

# Al Qaeda thrives in Yemen chaos

[Yemen, from A1] or supervise the Paris attacks. A total of 17 people were killed in the magazine offices, during the manhunt for those involved, and at a kosher market. The two brothers and a third gunman were killed by security forces.

In the video posted Wednesday, Ansi said the gunman who killed four Jewish patrons at the kosher market had not coordinated with the Kouachi brothers, calling it a "coincidence."

Western intelligence officials have struggled to unravel the plot in part because of the violent three-way power struggle that has convulsed Yemen in recent months.

In a sign of the difficulties, the U.S. has not launched any drone strikes against AQAP leaders since Nov. 12, said analysts with the website Long War Journal, which tracks such attacks. The two-month pause contrasts with an average of two drone strikes a month in



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**NASR ANSI** speaks for Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in a video.

Yemen over the previous 12 months.

The bloody conflict pits Sunni Muslim-dominated AQAP, long the target of a campaign of U.S. drone strikes, against Shiite Muslim Houthis, who are aided by Iranian weapons and advisors from Iran's Revolutionary Guard, according to analysts who study Yemen. Both groups oppose the central government in Sana and U.S. counter-terrorism efforts in the country.

AQAP, considered Al

Qaeda's most dangerous franchise, has seen a recent increase in recruits, analysts say. They say the boost was fueled both by a backlash against U.S. drone strikes and in response to a Houthi offensive.

The Houthi rebels in effect control much of the capital and large parts of the country. They have demanded that the government halt cooperation with U.S. counter-terrorism operations, including drone strikes, said a U.S. official

who spoke on condition of anonymity in discussing the situation in Yemen.

Other U.S. officials believe American counter-terrorism operations have been disrupted by the political chaos in Yemen, rather than by a decision from the Houthi leadership barring all cooperation with U.S. officials.

After their military gains, the Houthis forced the government to sign a deal last fall that gave them a leading voice in the government and influence over the nation's security services, as well as other agencies.