

Yemen under Assault: Drone Strike Kills 4 “Suspected Al-Qaeda” Members

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Washington’s approved drone strikes claimed the lives of 4 suspected Al-Qaeda members in the Maarib Province in Yemen on Tuesday. It took place in the wake of the “Terror Alert” issued by Washington last week. Reuters stated that *“The New York Times reported on Monday that the closure of the U.S. embassies was prompted by intercepted communication between al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri and Nasser al-Wuhaishi, head of Yemen-based al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).”*

The report also said that *“The Yemeni tribal leaders said five missiles struck a vehicle travelling in Maarib Province in Tuesday’s strike, killing all of its occupants. State news agency Saba also said initial reports indicated that four suspected al Qaeda militants were killed in the air strike in Maarib, but gave no further details.”*

Were civilians killed by this particular drone strike? In the past, civilians killed by drone strikes in Yemen have been the usual outcome. Obama’s war on Al-Qaeda in Yemen has been more aggressive than the previous Bush administration according to the New America Foundation based in Washington D.C., stated *“As of August 6, 2013, U.S. drone and airstrikes had killed an estimated 610 to 849 people in Yemen, according to the New America Foundation data. Of these deaths, 99% occurred during Obama’s presidency.”*

The drone strike initiative began under U.S. President George W. Bush, but Obama has expanded the drone war in the Middle East and other parts of the world. In a report conducted by the ‘Alkarama Foundation’ a human rights organization based in Switzerland called *‘The United States’ War on Yemen: Drone Attacks’* clarified what impact the drone war in Yemen has on the civilian population:

From the first air strike in November 2002 until the month of May 2013, there have been between 134 and 226 U.S. military operations in Yemen, including strikes by aircraft, drone missiles, or attacks launched from warships stationed in the Gulf of Aden. However, the exact number of operations is unknown due to the secrecy surrounding the United States’ military interventions in Yemen. As such, the number of casualties is also unknown. In a study of civilian victims of U.S. attacks in Yemen by Yemeni journalist Ali Al-Sha’bani, he notes the difficulty of obtaining accurate information about the number of strikes and people affected. In 2012, he counted 109 air strikes in nine provinces, causing the deaths of 490 people, including 390 civilians.

While the Bureau of Investigative Journalism counted nearly 1,150 deaths between 2002 and April 2013 due to U.S. attacks, Dennis Kucinich, a representative of the U.S. Congress, placed the number of deaths in Yemen at

1,952, in a speech to Congress. He says: "We have not declared war on any of these nations [Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia] but our weapons have killed innocent civilians there. Highly reputable research shows that the number of high-level targets killed as a percentage of total casualties is estimated at about 2 percent." The head of national security in Yemen, Ali Hassan Al-Ahmady, announced that during 2012, a hundred members of al-Qaeda had been killed by U.S. aircraft strikes

The latest reports on the U.S. drone strike in Yemen can be a prelude to a military intervention led by American and British forces if the current civil war in Syria leads to an attack on Iran in the future. The "Gulf of Aden" is a strategic waterway for oil exports vital to America's interests. The "Gulf of Aden" is located between Yemen, Somalia and the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula where the majority of people are anti-American because of America's relentless drone strike policy. As told by a Yemeni journalist and activist Farea al-Muslimi in a U.S. Senate hearing reported by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism last April:

'Drone strikes are the face of America to many Yemenis,' Farea al-Muslimi told a rare US Senate hearing on targeted killing yesterday. The Yemeni journalist and activist gave emotive testimony at a Senate subcommittee about the impact of drone strikes and targeted killings on his homeland. His statement was a view from beneath the strikes that is almost unique in Washington and drew some applause from the chamber.

In stark terms he described the human toll of the US's covert campaign in Yemen, such as the aftermath of the catastrophic December 2009 cruise missile strike on al-Majala that killed over 40 civilians, including children and pregnant women. After the attack the bodies of the women and children were indistinguishable from the livestock that died alongside them, a tribesman told him. 'Just six days ago, this so-called war came straight to my village,' said al-Muslimi, who was educated in the US. A reported drone strike on April 18 left farmers 'scared and angry' and 'tore my heart', he added.

Drone strikes will continue in both Yemen and Somalia so that Washington can establish a strategic point of operations that will secure oil shipments to the U.S. Military and its oil corporations. The Yemeni population will continue to experience drone strikes with or without the approval of the Washington-backed Yemen government. The collaboration between Washington and Sana'a can establish a future military base in the Gulf of Aden. Reuters says that "*Security in Yemen is a global concern as it is home to AQAP, considered one of the most aggressive branches of the global militant organization, and shares a long border with Saudi Arabia, a U.S. ally and the world's top oil exporter. The U.S. government backs Yemeni forces with funds and logistical support.*"

Drone strikes in Yemen have had severe consequences for U.S. Foreign policy in the Middle East. But, the question is whether continuous drone strikes in Yemen will only target Al-Qaeda and its leadership including Osama Bin Laden's right hand man Ayman al-Zawahiri who is affiliated with the leader of Jabhat Al-Nusra, Mohammed al-Jawlani who "*is a CIA operative in the Al Nusra*" according to former Al-Qaeda member Sheikh Nabil Naiim in a recent video or will it continue to kill and injure innocent civilians. Washington utilizes Ayman Al Zawahiri for its drone war within Yemen as they did for the overall "War on Terror" with Osama Bin Laden. An American based news agency called the worldtribune.com had an interesting article back in January with a title that explains what the U.S. plans in Yemen.

It was called “U.S. to establish military bases in Yemen”:

The United States was said to planning to build at least three military bases in Yemen. Yemeni sources said the administration of President Barack Obama intends to enhance defense and military cooperation in 2013 with a range of new projects. They said this would include arms deliveries and the construction of military bases in the Arab League state. “The projects would begin over the next few months,” a source said. The Yemeni daily Al Shaara reported that Washington has also agreed to construct 1,000 housing units in Yemen. The newspaper said the Defense Department would oversee the building of three bases, including one on the island of Socotra.

The objective of US policy in Yemen and its surrounding countries is to establish a permanent U.S. base to assure safe passage of oil exports out of Saudi Arabia and Yemen which has vast oil fields as well. The Yemen Times reported on May 27th of this year that “In a speech delivered at the first Yemeni-Turkish forum held in Sana’a this past Saturday, oil and minerals’ minister, Ahmed Dares, confirmed that 35 international companies are currently competing to invest in 20 oil sites throughout Yemen.” Yemen is a strategic location. Expect more drone strikes to intensify that would result in more civilian deaths across the Middle East as the US and its allies continue to wage its “War on Terror.”

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