

British intelligence: Al-Qaida expanding

by UPI

LONDON -- British intelligence officials said they believe that al-Qaida has a secure base in Pakistan's Waziristan region and is planning terrorist operations.

The group is reaching out to Muslims in North Africa, The Telegraph reported. Last year, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, an Algerian terrorist group, merged itself into al-Qaida, a move announced by Osama bin Laden's chief lieutenant, Ayman al-Zawahiri, in a tape promising action against the "apostates" in the Algerian government and "the treacherous sons of France."

Al-Qaida is also believed to be planning expansion into Lebanon and Syria, the newspaper report said.

For several years after al-Qaida was driven out of Afghanistan following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, simply staying free consumed most of its leaders' energy, The Telegraph said.

Intelligence officers told the newspaper that bin Laden and Zawahiri don't directly control terrorist operations. Instead, the two men and other members of "core al-Qaida" decide where to expand and whom to attack, leaving the details to those closer to the action.

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