



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 10, 2012

U.S. Drones Kill 10 in Yemen; “Part of the Solution” Says W.H. Official

On Tuesday, 10 people suspected of being al-Qaeda militants were killed by American drone strikes in Yemen [according to official Yemeni media reports](#).

Reports indicate that in separate attacks, missiles fired from Predator drones hit two cars carrying seven people in the town of Radda in southern Yemen. SABA, the state-run news agency in Yemen, claims that among those killed in the strike was Abdullah Awad al-Masri. Al-Masri, also known as Abou Osama al-Maribi, is described as “one of the most dangerous elements” of al-Qaeda operating in the country. He allegedly ran a “bomb-making” facility located in the Bayda province.



In the other drone attack, three “al-Qaeda militants” were killed while driving in the Zoukaika region of Hadramawt.

All of the dead are alleged to have been part of the al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP), the Yemeni branch of the larger al-Qaeda network.

One of the most notorious deaths in Yemen of a person accused of being an al-Qaeda operative was that of Anwar al-Awlaki. Anwar al-Awlaki was an American and so was his 16-year-old son. Neither of these men was charged with any crime.

Awlaki was placed on the president’s infamous kill list after he was suspected of influencing the Ft. Hood shooter, Major Nidal Hassan, as well as the so-called Underwear Bomber, Umar Abdulmutallab. No official charges were ever filed against the American-born cleric. The government never attempted to apprehend him and try him for his alleged atrocities. He was placed on a proscription list and murdered.

The hit reportedly went down like this: On September 30, 2011, while Anwar al-Awlaki had stopped to eat breakfast, two unmanned Predator drones fired Hellfire missiles killing him. Two weeks later, his son Abdulrahman was killed in similar manner. No charges. No trial. No due process.

Although the Obama administration has kept a tight lid on the details of its “death by drone” program, earlier this year the White House’s top counterterrorism advisor, John Brennan, [admitted for the first time publicly](#) to the extent of the use of drones in America’s War on Terror. Brennan said that the remote control killing of suspects on foreign soil who have been charged with no crime whatsoever, is “in full accordance with the law.”

Then, without apparent awareness of the macabre irony of the statement, Brennan reminded the world that the United States “respects national sovereignty and international law.”



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The day after the latest deadly drone strikes in Yemen were reported, Brennan took to the microphone once again to discuss the operation.

[During a conversation with Margaret Sanger at the Council on Foreign Relations \(CFR\)](#), Brennan defended his boss's remote-control elimination of those suspected of posing a threat to the security of the homeland.

"So long as AQAP seeks to implement its murderous agenda, we will be a close partner with Yemen in meeting this common threat," Brennan said.

In the interview, Brennan claimed that the president deploys drones only to target "militants" with designs on attacking the United States or its allies abroad. He admitted, furthermore, that American agents provide tactical intelligence support to Yemeni armed forces battling al-Qaeda on the ground.

When asked about the collateral deaths of innocent civilians during these attacks on "militants," Brennan said that the American "pilots" controlling the drones "make every effort" to avoid killing innocents. Said Brennan:

Today I'd simply say that all our CT [counterterrorism] efforts in Yemen are conducted in concert with the Yemeni government. When direct action is taken, every effort is made to avoid any civilian casualty. And contrary to conventional wisdom, we see little evidence that these actions are generating widespread anti-American sentiment or recruits for AQAP. In fact, we see the opposite, our Yemeni partners are more eager to work with us. Yemenese citizens who have been freed from the hellish grip of AQAP are more eager, not less, to work with the Yemeni government. In short, targeted strikes against the most senior and most dangerous AQAP terrorists are not the problem, they are part of the solution.

Contrary to Brennan's depiction of the drone program as "part of the solution" to fighting the proliferation of anti-American sentiment throughout the region, [a recent story published by The New American](#) paints a different picture.

As we reported last week:

At a conference of top Pakistani and American officials in Aspen, Colorado, [Sherry Rehman, Pakistan's ambassador to the United States](#), criticized the Central Intelligence Agency's drone warfare in Pakistan, describing it as having reached the point of "[diminishing returns](#)" and contributing to the growing anti-American sentiment in the country.

"This adds to the pool of recruits we're fighting against," Rehman said at the [Aspen Security Forum held July 25-28](#).

Then, in [a report filed by the Pakistan-based Conflict Monitoring Center](#), additional details of the CIA's drone war were revealed. The report offered evidence of the many people who were killed by American drones with no more than a suspicion of being linked to militant groups.

According to an [analysis of the report](#) by Global Research, in 2010:

The CIA carried out an unprecedented 132 drone attacks in tribal areas, claiming the lives of 938 people, it said. The Conflict Monitoring Center points out that none of the media organizations throughout last year reported on body counts from independent sources. Many analysts believe the geo-strategic game plan of the US has turned out to be counterproductive. The year 2010 was one of the deadliest years for civilians living in the tribal regions, as the number of drone strikes exceeded the combined number of such attacks carried out from 2004 to 2009. The report states



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that 2,052 people lost their lives in drone strikes during the 5-year period between 2004 and 2009. The rising civilian casualties have left behind many tragic stories in the tribal areas.

Additionally, [a story in the Los Angeles Times](#) cites an upcoming book on Yemen as evidence of what I call the "Predator Paradox." The *Los Angeles Times* reports:

But Gregory Johnsen, a Princeton scholar and author of a forthcoming book about Yemen, says it's doubtful that Yemenis make distinctions about whether people are dying at the hands of the U.S. or the U.S.-backed Yemeni government.

"The U.S. strategy runs the risk of driving more people into the arms of Al Qaeda," Johnsen said.

Despite this evidence of a backlash, the CIA's drone war continues to expand in scope. The United States has launched 28 drone strikes in Yemen this year, up from 10 in all of 2011.

In fact, in [July 2012, between 10 and 23 people have been killed in Yemen](#) as the result of drone strikes in that nation.

In one such attack carried out on July 23, the Bureau for Investigative Journalism reports:

A night time precision airstrike killed at least five alleged militants in a number of reported "air strikes" in southern Abyan province's al-Mahfad. The area is said to be the last geographic stronghold of AQAP and Ansar al-Sharia, and AP reported Yemeni media as saying that "the militants were consolidating their positions in al-Mahfad, quoting witnesses who said they saw military hardware headed to the area in trucks."

Although the operation was attributed to the Yemeni Air Force, [it is unlikely that it possesses such technology](#), thus implicating the United States in the strike.

Of course, the Yemeni Air Force might not be so technologically disadvantaged for long. In 2012, [the United States will send \\$159 million to the impoverished Arab nation](#) to assist with military and security improvements, this despite an outstanding public debt in the United States that [now reaches nearly \\$16 trillion](#).

Photo of drone in Yemen: AP Images



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