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Designations of Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Senior Leaders

OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR FOR COUNTERTERRORISM
January 19, 2010

The Secretary of State has designated al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended (INA). The Secretary also designated AQAP and its two top leaders Nasir al-Wahishi and Said al-Shihri under E.O. 13224. Secretary Clinton took these actions in consultation with the Attorney General and the Secretary of the Treasury. These actions prohibit provision of material support and arms to AQAP and also include immigration related restrictions that will help stem the flow of finances to AQAP and give the Department of Justice the tools it needs to prosecute AQAP members.

AQAP is a Yemen-based terrorist organization that has claimed responsibility for numerous terrorist acts against Saudi, Korean, Yemeni, and U.S. targets since its inception in January 2009. Such instances include a March 2009 suicide bombing against South Korean tourists in Yemen, the August 2009 attempt to assassinate Saudi Prince Muhammad bin Nayif, and the December 25, 2009 failed attack on a Northwest Airlines flight from Amsterdam to Detroit, Michigan.

Nasir Al-Wahishi proclaimed himself as the leader of al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in January 2009. The press release in which al-Wahishi announced AQAP's re-emergence also noted that the group's Saudi militants had pledged allegiance to al-Wahishi as their new leader. Since then, Al-Wahishi has provided significant support for AQAP terrorist operations and has worked with AQAP operatives to facilitate attacks. As AQAP's leader, al-Wahishi is responsible for approving targets, recruiting new members, allocating resources to training and attack planning, and tasking others to carry out attacks.

Said Ali al-Shihri was publicly identified in January 2009 as the deputy leader of al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). As deputy of AQAP, al-Shihri helps carry out terrorist acts by generating targets, recruiting new members, assisting with training and attack planning, and tasking others in the preparation of attacks.

These designations represent just one phase of the United States Government's response to the threat posed by AQAP and its senior leaders. In addition, the U.S. has requested that similar actions be taken against AQAP, al-Shihri, and al-Wahishi at the United Nations 1267 Committee. If successful, this will require all UN member states to implement an asset freeze, travel ban, and arms embargo against these entities. These designations will occur less than one month after the Security Council adopted resolution 1904, which renewed and strengthened the 1267 regime, and which created major new improvements to the way the UN imposes sanctions on al-Qa'ida and Taliban terrorists. The actions taken today against AQAP support the U.S. effort to degrade the capabilities of this group. We are determined to eliminate AQAP's ability to execute violent attacks and to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat their networks.

Designations of foreign terrorist organizations play a critical role in our fight against terrorism and are an effective means of curtailing support for terrorist activities and pressuring groups to get out of the terrorism business. The consequences of these designations include a prohibition against the provision of material support or resources to FTOs; the freezing of all property and interests in property of the organization that are in the United States, or come within the United States, or the control of U.S. persons; and provide special immigration related options to law enforcement.

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