

CIA chief holds secret talks with Egypt, Israel

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The Director of the CIA, Leon Panetta, has held secret talks with Egyptian and Israeli officials over expanded US intervention in Yemen.

According to Debkafile, the CIA chief paid secret visits to the Egyptian capital Cairo and Jerusalem Al-Quds on Thursday.

Panetta met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Defense Minister Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, and intelligence minister, Gen. Omar Suleiman to ask them to dispatch forces to Yemen to help the US troops.

Meanwhile, Washington has asked the Egyptian government to let the US use Egyptian airports for ferrying military equipment and launching air raids.

Panetta also met with Israeli officials in Jerusalem Al-Quds on the same day to talk about the latest developments in Yemen.

A large US base is under construction near the Yemeni Red Sea port of Hodeira, according to the report.

Washington became involved in secret joint operations in Yemen after President Barack Obama approved US military and intelligence teams to be dispatched to the country.

According to the Washington Post, operations began six weeks ago, involving troops from the US military's clandestine Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), whose main mission is tracking and killing suspected "terrorists."

The US agents are helping the Yemeni army develop tactics, while providing Sana'a forces with electronic and video surveillance, as well as three-dimensional terrain maps.

In addition to "highly sensitive intelligence," the United States is sending weapons and munitions to be used against what the White House describes as an al-Qaeda cell operating in the Arabian Peninsula, the article added.

Earlier in January, the White House pledged \$121 million in aid to help the unpopular Yemeni government crush uprisings.

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