

Zawahiri Named Al-Qaida's Chief After Bin Laden Death

Al-Qaida named Ayman Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden's top lieutenant and the terrorist group's frequent spokesman, as its new leader to succeed the mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks, who was killed in a U.S. raid in Pakistan last month.

Zawahiri, an Egyptian surgeon, has been al-Qaida's public face for years, sending video and audio messages threatening attacks against Western targets and attempting to turn Muslim populations against their governments.

"We ask God for this to be a new era for al-Qaida under the leadership of Ayman Zawahiri, an era that will purify Muslim land of every tyrant and infidel," al-Qaida said in a statement posted on a website frequently used by the group.

Intelligence officials have said that bin Laden, isolated by U.S. efforts to track him, had ceded operational responsibilities to Zawahiri. The U.S. government is offering a \$25 million reward for information leading to Zawahiri, who is believed to be hiding in southwestern Pakistan or Afghanistan, according to White House intelligence adviser John Brennan.

Zawahiri, 59, was wanted in the U.S. even before the 2001 attacks that targeted New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon, killing more than 3,000 people.

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