



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0495-16

Ministerial briefing papers containing any of the following terms "Al Qai'da in the Arabian Peninsula" OR "AQAP" OR "Ansar Al Sharia" - created during the year 2012.

(In relation to Yemen).

26 January 2012

To: PS/Burt

POTENTIAL INFLUX OF VISITORS TO YEMEN TO COVER THE ELECTIONS: HEIGHTENED KIDNAP THREAT IN YEMEN AGAINST WESTERN NATIONALS

BACKGROUND

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) have displayed the capability and desire to undertake high profile kidnappings over the last few years, although previous attempts did not achieve successful conclusions for HMG or AQAP. The recent high value ransom payment has highlighted the profitability of kidnapping Westerners. We anticipate there are likely to be increased numbers of British nationals (BNs) travelling to Yemen in the run up to the elections, including Western journalists and non-governmental organisations (NGO) representatives, increasing the possibility of a Westerner being targeted by AQAP.

7 February 2012

To: PS/Burt

MR BURT MEETING WITH DR ANWAR GARGASH, UAE FOREIGN MINISTER

Background: Security/CT

The security situation in Yemen remains acute. Large parts of the country remain no-go areas and outside of the effective control of the central government. As a result of the security and economic situations, AQ-AP have flourished and extended the area where they can operate with little or no hindrance from the government (although it is difficult to determine how much ground they actually hold).

22 February 2012

To: PS/Burt

MR BURT'S MEETING WITH YEMENI FOREIGN MINISTER, DR ABU BAKR AL QIRBI

Points to Make

- We consider aviation security to be a priority area. There is a global threat to aviation security from terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).
- We hope to continue to work closely together with you to effectively mitigate threats. The UK hopes to do this through further capacity building work in Yemen's international airports.

19 March 2012

To: Foreign Secretary

London 2012: Yemen

Key current UK policy goals for Yemen

- Reduce the threat to Yemen, the UK and Western world from Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

Background

Although the death of Anwar al-Awlaki is a significant blow, we remain concerned about the threat they pose.

22 March 2012

To PS/Burt

Alistair Burt - YEMEN UPDATE TO MPS

The NUG (National Unity Government) also face an ongoing struggle against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in the South of the country and are experiencing heavy casualties as they seek to regain territory lost to the militants.

26 April 2012

To PS/SOFA

FS Briefing Pack for:

Parliamentary Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy

Yemen: Political Situation & Terrorism

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) represents a direct threat to the security of this country. On 30 September 2011, Anwar al-Awlaki was killed in Southern Yemen. There has been a serious deterioration of the security situation over the past year. We have recently seen a significant rise in the threat of kidnap. March

2012 included the abduction, and fortunately safe release, of UN and aid workers in Sana'a. We will work closely with the new National Unity Government to ensure that tackling the threat from AQAP is given high priority.

Background

AQAP pose a significant threat to stability in Yemen, the region and to UK interests. They are involved in ongoing conflict with government security forces in Zinjibar (southern Yemen). Direct commercial flights between Yemen and the UK stopped in December 2009. Explosive devices, disguised in toner cartridges, were discovered en route from Yemen to the US in October 2010 resulting in a ban on cargo directly entering the UK and all postal items above 20 grams. The Embassy remains closed to the public.

Most likely questions to arise:

What is being done to tackle terrorism in/from Yemen?

- AQAP pose a serious, innovative and continuing threat to both regional and international security; the British Government works with both the Yemeni Government and regional States to continue tackling this shared issue. I welcome the commitment to tackling AQAP expressed by President Hadi in his inauguration speech. Removing the threat posed by extremists is clearly priority for the Yemeni government.

11 May 2012

To: PS/SOFA

Debate on the Queen's Speech

Most likely questions to arise:

What does the underpants bomb plot mean for the UK?

- This latest attempt to attack a passenger aircraft underlines that AQAP and its affiliates continue to pose a serious and innovative threat and have the ability to plan complex attacks against the West. Direct passenger flights between Yemen and the UK are still suspended.

Was the UK involved?

- There are media reports that there was UK involvement in this case. We neither confirm nor deny UK involvement, as is standard practice with allegations on such matters.

16 May 2012

To: PS/SOSFA

FOREIGN SECRETARY PHONE CALL WITH YEMENI PRESIDENT HADI

Objective

To demonstrate UK commitment to Yemen and support for President Hadi during political transition and in his fight against AQAP.

- Welcome your personal commitment to fighting AQAP. My condolences for the heavy losses you have suffered. Recent events show that AQAP continue to pose a serious threat to Yemen and the international community. The UK stands ready to support the Government of Yemen in the fight against AQAP. What more can we do to help?

23 May 2012

TO:PS/SOFA and PS/Bellingham

**FOREIGN SECRETARY AND MINISTER BELLINGHAM, SOMALIA
CONFERENCE, ISTANBUL, 31 MAY-1 JUNE**

Yemen

Top Lines

- Security and tackling AQAP is a priority for the Yemeni government. The terrorist attack in Sana'a on 21 May underlines the scale of the security challenge facing the Yemeni government as it seeks to introduce key reforms and work towards completing political transition.

Background

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) continues to pose a serious threat to Yemen and the international community. Yemeni security forces in the South of the country are experiencing heavy casualties as they seek to regain territory lost to the militants. AQAP claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb attack in central Sana'a on 21 May during the rehearsal for a military parade which resulted in the death of almost 100 Yemeni servicemen with many more injured.

28 May 2012

To: PS/SOSFA

**SOMALIA CONFERENCE, ISTANBUL, 31 MAY-1 JUNE: FOREIGN SECRETARY
BILATERAL WITH YEMENI PM BASINDWA OR FM AL-QIRBI**

Yemen

Points to make

- The UK stands ready to support the Government of Yemen in its fight against AQAP. We looking forward to increasing our co-operation with the Yemeni

Government on CT. We see AQAP very much as a shared problem and we want to play a part in defeating them.

Background

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) continues to pose a serious threat to Yemen and the international community. Yemeni security forces in the South of the country are experiencing heavy casualties as they seek to regain territory lost to the militants. AQAP claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb attack in central Sana'a on 21 May during the rehearsal for a military parade which resulted in the death of almost 100 Yemeni servicemen with many more injured.

30 May 2012

T0: PS/Burt

MR BURT'S VISIT TO OMAN, JUNE 2012

YEMEN

Points to make

- Security and tackling AQAP is a priority for the Yemeni government. The terrorist attack in Sana'a on 21 May underlines the scale of the security challenge facing the Yemeni government as it seeks to introduce key reforms and work towards completing political transition.

Background

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) continues to pose a serious threat to Yemen and the international community. Yemeni security forces in the South of the country are experiencing heavy casualties as they seek to regain territory lost to the militants. AQAP claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb attack in central Sana'a on 21 May during the rehearsal for a military parade which resulted in the death of almost 100 Yemeni servicemen with many more injured.

18 June 2012

TO: PS/SOSFA

FOREIGN SECRETARY MEETING WITH GCC FOREIGN MINISTERS, 21 JUNE 2012

Points to make

- After the significant progress made by the Yemeni military in recent weeks, saddened to hear of the assassination of Southern military commander, Major General Salim Ali Qatan, by AQAP. What is your assessment of the situation in the South?

Background

1. The GCC implementation plan for Yemeni transition remains broadly on track. President Hadi has shown strong leadership in removing associates of Saleh

from key positions as part of military restructuring, tackling AQAP in the South, and taking forward an inclusive National Dialogue process.

2. UNSCR 2051, unanimously adopted on 12 June 2012, warned those who continue to interfere with transition that they face sanctions.
3. In recent weeks, Yemeni armed forces, led by Major General Salim Ali Qatan, have re-taken control of AQAP strongholds in Southern Yemen which had been under AQAP control for over a year. On 18 June, Qatan was killed by a suicide bomber on his way to work. AQAP subsequently claimed responsibility blaming Qatan for leading the military offensive against them.

UK-GCC FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING 21 JUNE 2012 Yemen

Points to make

- After the significant progress made by the Yemeni military in recent weeks, saddened to hear of the assassination of Southern military commander, Major General Salim Ali Qatan, by AQAP. What is your assessment of the situation in the South?

Background

President Hadi has shown strong leadership, tackling AQAP in the South.

In recent weeks, Yemeni armed forces have re-taken control of AQAP strongholds in Southern Yemen which had been under AQAP control for over a year.

Counter Terrorism

Main point

- Tackling the threat from AQAP in Yemen remains a top priority. But we must also work to address the longer term drivers of conflict in Yemen that terrorists seek to exploit.

Background

- Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) represents a direct threat to the security of the UK and its interests. It also poses a significant threat to stability in Yemen and the region. AQAP are involved in ongoing conflict with government security forces in Zinjibar and Ja'ar (southern Yemen).
- We remain concerned about their continuing intent and capability to carry out attacks. AQAP were responsible for suicide attacks in Aden on 18 June in which a senior military commander (General Salem Ali Qatan) was killed and in Sana'a on 21 May resulting in the deaths of over 120 members of the Central Security Forces.

- Despite the recent deaths of senior AQAP figures, namely al-Awlaki and al-Quso, there remains a threat to the West. We have seen a significant rise in the threat of kidnap.
- HMG has been working with the Yemeni government and other international partners to disrupt AQAP and increase Yemeni capacity and capability to tackle terrorism.

20 June 2012

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE SAUD AL FAISAL, SAUDI ARABIA'S MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, WEDNESDAY 20 JUNE, 1700HRS

Background

Yemen

President Hadi has shown strong leadership in tackling AQAP in the South.

10 July 2012

To: PS/Burt

MR BURT'S MEETING WITH YEMENI FOREIGN MINISTER, DR ABU BAKR AL QIRBI

Points to make

CT/Security

- Recent successful operations by Yemeni security forces in recapturing territory are welcome developments. Despite this we should not be complacent. Although AQAP no longer hold ground in the south they continue to pose a threat to Yemen and the international community.
- The UK stands ready to support the Government of Yemen in its fight against AQAP. We looking forward to increasing our co-operation with the Yemeni Government on CT. We see AQAP very much as a shared problem and we want to play a part in defeating them. Interested to hear your views on how AQAP might change its tactics.

Background

President Hadi has stressed that defeating AQAP in the south was a top priority. Over the past few months Hadi has demonstrated that he meant what he said. Government forces have retaken the towns of Lawdar, Zinjibar and, Shuqra on the coast. AQAP had occupied these towns for over a year as part of the 'Islamic Caliphate'.

Yemen success in the military campaign in the south will bring new challenges. No doubt, AQAP are already starting to prepare for a different kind of approach in Yemen. Many AQAP driven from the southern cities are taking refuge in the mountains. Others – particularly the Yemenis as opposed to the foreign jihadists -

will probably melt into cities further north, including Sana'a. As a result we may well see the terrorist threat morph and become more asymmetric as AQAP adopt guerrilla tactics. Renewed AQAP focus on more traditional attacks on western interests in Yemen and elsewhere means that the threat emanating from Yemen to the UK and its allies is unlikely to diminish, at least in the short term.

12 July 2012

To: PS/Burt

Alistair Burt - YEMEN UPDATE TO MPS

Key points

- **AQAP:** welcome recent successes of Yemeni security forces in fight against AQAP in Abyan province, south of Yemen. Presence and influence of violent extremists has diminished but not removed, as shown in assassination of Major General Qatan on 18 June and the suicide attack in Sana'a on 21 May. We have expressed our condolences to the Yemeni government. As AQAP retreats the Yemeni government must ensure liberated areas are safe for the return of displaced persons and that humanitarian agencies can safely access affected areas.

(note this information in the public domain,

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2012-07-17/debates/12071773000014/ForeignAndCommonwealthOffice#contribution-12071773000591>).

20 August 2012

To: PS / Mr Burt

YEMEN TRANSITION: SIX MONTHS ON FROM ELECTIONS

AQAP in retreat: the Government of Yemen has reclaimed territory held for nearly a year by AQAP-offshoot Ansar al-Shari'a in southern Yemen, removing a safe haven and forcing AQAP to return to traditional terrorist tactics.

14 November 2012

To: PS/SOSFA

FAC Briefing for 19 November

Yemen

Background

A superficial lull in high level political and security developments in Yemen. Behind the scenes there is much activity, including moving from aid pledges to delivery, preparing the National Dialogue Conference, pushing forward military and security reform and strengthening the government's CT capacity. The UK is involved in all of

this. The transition remains fragile and will fail without international support every step of the way.

Yemen's political transition is not smooth... The country is relatively calm, despite a spate of AQAP (on the back foot and lashing out) assassinations. The latest suicide attack on 19 October killed 10 soldiers in Abyan.

Relaunching the economy Hadi is adamant that this can't wait until governance and security are increased. Starting now, he wants to increase the level of investment and employment and get the economy moving again. Hadi's hope is that that this will create the two million jobs that he estimates are necessary to deprive AQAP of its recruitment base among poor, hungry and disaffected youth.

Press Release of Meeting in Public Domain

(http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/133604.pdf)

27 November 2012

To: PS/ Mr Burt

Briefing for Minister Burt Visit to Yemen

Points to make

- Tackling the shared threat from al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen remains a top priority for the UK. The Government of Yemen needs to maintain the fight. The UK is keen to support Yemeni efforts by helping build their CT capabilities.

Background

Recent military successes by the Government of Yemen has reclaimed territory held by AQAP in the South.

UK Activities in Yemen

Aviation Security

Aviation attacks continue to be of interest to AQAP, demonstrated by the foiled 'underpants' aviation bomb plot in May 2012; the cargo printer bomb of 2010; and the first 'underpants' aviation bomb plot of Christmas 2009.

There are currently no direct flights between Yemen and the EU, and flights by their national carrier to the UK were voluntarily suspended in 2010.

03 December 2012

To: PS/SOSFA

CTD Middle East Briefing for Foreign Secretary at IISS Manama Dialogue

Points to make

- Yemeni security forces successfully removed the presence of AQAP in key parts of Abyan in the south of Yemen, but the group continues to carry out attacks. We welcome the ongoing commitment by the Yemeni authorities to eradicate this malign presence.

Background

The immediate threat to the UK from the region is from al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen. Despite recent military successes by the Government of Yemen in reclaiming territory, and the deaths of senior AQAP figures, AQAP retains both intent and capability to carry out attacks domestically and against the West.