



U.S. officials believe al Qaeda in Yemen is now collaborating more closely with allies in Pakistan and Somalia to plot attacks against the U.S., spurring the prospect that the administration will mount a more intense targeted killing program in Yemen.

Such a move would give the Central Intelligence Agency a far larger role in what has until now been mainly a secret U.S. military campaign against militant targets in Yemen and across the Horn of Africa. It would likely be modeled after the CIA's covert drone campaign in Pakistan.

The U.S. military's Special Operation Forces and the CIA have been positioning surveillance equipment, drones and personnel in Yemen, Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia to step up targeting of al Qaeda's Yemen affiliate, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, known as AQAP, and Somalia's al Shabaab—Arabic for The Youth.

U.S. counterterrorism officials believe the two groups are working more closely together than ever. "The trajectory is pointing in that direction," a U.S. counterterrorism official said of a growing nexus between the Islamist groups. He said the close proximity between Yemen and Somalia "allows for exchanges, training." But he said the extent to which AQAP and al Shabaab are working together is "hard to measure in an absolute way."

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