

# US drone strike against Somalia

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A US pilotless drone carried out an attempted assassination Monday night of a leading member of Somalia's Al Shabab, an Islamist militia opposed to the country's US puppet government.

Pentagon spokesman Adm. John Kirby issued a statement acknowledging that the target of the strike, which took place in the vicinity of Saccaw, about 100 miles north of the port city of Kismayo, was a senior Al Shabab leader, but he did not name the intended victim.

Kirby said the Pentagon did not "assess" that there were civilian casualties from the missile strike, adding, "We are assessing the results of the operation and will provide additional information, when appropriate." Based on this account, there is no way of knowing whether the strike claimed the life of its target or how many others died in the missile attack.

Such tight-lipped statements are the norm for the drone assassination program, which has been condemned by the United Nations as a direct violation of international law and is hated by the populations forced to live under the constant threat of murder or massacre from the sky.

The Associated Press reported that the target of the attack was Ahmad Umar, who is alleged to have assumed leadership of Al Shabab after its former head, Ahmed Abdi Godane, was killed in a similar US drone strike last September.

In another operation last October, Navy SEALs raided the home of a third Al Shabab leader, Abdulkadir Mohamed Abdulkadir, in Baraawe, south of Mogadishu. This abduction/assassination attempt, however, proved a failure.

Somalia was officially proclaimed a front in the "global war on terrorism" under the Bush administration in 2008. It was then that Al Shabab was proclaimed a "specially designated global terrorist entity," despite its having confined its actions to the civil war within Somalia.

Washington's campaign against Al Shabab has consisted of drone strikes and special operations raids to decapitate the organization. As in similar drone assassination programs in Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere, this effort has shown no sign of curtailing the targeted group's operations. At the same time, the US has relied on a foreign occupation army of 22,000 troops, known as AMISOM, mobilized on behalf of US and Western imperialism by the African Union.

On December 26, Al Shabab militants dressed in Somali government army uniforms stormed the AMISOM headquarters adjacent to the Mogadishu airport. Fourteen people died in the operation, including eight members of the Islamist group, five AMISOM soldiers and a civilian contractor. The gun battle raged for more than two hours.

While including troops from Uganda, Kenya, Burundi and Djibouti, AMISOM is operationally dominated by the military of Ethiopia, which functions as Washington's cats' paw in the Horn of Africa, providing it with both drone bases and CIA "black site" torture centers.

In December 2006, the US orchestrated an Ethiopian invasion of Somalia to topple the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), a group of Sharia courts that had united to form a governing administration that managed to wrest control of most of southern Somalia, including the capital of Mogadishu, ending the continuous clan warfare that had dominated the region for the previous 15 years.

After the defeat of the ICU, the more militant Islamist elements within it formed Al Shabab to combat the US-backed regime and the foreign troops supporting it.

In seven years of fighting, the US and its proxy forces have gained control over most of southern Somalia, but have not been able to crush Al Shabab. The regime they are propping up is dominated by corruption, crisis and clan rivalries. Last week, the country saw the

appointment of its third prime minister in the space of one year.

As elsewhere in the “war on terror,” Washington is not carrying out military operations in Somalia out of concern for the safety of the American people, much less for the welfare of the Somalis, among the poorest populations on the planet, with a per capita gross domestic product of just \$112 and a life expectancy of 52.

The country’s coastline is the largest in Africa and lies adjacent to the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, the narrow passage linking the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. Fully 70 percent of global petroleum products and half of the world’s container traffic flow through the Indian Ocean, much of it bound for US capitalism’s rival, China.

Yemen, which controls the other side of this strategic seaway, is another front in the US “war on terror” and a frequent target of drone assassination strikes. Control over it and Somalia provides Washington with the ability to choke off China’s economic lifelines.

The latest strike in Somalia is part of a marked global escalation of the Obama administration’s illegal drone killing program as the year 2014 comes to an end.

Drone strikes in Afghanistan killed at least six alleged Taliban “militants” in eastern Nangarhar province on Sunday night, while another five people were killed and six others wounded in a similar attack in Logar Province last Friday.

Last Thursday, eight people died in a pair of **drone strikes** in Pakistan’s impoverished region of North Waziristan, near the Afghan border.

The criminality of these operations was underscored by a report released last month by the human rights group Reprieve entitled “You Never Die Twice.” It establishes that at least 41 individuals placed on “Kill Lists” personally drawn up by Obama—with no judicial or any other oversight—have each been reported killed multiple times, in one case on seven different occasions.

“This raises a stark question,” the report points out. “With each failed attempt to assassinate a man on the Kill List, who filled the body bag in his place? In fact, it is more accurate to say ‘body bags:’ many other lives are sacrificed in the effort to erase a name from the Kill List.”

In the case of the man killed seven times, Reprieve

found, 164 other people were killed in the strikes, including 11 children. It found that in the multiple—on average three—attempts to kill the 41 individuals, a total of 1,147 people lost their lives, accounting for fully a quarter of drone strike casualties in Pakistan and Yemen.

In Pakistan, the report states, 24 men were reported killed or targeted on multiple occasions, with failed strikes against them accounting for the deaths of 874 people. In two failed strikes against Ayman al-Zawahiri, the CIA managed to kill 76 children and 29 adults. The Al Qaeda leader remains alive.

Children have born the brunt of the assassination program. In pursuing 14 targets between 2004 and 2013, according to Reprieve, the drone strikes took the lives of 142 children, only six of whom died in strikes that successfully assassinated their intended victims.



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