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Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri

By [Bridget Johnson](#)

Who is he?:

An [al-Qaeda](#)¹ commander of [Persian Gulf activities](#)² arrested in 2002 in Dubai and held at the [Guantanamo Bay](#)³ detention facility in Cuba. The accused mastermind of the Oct. 12, 2000, bombing of the USS Cole in the port of Aden, which killed 17 and injured 39. Faces the death penalty at his trial before a U.S. military commission. Also charged in the attempted attack on the USS The Sullivans in January 2000 and an attack on the French oil tanker MV Limburg in October 2002. The subject of multiple interrogation sessions using the controversial tactic of waterboarding before the practice was banned.



Birthdate:

Jan. 5, 1965, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

Personal life:

Al-Nashiri told U.S. officials in 2007 that he was a merchant and a millionaire by the time he was 19. U.S. officials charge that he developed close connections to most senior al-Qaeda members and grew to have a long history of jihadist activity.

Political affiliation:

Unknown if he had any distinct ties to a political organization, like how some other high-ranking al-Qaeda officials had early ties to the [Muslim Brotherhood](#)⁴.

Career:

In 1992 and 1993 al-Nashiri fought in Tajikistan, where he met al-Qaeda operative Walid bin Attash, who is also being tried at Guantanamo alongside [Khalid Sheikh Mohammed](#)⁵. He went to train at an al-Qaeda camp in Afghanistan in 1993 and met Osama bin Laden the following year. He spent some time back in Saudi Arabia and Yemen before returning to Afghanistan. The CIA says he finally joined al-Qaeda in 1998, after his cousin was involved in the suicide bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Kenya. Prosecutors say it was this year that he met with bin Laden to start discussing attacking a western vessel off the coast of Yemen. Al-Nashiri promptly returned to Yemen, but wound up back in Afghanistan soon after as Yemeni authorities were pursuing al-Qaeda suspects. Bin Laden gave al-Nashiri \$2,000 to return to Yemen, buy a boat, and observe the movements of U.S. ships in the area. An attack was attempted on the USS The Sullivans in February 2000, but the boat weighted down with explosives capsized before reaching the ship. Bin Laden ordered al-Nashiri to try again, but wanted the suicide bombers picked for the operation replaced. Al-Nashiri reportedly left for Afghanistan to discuss with the al-Qaeda leader, but told his handpicked bombers to strike the next U.S. ship that came into the port of Aden. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks -- during which time al-Nashiri was recovering from tonsillitis -- al-Qaeda operatives were ordered to disperse from the safehouses and conduct small attacks. While trying to hatch plots against the U.S. embassies in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, the attack was carried out against the Limburg; one crew member was killed and a dozen more were injured when the tanker was rammed with an explosive-laden boat. He was captured in the United Arab Emirates in November 2002 and transferred to Guantanamo Bay in 2006. Charges were withdrawn in February 2009, yet were brought against him again in April 2011.

Future:

In September 2004, al-Nashiri was sentenced to death in absentia by a Yemeni court for the USS Cole bombing. Al-Nashiri has claimed that confessions he made were coerced by years of torture, and human rights groups have rallied to his case; at least two videotapes documenting such interrogation of al-Nashiri were destroyed by the CIA in 2005. Former CIA director Michael Hayden confirmed in 2008 that al-Nashiri was one of three prisoners subjected to waterboarding.

Quote:

"Detainee is one of the highest-ranking, most skilled, and dangerous al-Qaida operatives captured to date," the U.S. says in a 2006 Guantanamo court filing.

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