



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 9, 2013

U.S. Drones Kill More Than 30 in Yemen; School Targeted in One Attack

In fewer than two weeks, Hellfire missiles launched by U.S. drones have killed at least 31 people in Yemen. At least 14 of the victims were believed by President Obama — the launcher-in-chief — to be al-Qaeda militants.

On the heels of reports of the [foiling of a plot](#) purportedly hatched by the Yemeni-based branch of the alleged terrorist organization, the president has accelerated the frequency and ferocity of the drone strikes in the small Arab nation.



[The Associated Press reports](#) that on August 7, “A suspected U.S. drone strike killed seven alleged Al Qaeda militants Wednesday in southern Yemen” according to security officials quoted by the AP.

Later that same day, [CNN reported](#) that “in central Yemen’s Mareb province, eight people were killed in an early morning drone strike, including four with links to al Qaeda,” again quoting Yemeni security officials.

Then, for the third day in a row, the United States sent drones to summarily execute targets in Hadramout province, an area of Yemen identified by the Obama administration as “a bastion of al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP).”

According to the establishment party line, the purpose of the drone strikes is to prevent any further terrorist attacks on the United States or her allies and to eliminate the vestiges of al-Qaeda. There are those in Yemen, however, who see a paradoxical outcome.

In a hearing before the Senate in April, Yemeni journalist Farea al-Muslimi testified, “The US thinks it understands Yemen but the drones have been one of the most effective tools for AQAP to succeed in Yemen. A big part of al-Qaeda power at the moment is convincing Yemenis that they are in a war with America, (that) America is attacking the sovereignty of Yemen and this government is non-legitimate.”

[Yalda Hakim, reporting for the BBC](#) from Zinjibar in southern Yemen, echoes al-Muslimi’s criticism, asking, “Are U.S. drones creating more enemies than they kill?” According to locals interviewed by Hakim, the answer is yes.

“The drones are killing our people, killing our children, and destroying our homes,” one man said, as he sat among the sheared rebar and crumbled concrete that was once his village. “The drones don’t differentiate between people,” he added, “they just kill.”

Another man who spoke to Hakim related that he and two children “live in constant fear of drone strikes.” And, according to his story, it’s not without good reason.

After he picked up his daughter from school to take her to a doctor’s appointment, Hellfire missiles fired from U.S. drones destroyed the clinic. He grabbed his daughter and ran back to the school to take cover. Before he got there, though, the school was obliterated by a second missile. His daughter was



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struck in the back of the head by debris and she bled to death in his arms.

“What did my daughter ever do to them?” he cried. “She was eight years old.”

That innocent little girl died in her father’s arms despite promises by President Obama to scale back the use of drones and to confine their use to known terrorists and their associates.

In [a policy speech delivered in May](#), the president assured citizens that drones would be used more discriminately only to “dismantle networks that pose a direct danger to us.”

But given the apparent disregard for venue or victim, how many other parents have buried their babies after the drones returned to their secret bases?

How many of the actual “targets” were themselves innocent or at least had no demonstrable ties to terrorist organizations? This question will never be known with certainty because the president alone serves as judge, jury, and executioner — and does not believe he is obliged to provide evidence to the American people.

And what of the fomenting of hate for the United States?

Facts reveal that the prosecution of the drone war in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, and North Africa is [creating more enemies than it is destroying](#). Al-Qaeda couldn’t cook up a more effective recruitment program than the U.S. drone war that is allegedly aimed at eliminating the “terrorist” organization.

In [a Christmas Eve 2012 Washington Post report](#), anonymous officials of the government of the United States admitted that the brutal mass murder of 12 innocent civilians (three of whom were children) was carried out by “a Defense Department aircraft, either a drone or a fixed-wing airplane.”

That’s it. The U.S.-dependent Yemeni regime remarked that the drone-delivered deaths were the result of an “accident.”

What isn’t an accident is the targeting by Yemenis, Pakistanis, and others weary of constant bombings of Americans and those perceived to be aiding them. It is a deadly development known as blowback.

“You want us to stay quiet while our wives and brothers are being killed for no reason. This attack is the real terrorism,” said Mansoor al-Maweri, whom [CNN reports](#) as being “near the scene of the strike” that “accidentally” killed 15 innocent men, women, and children in Yemen in September.

Then there was this from “an activist” who lives near the site of the massacre: “I would not be surprised if a hundred tribesmen joined the lines of al-Qaeda as a result of the latest drone mistake,” said Nasr Abdullah. “This part of Yemen takes revenge very seriously.”

[Reuters explains](#) that “Western diplomats in Sanaa say al Qaeda is a threat to Yemen and the rest of the world.” An argument can be made that a bigger threat to the world is the United States’ daily drone attacks that destroy our own dedication to the rule of law and serve as an effective recruiting tool for those seeking revenge for the killing.

The former CIA Pakistan station chief agrees. Speaking of the rapid expansion of the drone war in Yemen, [Robert Grenier told the Guardian \(U.K.\)](#):

That brings you to a place where young men, who are typically armed, are in the same area and may hold these militants in a certain form of high regard. If you strike them indiscriminately you are running the risk of creating a terrific amount of popular anger. They have tribes and clans and large families. Now all of a sudden you have a big problem.... I am very concerned about the



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creation of a larger terrorist safe haven in Yemen.

We have gone a long way down the road of creating a situation where we are making more enemies than we are removing from the battlefield. We are already there with regard to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

For President Obama and those pulling the triggers on the joysticks guiding the missiles toward their human targets, “suspected militant” means (presumably) “all military-age males in a strike zone.”

For those of us more concerned with the Constitution, the rule of law, and the sanctity of human life than the president, “suspected militant” means nothing other than a person not charged with any crime, not afforded even the most perfunctory due process protections, but summarily executed upon order of the president anyway. What, then, are the practices or principles that separate the president from those he orders assassinated in the name of safety?

And the death doesn’t stop. [Reuters reports](#) that “Yemeni authorities issued a statement early on Tuesday listing 25 “most wanted terrorists” it said were planning to carry out attacks in the country during the Muslim Eid al-Fitr holiday which started Thursday.”

Photo of MQ-9 Reaper drone: AP Images

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