

15 Al Qaida suspects arrested in Yemen

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- By Nasser Arrabyee, correspondent
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Sana'a: About 15 Al Qaida suspects were arrested in the Yemeni southern coastal city of Aden over the last few days, security sources said on Saturday.

Some of those arrested had participated in the brazen attack on the headquarters of Aden intelligence on June 19 when 11 people including three women and a child were killed, the sources said.

"It was a swift raid based on accurate information, and all those in a meeting were arrested," the state-run media quoted an unnamed security official as saying..

The sources said that the security forces obtained the information from the leader of the group Gawdal Mohammad Saleh Naji who was arrested last Sunday, a day after the attack on the intelligence headquarters. Ghawdal and his group were also accused of plundering 100 million Yemeni rials (about half million dollars) from the Arab Bank in Aden late last year.

The sources described Gawdal as a dangerous Al Qaida operative saying he appeared in video footage with some of terrorist leaders last December.

Gawdal appeared in a video footage shown by Al Jazeera satellite channel beside Al Qaida operative Mohammad Ahmad Saleh Omair who threatened in that video to retaliate for the air strike that targeted an Al Qaida training camp in Al Majalah, Abyan on December 17, 2009. Omair was killed one week later in another air strike which targeted a meeting of Al Qaida leaders in Rafadh area in Shabwa.

Local sources said the militants are exploiting the rising tension between the government and the separatist groups in the south.

Sources from the separatist groups, however, say those who were arrested had nothing to do with Al Qaida but they were only separation activists.

On Friday, the security forces dispersed angry demonstrations after one of those arrested died in the custody.