

Beat: Miscellaneous

U.S. drone kills 5 suspected al-Qaeda members in Yemen

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USPA News - A U.S. drone fired at a vehicle in northern Yemen on Sunday, killing a man described as a high-ranking al-Qaeda member and at least four other suspected militants, Yemeni security officials said Monday. It follows two deadly drone strikes last week.

Yemeni security officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the incident, said the attack happened on Sunday afternoon when an unmanned U.S. drone fired five missiles at a vehicle in the Khab al-Shath area of northern Al Jawf Governorate. At least five suspected militants were killed in the drone strike, but some reports put the death toll as high as six. One security official identified one of those killed as Hassan al-Saleh Huraidan, described as a high-ranking al-Qaeda operative in the region. His brother, also said to be an al-Qaeda member, was among those killed. The officials said the militants had traveled to the area to recruit new members in their fight against government forces, which last week launched a massive ground and air offensive against al-Qaeda militants in the southeastern province of Hadhramaut. Yemen is currently undergoing a transition process after a popular uprising erupted in the country in 2011, similar to protests seen in other countries across the Middle East and North Africa. Yemen held presidential elections in February 2012, resulting in a victory for the country's new leader Abd Rabbuh Mansur Al-Hadi. The United States regularly carries out drone strikes in Yemen, and documents released by the whistle-blowing website WikiLeaks in November 2010 revealed that the Yemeni government has covered up such strikes in the past. "We'll continue saying the bombs are ours, not yours," then-Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh told a U.S. official, according to a classified U.S. document. In October 2012, local al-Qaeda leader Nadir Haider Nasser al-Shaddadi and eight other suspected militants were killed when a U.S. drone fired several missiles at a farm and vehicles near the town of Jaar in southern Yemen's Abyan province. While the government claimed Yemeni security forces carried out the operation, it is believed to have been a U.S. drone strike. And last week, at least seven suspected al-Qaeda members were killed in two U.S. drone strikes in the southern province of Abyan. It is believed the United States carried out no less than 40 drone strikes in Yemen during the first five months of this year, but only few details are usually made available.

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