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The al-Qa'ida (AQ) core, under the direction of Ayman al-Zawahiri, has been significantly degraded as a result of ongoing worldwide efforts against the organization. Usama bin Laden's death was the most important milestone in the fight against AQ, but there have been other successes dozens of senior AQ leaders have been removed from the fight in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. Ilyas Kashmiri, one of the most capable AQ operatives in South Asia, and Atiya Abdul Rahman, AQ's second-in-command, were killed in Pakistan in 2011. AQ leaders Abu Yahya Al-Libi and Abu Zaid al-Kuwaiti were killed in 2012. As a result of these leadership losses, the AQ core's ability to direct the activities and attacks of its affiliates has diminished, as its leaders focus increasingly on survival. Leadership losses have also driven AQ affiliates to become more independent. The affiliates are increasingly setting their own goals and specifying their own targets. As avenues previously open to them for receiving and sending funds have become more difficult to access, several affiliates have engaged in kidnapping for ransom. Through kidnapping for ransom operations and other criminal activities, the affiliates have also increased their financial independence. While AQ affiliates still seek to attack the "far enemy," they seem more inclined to focus on smaller scale attacks closer to their home base. Both al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb AQIM have taken steps to seize land and impose their brutal authority over local populations. The AQ core still has the ability to inspire, plot, and launch regional and transnational attacks from its safe haven in Western Pakistan, despite its leadership losses. Along with AQ, the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani Network, Tehrike Taliban Pakistan, and other like-minded groups continue to conduct operations against U.S., Coalition, Afghan, and Pakistani interests from safe havens on both sides of the Afghanistan/Pakistan border. Other South Asian terrorist organizations, including Lashkar e-Tayyiba (LeT), cite U.S. interests as legitimate targets for attacks. The group responsible for the 2008 Mumbai attacks, continues to pose a serious threat to regional stability. In Yemen, the fight against AQAP is a work in progress, but the trend lines are positive. Yemeni forces have had success pushing AQAP out of its southern strongholds over the last year, leading AQAP to turn increasingly to asymmetric tactics in a campaign of bombings and targeted assassinations against government targets, pro-government tribal militias known as Popular Committees and their leaders, soldiers, civilians, and foreign diplomatic personnel. After more than two decades of strife, autumn 2012 marked the beginning of political transition in Somalia, with a new provisional constitution, parliament, and president. These are hopeful signs of a new era in this long-suffering country. This success was made possible because Somali National Forces and the AU Mission in Somalia with strong financial support and training from the United States and Western partners expelled al-Shabaab from major cities in southern Somalia. Though al-Shabaab is carrying out attacks against the new government, it is fragmented by dissension and much weakened. Though the AQ core is on a path to defeat, and its two most dangerous affiliates have suffered serious setbacks, tumultuous events in the Middle East and North Africa have complicated the counterterrorism picture. The dispersal of weapons stocks in the wake of the revolution in Libya, the Tuareg rebellion, and the coup détat in Mali presented terrorists with new opportunities. The actions of France and African countries, however in conjunction with both short-term U.S.support to the African-led International Support Mission to Mali and the long-term efforts of the United States via the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, have done much to roll back and contain the threat.

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