



## Maples: Al-Qaida returning to Afghanistan

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WASHINGTON, March 11 (UPI) -- The director of the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency says al-Qaida has expanded its presence in Afghanistan seven years after the fall of the Taliban.

Testifying Tuesday before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, DIA Director Lt. Gen. Michael Maples said while the terrorist group isn't entrenched in the country as it was before the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks, its renewed presence was a key reason for a U.S. decision to send in more troops, the Los Angeles Times reported.

"I believe al-Qaida's presence in Afghanistan is more significant, although still at a relatively minor scale, than we have seen in the past," Maples said.

During the hearing, Maples also said intelligence is showing Iran is becoming more active in supporting the Haqqani network, a militant group based in Pakistan that has been attacking U.S. and Afghan forces.

"We are seeing some increased activity between Iran and the Haqqani network," Maples testified.