

Al Qaeda In Africa Increases Its Violence
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Yemen is in the epicenter of Al Qaeda horrors. On December 5, the brazen group took on Yemen's very Ministry of Defense, right in the heart of the capital, probably the most heavily guarded facility in the country. In what is becoming a familiar two-part attack, they first used a car full of explosives (and a suicidal driver) to blow open the entrance to the compound and then others burst inside to slaughter civilians in the hospital inside. They killed 52 and wounded 167 others.

What makes this particularly horrible is that the attackers wore Yemeni military uniforms (stolen or illicitly secreted by people inside the military). US drones have been after the leadership of this gang for some time now, but this gang is like an octopus, growing ever more tentacles.

They have sustained themselves by kidnapping for ransom and targeting the military. They have also attempted to plant bombs on jetliners bound for the US. (See Nasser Arrabyee and Ben Hubbard, NY Times, December 6.) Even the Yemeni government acknowledges that Al Qaeda has infiltrated the country's security services.

The attack was timed to coincide with the changing of the guard at the complex, when gates are opened to allow soldiers to enter and leave, according to this NY Times report. Even heavy armored cars surrounding the ministry could not prevent this attack. That a number of the attackers were identified as Saudis further aggravates Yemeni relations with their northern neighbor. Saudi support for Al Qaeda, fueled by private (not state) money, is well known.

Last May, a suicide bomber disguised as a soldier detonated himself during the rehearsal for a military parade, killing and wounding hundreds.

Al Qaeda seized the opportunity during the Arab Spring (the unseating of authoritarian governments), when in 2011 an uprising ousted their long time President Ali Saleh. But democracy did not follow (by now, no surprise). Removing dictators in the authoritarian Muslim world morphs only to anarchy, in which the most ruthless groups quickly get the upper hand. We are seeing this now in Syria, in which Bashar looks no worse than the alternatives. Moderate democratic opposition forces cannot compete with ruthless Islamists.

Al Qaeda attacked a factory in the Algerian desert some months ago, but the Algerian army (much better than most in Africa) managed to find and blow up the attack's leader, Khalid Ould Addah (Abu Bassen). He and his cohorts were hit by an army helicopter as they were traveling through the desert.

In neighboring Mali, the Al Qaeda occupation of villages in the north was turned back by French forces, to the relief of the residents. Nearly all the militants were killed, but at least 40 hostages died in the standoff.

Also in Africa, this time the Central African Republic, is a bloodbath generated by head-on clashes between militant Islam and newly militant Christianity. Nigeria has suffered from this sort of clash for years now. Terrified civilians rushed to the airport to flee the country, but were unable to leave.

This conflict looks more like Rwanda's ethnic genocide rather than Al Qaeda militancy, yet Muslims and Christians used to live side by side as neighbors before Islam went militant. Now, thugs from both groups go door-to-door slaughtering civilians of the other religion.

French troops are rushing in (permitted by a UN resolution), to the relief of the civilians.

Before 9/11, historian Samuel Huntington noted that everywhere that Muslim majority countries border on non-Muslim states, the borders are bloody. That explains Thailand, India, Israel, and Lebanon, all in conflict with newly militant neighbors. But he never envisioned the conflict becoming internal, within Muslim countries, not just their borders.

Once more, I take the stand that this is like a fever, a global fever, caused by the clash between modernity and a medieval worldview combined with fascist values and modern weapons. The more violent militant Islam gets, the more it rouses the hatred of ordinary Muslims who have no real taste for Islamo-fascism, especially when it is in charge.

673 words

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