

# Al Qaida planned to kill Saudis with poisoned gifts

Al Qaida militants planned to kill Saudi officials and media workers by sending poisoned gifts to their offices

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Jeddah: Al Qaida militants now in detention planned to kill Saudi government and security officials and media workers by sending poisoned gifts to their offices, an interior ministry official told Reuters on Saturday.

The group "planned to rob banks and companies to finance their operations," said the official, who declined to be named.

Last month Saudi Arabia said it had captured 149 Al Qaida militants in recent months who were raising money and recruiting members to carry out attacks on government facilities, security officials and the media.

"Using poisoned perfume which they planned to send as gifts is one of the ways the arrested people planned to carry out their assassinations," the interior ministry official said.

The militants, who revealed their plans to Saudi security forces, belonged to 19 Al Qaida cells and comprised 124 Saudis and 25 foreigners. The groups had links to militants in Somalia and Yemen, the Interior Ministry said last month.

Saudi Arabia has been fighting Al Qaida militancy for years and quelled a three-year Al Qaida campaign of violence in 2006. Al Qaida's Yemeni and Saudi wings merged in 2009 into a new group, Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), based in Yemen.

In August 2009 a suicide bomber posing as a repentant militant tried to assassinate Saudi Arabia's top anti-terrorism official, Prince Mohammad Bin Nayef, but only inflicted minor injuries.

Recently Al Qaida has become more innovative, and Saudi security forces have intensified efforts to foil it. In October, a plot to send two parcel bombs from Yemen to the United States was foiled after a tip-off from Saudi Arabia.

The arrests announced last month were one of the largest Al Qaida sweeps by Saudi Arabia in years. In March, the kingdom arrested 113 Al Qaida militants, including alleged suicide bombers who it said had been planning attacks on energy facilities in the world's top oil-exporting country.

"We are still investigating the whole thing," the official said.

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