

CIA stops secret plan to nab Qaeda leaders

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CIA Director Leon Panetta has stopped the agency's secret plan for capturing or killing al-Qaeda operatives, US intelligence officials have said.

The precise nature of the highly classified effort remained unclear, unnamed former intelligence officials familiar with the matter told The Wall Street Journal.

The Central Intelligence Agency would not comment on the case, the paper said on Sunday.

The report said that the agency spent money on planning and possibly some training of its operatives for the mission.

The mission was acting on a 2001 presidential legal finding, which authorized the CIA to pursue such efforts. But the initiative had not become fully operational at the time Panetta ended it.

In 2001, the CIA also examined the subject of targeted assassinations of al-Qaeda leaders. But those discussions tapered off within six months.

Neither Panetta nor members of Congress provided details, the Journal said, adding that he quashed the CIA effort after learning about it on June 23.

Meanwhile, Representative Pete Hoekstra, the top Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, said little money had been spent on the project — closer to one million dollars than 50 million.

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