

SAN'A, Yemen, May 23, 2010

American Couple Kidnapped in Yemen

U.S. Embassy Tells CBS No Confirmation Pair Nabbed by Gunmen Are Americans, But Tribesmen Say Pair Now "Guests" in Village



(AP / CBS)



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(CBS/AP) *Updated at 8:28 a.m. Eastern.*

Tribal gunmen kidnapped two American tourists in Yemen on Monday and are demanding the release of a jailed tribesman for the pair, security officials said.

The U.S. Embassy in San'a tells **CBS News** it has no information about the reported kidnapping.

The security officials, a taxi driver and tribesmen said the two - a man and a woman - were seized while travelling in al-Hudaydah province west of the capital San'a.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Taxi driver Mohammed Saleh, who was driving the two, said six gunmen stopped them on the road and took them to the al-Hamra village. Al-Sharda tribesmen said the hostages were now "guests" in the village.

Kidnappings are endemic in Yemen and are usually carried out by disgruntled tribesmen hoping to win concessions from the government. In the past few years, however, al Qaeda has begun kidnapping foreigners as well, often with lethal results.

The kidnapping comes a day after radical American-born Yemeni cleric Anwar al-Awlaki [called for the killing of American civilians](#) in a video released by the al Qaeda branch in Yemen.

White House spokesman Robert Gibbs responded on CBS's "**Face the Nation**," calling al-Awlaki a murderous thug.

"We are actively trying to find him and many others throughout the world that seek to do our country and to do our interests great harm," he said.

The Obama administration admitted in April that al-Awlaki is on the C.I.A.'S list of targets for assassination, despite his American citizenship, reports **CBS News correspondent Lara Logan**.

"Because he's so visible, it would be very important to get him because it would send a message to radical Islamists and jihadists around the world," said terror expert Neil Livingstone.

Al-Awlaki is believed to have been in contact with [Maj. Nidal Hasan](#), who is accused of waging a shooting rampage at Fort Hood in Texas, and with [Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab](#), the Nigerian man who allegedly tried to blow up a Delta passenger jet over Detroit on Christmas day.

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