government



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are all fighting al-Qaeda's most powerful opponents. So it would make sense that al-Qaeda's leader, al-Rimi, would say that he considers the U.S.-backed coalition as his allies

However, this still does not explain why — after waging a long war against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, we should find ourselves on the same side as our former enemy in the civil war going on in Yemen. Only in Orwell's book *1984* did alliances shift so irrationally and mercurially.

We observed in our [April 2015 article](#) that our interventionism in Yemen has not been any more productive than was our nation's long history of intervention in Iran — the country that we are now posturing to keep away from Yemen. Former U.S. Representative Ron Paul often spoke of the “blowback” that resulted from our meddling in Iran, from the time our government undermined the democratic government of Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953 to install the Shah. It was lingering resentment over those actions that fueled the anti-U.S. sentiment that came to a head after the 1979 Iranian Revolution that installed the theocratic rulers who have governed Iran ever since. The 444-day hostage crisis, during which the Iranians held 52 American diplomats hostage, was the beginning of an adversarial relationship between Iran and the United States.

We concluded that article by stating:

Now, the result of years of U.S. interventionism in the Middle East is producing more bad fruit, as the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels and the U.S.-backed forces loyal to Hadi square off against each other.

Photo of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula: [Wikipedia](#)

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