

Two Suicide Attacks in Yemen against South Korean Targets – Situation Report

A suicide bomber carried out a suicide attack in Yemen on March 15th 2009, killing four South Korean tourists and a Yemeni citizen. The attack was carried out at a tourist site in the city of Shibam in the Hadramawt Province in South-East Yemen.

The Yemeni website "Newsyemen" quoted Yemeni security sources, who said that the suicide bomber was Ali Muhsin Al-Ahmad, aged 19 years old, and an Al-Qaeda activist from Sana'a Province. He blew himself up using an explosives belt after asking to be photographed with the tourists - he even went to the length of moving nearby children away.¹ The Yemeni newspaper "September 26" has reported that the suicide bomber was Abd Al-Rahman Mahdi Ali Qasem Al-Agiri, aged 18 years old and from the Ta'izz Province in Yemen.²



The city of Shibam in South East Yemen

Three days later, on March 18th 2009, another suicide bomber blew himself up in Sana'a using an explosives belt, when a convoy of cars carrying South Korean investigators and the South Korean Ambassador in Yemen arrived to investigate

¹ http://www.newsyemen.net/view_news.asp?sub_no=1_2009_03_16_26546

² http://www.26sep.net/news_details.php?sid=51551

the circumstances of the terrorist attack of March 15th. The Yemen website "Marebpress" reported that the suicide bomber was an Al-Qaeda activist called Saleh Ali Al-Ashwal, aged 19 years old.³



Yemenite security forces examining the bombing site, 18/3

Both the events indicate an increase in terrorist activity in Yemen, after a terrorist attack was carried out on the American Embassy on September 17th 2008.⁴

It should be noted that in the past two years several terrorist attacks were carried out against tourists in the Yemen capital: on July 2nd 2007, eight Spanish tourists and two Yemeni drivers were killed in a car bombing in the Mareb region. On January 18th 2008, two Belgian tourists and a Yemeni tourist guide were killed in the Hadramawt region. The local Al-Qaeda branch took responsibility for both attacks.

³ http://www.marebpress.net/news_details.php?sid=15641

⁴ http://www.ict.org.il/Portals/0/Internet%20Monitoring%20Group/JWVG_US_Embassy_Yemen.pdf

It should also be mentioned that two months ago a merger between Al-Qaeda in Yemen and in Saudi Arabia was announced.⁵ The organizations' leader, Abu Bassir Nasser Al-Wahishi, threatened on video to carry out terrorist attacks against western citizens in the Arab Peninsula.⁶ In mid-February 2009 it seemed that an apparent blow to the organizations' position has been dealt, when Yemen extradited the field commander of the united organization, Muhammad Al-Awfi, to Saudi Arabia. However, as said, two terrorist attacks took place in Yemen in the past week.

Up till now, no official taking of responsibility was found in the Jihadi forums for both attacks, but in Yemen, security sources reported that the Al-Qaeda organization was responsible. The Yemeni Ministry of Interior even published a list of 12 wanted people from the organization, alongside their photographs, who were said to be planning to carry out attacks in the country, and offering a tempting monetary reward.⁷



Photographs of those wanted by the authorities

⁵ <http://www.jihadica.com/saudi-and-yemeni-branches-of-al-qaida-unite/>
<http://al-shouraa.com/vb/showthread.php?t=21193>

⁶ <http://hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=87820>. See also in this matter:
<http://hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=88151>, <http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=47308>,
<http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2009/01/21/monitor/entry4745907.shtml>

⁷ [http://www.moi.gov.ye/moi1/News/news2008/\(12\)%20north/%d8%b1%d8%b5%d8%af%d8%aa%20%d9%85%d8%a8%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ba%20%d9%85%d8%ba%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a9%20%d9%84%d9%85%d9%86%20%d9%8a%d8%af%d9%84%d9%8a%20%d8%a8%d9%85%d8%b9%d9%84.aspx?vtype=1&ndate=19/03/2009](http://www.moi.gov.ye/moi1/News/news2008/(12)%20north/%d8%b1%d8%b5%d8%af%d8%aa%20%d9%85%d8%a8%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ba%20%d9%85%d8%ba%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a9%20%d9%84%d9%85%d9%86%20%d9%8a%d8%af%d9%84%d9%8a%20%d8%a8%d9%85%d8%b9%d9%84.aspx?vtype=1&ndate=19/03/2009)

In Jihadi online forums responses of joy were detected, alongside calls to push out the infidels from the Arab Peninsula. One of the online surfers even wished for an official announcement on behalf of the Al-Qaeda organization in the Arab Peninsula. One of the surfers explained the terrorist attacks by saying that South Korea has aided the United States in conquering Iraq and is still helping it in Afghanistan, and for it being one of the most loyal countries to the United States. Following these words, a dialogue with another surfer developed, wondering whether civilians whose countries hurt Muslims can be hurt just for being citizens of those countries. He mentioned India as a country taking a stand against Islam, and presented the fact that many Indians work in the Gulf countries and are easy to kill due to this fact, but wondered if it should be done. The surfer protested the fact that his predecessor has turned the duty of Jihad against the infidels into an act of protest killing: "We shall kill the citizens of all the infidel countries participating in the war against Islam. Does that anger you? We shall kill them, slaughter them, blow them up and rejoice [...]". Other surfers sided with him.⁸

Additional reference to the last terrorist attack in Yemen has come up in the Jihadi online forum "Al-Medad" on March 19th 2008.⁹ The source of the report is the news website "Islam on-line", belonging to Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, written by a Yemeni expert on Islamic movements.¹⁰ According to him, the attack serves both Al-Qaeda and the central government in Sana'a – Al-Qaeda since this attack corresponds with its ideology, that is, the banishment of the non-Muslims from the Arab Peninsula; and the central government since terrorist attacks attributed to Al-Qaeda gives the central government an excuse for the subjugation of

⁸ <http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=52398>, <http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=52398&page=2>

⁹ <http://www.almedad.com/vb/aaeeii-caoicoe-caonuie/11847-eyiince-caiaae-aeoco-iiii-aiacic-cathcuie-caiacie.html>

¹⁰ http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1236509128144&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout

rebellious tribes, with the justification that they lean towards Al-Qaeda and try to undermine the country's stability. According to the writer, the most recent attack, occurring on March 18th 2009, proves that the terrorist groups succeeded in gathering precise intelligence on their attack targets, pointing also to breaches in the state security mechanisms.