in Yemen

Wrote in Afghanistan (33,000 of whom will be withdrawn by the end of the summer). Troubling as they are for other reasons, including the possibility of civilian casualties, drone strikes against Al Qaeda insurgents are not labor-intensive. Moreover, the administration is adamant that the recent increase in U.S. activity in Yemen doesn't portend a major commitment of troops or resources. "That would not serve our long-term interests and... runs counter to the desires of the Yemeni government and its people," a spokesman for the National Security Council told The Times.

Given the experience of the U.S. in Afghanistan, where a mission to dislodge Al Qaeda and the Taliban morphed into a decade-long exercise in counterinsurgency and nation-building, it is hardly alarmist to worry that similar mission creep might occur in Yemen, especially as the U.S. becomes more invested in the Hadi government. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula isn't the only threat to the new regime. Islamic militants have established an "emirate" in southern Yemen.

No one should belittle the danger posed by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. There is clearly a need for intelligence operations such as the one that thwarted a conspiracy to construct a potentially undetectable bomb in the month before the anniversary of Osama bin Laden's death. What President Obama — or Mitt Romney, if he is elected in November — must avoid is the sort of expansive intervention that has enmeshed this country in Afghanistan.

Re "Firm wants to tap liquid gold in the Mojave Desert," May 16

The Cadiz Inc. project will drain an aquifer in the eastern Mojave Desert and pipe it to the lawns of Orange County, reaping billions for the company. Conspicuously absent from the debate is the government of San Bernardino County, which was required to produce an environmental review but punted it to a water district nearly 200 miles away. Now it has moved to exempt the Cadiz project from the local groundwater law, signing away its enforcement authority for the laughably weak provisions of the exemption agreement, which, among other things, waits an entire decade before even calculating harm to the aquifer.

Our groundwater is a public resource, being squandered here to make a few people rich and destroying the environment in the process. The government has a responsibility to stop this dirty water grab.

ILENE ANDERSON
Los Angeles

The writer is the desert lands program director at the Center for Biological Diversity.

CADIZ INC. President Scott Slater; his firm wants to tap water reserves in the Mojave Desert.

were one to sell topsoil or sand from public lands to benefit a private seller, what would one think? Absurd? Not at all, in the context of the water thieves who have researched the regulations and concluded that their theft of public property is legitimate.

We must certainly take whatever action is necessary to ascertain if the stockholder had re-nounced his citizenship. If the person had, then the dividends would be taxed at 90%. Income earned from selling stock, homes or a business should all be taxed heavily.

Of course, this will not happen. However, we now understand precisely what right-wingers mean when they say they would not serve our long-term interests and... runs counter to the desires of the Yemeni government and its people."