

US launches more strikes against Yemen, expands terror alert to Pakistan

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At least 34 people have been killed as a result of eight separate US drone attacks during the past two weeks, according to military officials in Yemen. US drones have been attacking targets in Yemen almost every day since intensified operations began on July 27.

A primary purpose of the drone barrage is to stage yet another display of the destructive power of US military technology, as a warning to any country that might stand in the way of US control of the key global geostrategic regions.

At least three strikes involving US drones have been launched since Wednesday. A drone attack Thursday in Wadi Ubaidah killed six alleged militants. Another killed three alleged militants in Hadramawt province, while a third, also in Hadramawt, killed three more. All three strikes were launched against vehicles that officials claim were carrying extremist fighters.

Yemeni officials said Friday that at least two of those killed in the strikes turned out to be civilians. According to the *Guardian*, definitive identification of drone strike victims has been difficult because the remains are typically charred beyond recognition.

“It has become common that civilians are killed when drones target suspected Al Qaeda fighters in Mareb,” said an anonymous senior security official in Mareb, Yemen. “That is why the names of those killed in strikes are rarely released.”

A virtual state of siege prevails in the Yemeni capital city of Sana’a. Foreign embassies as well as the airport and other official installations have been surrounded with soldiers and armored vehicles. Residents of Sana’a have been repeatedly quoted in media reports saying that the distinctive “buzz” of drones can be heard over the city throughout the day.

Drone operations in Yemen are conducted by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Joint

Special Operations Command (JSOC). Missions are launched from bases in Djibouti and Saudi Arabia, with the US carrying out an official total of 54 strikes against targets in Yemen in 2012 alone. The US operates a command center jointly with Yemeni officials inside the country, where possible strike targets are evaluated and selected. Pentagon and CIA officials continue to refuse comment on the existence and nature of the US drone program.

Yemeni president Abdo Rabbu Mansour Hadi just returned this week from a trip to the US, where he met with President Obama, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and Secretary of State John Kerry. Hadi, who has publicly signaled his support for US drone strikes inside Yemen, was praised by Obama for “good work” and for supposedly moving the country toward “a fully democratic government that can serve the interests of people.”

US operations in Yemen, the public is told over and over again, are necessary to combat Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. White House Press Secretary Jay Carney said at a press conference Friday that “AQAP in particular is viewed by the national security team as the most operational of the Al Qaeda affiliates and the one that poses the greatest potential threat to the United States.”

Abdul Salam Mohammed of the Abaad Research Center claims that the surge in US military operations inside of Yemen is driven by political considerations and that fighting Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is merely a pretext: “Al Qaeda today is not the powerful network of yesterday and they have been weakened to a great extent,” Mr. Mohammed said.

In fact, the operations in Yemen are aimed at extending US control in the country and throughout the region.

The war against Al Qaeda and radical Islamic terrorism has become, since 9/11, the favored ideological pretext of the US ruling elite as it seeks to justify its war plans. The real threat to peace, however, comes from US imperialism's limitless militarist aims, which have full bipartisan backing.

Representative Dana Rohrabacher, Republican of California, said in an interview with C-SPAN, "I don't have anything against drone strikes, and I think that the administration has not been doing a bad job when it comes to using drones to single out and kill the terrorists."

"The rest of the world understands," Rohrabacher asserted. "If they don't, they are our enemies."

In its installment of the evening news, CBS ran a segment titled "US sends psychological message with Yemen drone strikes." Security correspondent Bob Orr told the program, "The US is sending a pretty clear psychological message that the drones are on patrol, that they are scouting for targets."

While Orr argued that the "psychological message" is intended for Al Qaeda, the real intended recipients are America's strategic rivals.

As drone strikes have been escalated in Yemen, the US State Department closed its consulate in Lahore, Pakistan, moving "non-essential staff" to Islamabad, in response to a supposed terror threat against the facility. The government has also issued a travel advisory warning US citizens not to travel to Pakistan.

The warning follows directly on the heels of US and British moves to evacuate personnel from diplomatic posts in Yemen, and US closures of diplomatic facilities throughout the Middle East and Africa.

The Pakistani government claims that attacks have been planned against targets throughout Islamabad. The government has placed the city on high alert.

At the press conference held Friday, Carney continued to provide only the most vague and amorphous justification for the terror alert: "I would simply say what I said earlier, which is that we have information that is specific enough and credible enough to lead us to take the action we've taken in order to, out of an abundance of caution, ensure the security of our personnel in a variety of countries serving abroad."

The global terror alert, which has resulted in the closing of numerous diplomatic stations and coincided with a serious escalation of US military operations in

the Middle East, has yet to be substantiated on the basis of any evidence.

The terror alert comes amidst growing popular hostility to the worldwide surveillance state and US militarism. The US ruling elite is seeking to overcome the crisis of American capitalism through war abroad and repression internally, and the terror scare provides a necessary pretext for the continuation of these policies.

The US is set to reopen eighteen of the nineteen diplomatic posts that were closed last week. The closures were extended for one week last Sunday, a decision made according to State Department spokespersons out of "an abundance of caution." Diplomatic facilities in Lahore and Sana'a will remain closed.



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