

## **Attack Targets a Residential Complex in Sanaa, Yemen**

### **Summary**

On 6 April 2008, three different explosions hit the “Hadda” residential complex in Sanaa, the capital of Yemen. The complex caters to foreigners, primarily from western countries. The blasts are believed to have been caused by mortar shells.<sup>1</sup>

### **Casualties**

The attack led to the evacuation of the residents. There were no injuries or deaths as a result of the attack.

### **Suspects**

Yemeni officials stated that al Qaeda in Yemen claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Jund Al-Yemen Brigade, which is affiliated with al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement released on a Jihadist website, in which they mention the use of three mortar shells. The group also said that the attack was motivated by the desire for revenge for the death of Mullah Dadallah, a Taliban military strategist who worked with al Qaeda and was killed in Afghanistan in a raid by Afghan and NATO forces in May, 2007.

### **Government and International Response**

The Yemeni government arrested seven suspects linked to al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in Sanaa including Abdullah Al-Reemi, an extremist linked to al Qaeda.<sup>3</sup>

The U.S ordered non essential embassy staff and family members to leave Yemen. It has also urged U.S citizens not to travel to Yemen. The State Department said that it “remains concerned about possible attacks by extremist individuals against U.S. citizens, facilities, businesses and perceived interests”.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> “Reuters: Update 2-Blasts Smash Window at Yemen Complex, No One Hurt” Gulf in the Media, 6 April 2008

<http://www.gulfinthemedias.com/index.php?m=reuters&id=870796&lang=en&>

<sup>2</sup> “Reuters: Yemeni Official: Tanzim al Qaeda Claims Responsibility for the Attack in Yemen” Asharq al Awsat, 7 April 2008

<http://www.asharqalawsat.com/details.asp?section=1&issue=10723&article=465968>

<sup>3</sup> “Reuters: Yemeni Official: Tanzim al Qaeda Claims Responsibility for Yemen Attack” Elaph, 7 April 2008

[http://www.elaph.com/ElaphWeb/Templates/News.aspx?Id=2008-04-07T211811Z\\_01\\_EGO776330\\_RTRIDST\\_0\\_OEGTP-YEMEN-QAEDA-MH3.html](http://www.elaph.com/ElaphWeb/Templates/News.aspx?Id=2008-04-07T211811Z_01_EGO776330_RTRIDST_0_OEGTP-YEMEN-QAEDA-MH3.html)

“Aljazeera: Seven Arrested After Yemen Attack” Aljazeera, 8 April 2008

<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/7447601F-0AFA-4AD0-BED4-28CD46B80971.htm>

<sup>4</sup> “Reuters: U.S Orders Some Embassy Staff to Leave Yemen” Reuters, 7 April 2008

<http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSN07305706>

## Context

This attack comes during a period of violence in the south of Yemen, with clashes taking place between the security forces and restive mobs consisting of former southern Yemeni officers, political activists, and unemployed men.<sup>5</sup>

In another security incident on the same day, Yemeni Shiite rebels destroyed the house of a Yemeni Jewish rabbi named Yehia Youssuf in Saada located in the north of Yemen. Other Jewish houses were also destroyed. Residents claimed the attack came from a group opposed to the U.S allied government. The Yemeni Jews are a minority in Yemen. There numbers have dwindled to a couple from a height of 50,000 in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, mostly due to immigration. The attack on their homes takes place within the context of a four-year conflict between Shiite rebels in the area, called the Houthis, and Yemeni government forces.<sup>6</sup>

Several other attacks have struck Yemen recently, In March, an attempted mortar attack targeted the U.S Embassy, (but instead it hit a nearby school for girls, injuring more than a dozen students and killing a security guard.)<sup>7</sup> Government officials believe that attack was linked to al Qaeda. In July, a suicide car bombing killed seven Spanish tourists and two Yemeni guides.

All of this turbulence in Yemen reflects the possibility that this attack could be done by any group in Yemen. Terrorism is not new in Yemen, during the nineties Yemen was considered a haven for Islamists from all over the world. This lasted until the 9/11 incidents, when the Yemeni government declared its support to the US counter terrorism campaign. Yet, in spite of the Yemeni government's counterterrorism efforts, the attacks occurring in Yemen are changing from well-planned and expertly executed attacks such as the 2000 USS Cole attack to random attacks targeting various targets of opportunity that have no strategic value, like the 3 July 2007 attack targeting a tourist spot in the isolated district of Maarib which killed six Spanish tourists.

An attack on a residential compound that does not cause any injuries or deaths is not a typical al-Qaeda attack. The reason behind this is that the new al Qaeda in Yemen is made of home grown cells with young radical members who participated in the Iraq war and decided to join the global jihad. They have their own operations and strategies and while inspired by al-Qaeda, they lack the skills of conventional al Qaeda cells.

Former Bin Laden bodyguard Nasser al-Bahri, alias Abu Jundal, explained in an interview with Gulf News that the new "al-Qaeda" operating in Yemen could be of a new generation of young inexperienced, misguided, and wrongly mobilized people who

---

<sup>5</sup> "Ahmed Al-Haj: Blasts Hit Foreigners' Complex in Yemen" Associated Press, 7 April 2008  
[http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5gXUoF1tEJIPM\\_ogS3j0o-fPd6GeQD8VSMH100](http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5gXUoF1tEJIPM_ogS3j0o-fPd6GeQD8VSMH100)

<sup>6</sup> "Reuters: Yemen Shiite Rebels Destroy Rabbi's House" Reuters, 6 April 2008  
<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L06321167.htm>

<sup>7</sup> "Ahmed Al-Haj: Blasts Hit Foreigners' Complex in Yemen" Associated Press, 7 April 2008  
[http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5gXUoF1tEJIPM\\_ogS3j0o-fPd6GeQD8VSMH100](http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5gXUoF1tEJIPM_ogS3j0o-fPd6GeQD8VSMH100)

fought in Iraq. He described them as a different version of al Qaeda with different strategies than Bin Laden's.<sup>8</sup>

Prepared by Nidaa Abu-Ali

---

<sup>8</sup> "Nasser Arrabyee: Al Qaida 'not behind tourist attack' in Yemen" Gulf News, July 10, 2007  
<http://www.gulfnews.com/region/Yemen/10138233.html>