

Qaeda suspects wound Yemen consultative council member



ADEN, Yemen — A member of Yemen's consultative council and an army colonel were wounded on Thursday when their car was fired on by presumed Al-Qaeda militants, tribal sources said. (04 Nov 2011)

"Militants, suspected of belonging to Al-Qaeda, opened fire with a barrage of bullets at the car of Mohammed al-Haithami Ashal as he was heading towards Sanaa, wounding him in the leg," said a source from the Ashal tribe.

Colonel Ahmed Naser Ashal, who was in the same car, was hit in the head by a bullet, the same source told AFP.

No details were given on the condition of either man.

"The Al-Qaeda network is targeting our tribe after we kicked them out of our village of Moudia in Abyan province, a stronghold of the extremists, he said.

In August, 11 tribesmen, including Ashal tribal chief Sheikh Abu Bahr Ashal, were killed in two suicide attacks in Abyan.

Tribal sources have accused Al-Qaeda of carrying out the attacks in two villages of Abyan, where tribesmen and the army have been battling militants from the "Partisans of Sharia (Islamic law)" who are believed to be close to Al-Qaeda.

Yemen soldiers patrol the street in the southern city of Zinjibar (AFP/File)

Yemen has been gripped by violence as the central government in Sanaa is weakened by anti-regime protests that have rocked the country since January.

The international community has expressed fears that the power vacuum in the impoverished country could play into the hands of Al-Qaeda.

Hundreds have died in battles between security forces and protesters, and between security forces and Al-Qaeda fighters amid growing fears of the extremists exploiting the weakening of the central government in Sanaa to take control over Yemen's restive southern and eastern regions.