

Drone Wars - August 2013 - a day by day log compiled by Elayne Jude for Great North News Service is on the next page.

The Association of Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI) held a convention/expo on in Washington DC this month. Article by Foreign Policy magazine and photos here:

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/08/14/cutting_edge_drone_tech_convention

Al Salafiyya al Jihadiyya in Sinai issued a report to jihadist forums alleging that Israeli drones are operating over the Sinai Peninsula with the consent of the Egyptian authorities, leading to the deaths of a number of civilians in the Sinai.

Al Salafiyya al Jihadiyya note seven events between June 29 and July 3. On July 13, the statement alleged, "an Apache war plane fired a rocket at random due to a group of children playing with laser pointers and pointing them at the plane." (There are 35 Apache attack helicopters in service with Egyptian forces and 45 in service with the Israeli Defence Forces)

According to the statement, the Egyptian army has allowed "Egypt's airspace to be open to the spy planes of the Zionist enemy." In recent days, "Zionists drones were spotted roaming the skies over El Arish and El Sheikh Zeweid, and the spy planes fired rockets at will at any target in North Sinai."

In October 2012 al Salafiyya al Jihadiyya charged that Israeli drones were operating over the Sinai.

The month closed with the first strike in Pakistan in more than a month:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/31/three-militants-dead-us-drone-strike-pakistan>

August 1 - Yemen. Five al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula operatives killed in the third strike in Yemen in five days.

A pair of missiles were launched at a target in the Qatan Valley in Hadramout province, killing five and wounding three others. Differing accounts said the missiles struck a car, and that the strike took place at an al Qaeda-held site in the Qatan valley used for training terrorists.

No senior al Qaeda operatives or leaders were reported killed at the time. The identities of the dead were not disclosed.

Hadramout is the ancestral home of the bin Ladens. The province has become an AQAP stronghold. In 2012, strikes against AQAP in Hadramout increased. Prior to May 2012, there were zero in the province. From mid-May until the end of 2012, the US launched seven attacks in Hadramout. Seven of the 42 drone strikes in Yemen in 2012, or 17%, have taken place in the province. Today's strike in Hadramout is the first in the province so far this year.

August 6 - Yemen. Four al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula operatives killed. The strike occurred as AQAP activity forced the closure of more than 20 diplomatic facilities across the Middle East and Africa.

Several missiles were launched at a vehicle traveling in the Wadi Abeedah district in Marib province. A nearby compound was also targeted.

Four AQAP operatives, including "an al-Qaeda leader," are reported to have been killed in the strike on the vehicle. The dead are said to include Saleh al-Tays al-Waeli and Saleh Ali Guti. Al Waeli was among those whose names appeared on a list of Yemen's 25 most-wanted terrorists that was published yesterday.

Today's strike is the fourth in 10 days. The recent spike in attacks is related to the closure of diplomatic facilities in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. US officials said they have

intercepted communications between al Qaeda emir Ayman al Zawahiri and Nasir al Wuhayshi, AQAP's leader and al Qaeda's general manager.

The strike took place the day after the Yemeni government issued rewards of five million Yemeni Rials (an estimated \$23,000) for 25 AQAP operatives who are "planning to carryout operations in the capital, Sana'a."

August 7 - Yemen. 11 AQAP operatives were killed in two strikes in southern and central Yemen. The Yemeni government claimed to have baffled several plots to attack oil facilities in the country.

In the first strike, several missiles were launched at two vehicles in the Markha area of Shabwa province. Seven AQAP operatives are said to have died, including Sarhan al Thamlaji, who was on a list of wanted AQAP operatives.

In a second strike, four AQAP fighters and two civilians were killed in Marib province.

AQAP leaders are known to operate in Shabwa; the province was under AQAP control from May 2011 until the summer of 2012, when the Yemeni military launched an offensive to wrest control of Shabwa from the terror group. Marib is also a stronghold of AQAP.

The strikes took place the day after the Yemeni government issued rewards of five million Yemeni rials (around US \$23,000) for information leading to the arrest of 25 AQAP operatives.

Topping Yemen's list are Ibrahim Sulaiman al Rubaish, AQAP's leading ideologue and theologian and a former Guantanamo Bay detainee; and Ibrahim Hassan al Asiri, the terror group's senior bomb maker who has designed devices that are said to be undetectable by traditional screening methods.

The Yemeni government claimed to have disrupted a major plot to take over the city of

Mukallah, the provincial capital of Hadramout, and target oil export terminals and facilities.

August 8 - Yemen. Six AQAP fighters killed in the eastern province of Hadramout. Missiles struck a vehicle in the Al Ayoon area, killing three. The second strike killed three more AQAP fighters, in the Al Qutn area of Hadramout, also by missiles striking their vehicle.

No senior al Qaeda operatives or leaders were reported to have been killed at this time. The identities of the al Qaeda operatives who were killed have not been disclosed.

Yemeni officials claimed that AQAP was plotting to attack Mukallah, the provincial capital of Hadramout, and the Al Dabbah oil and Balhaf gas export facilities. AQAP fighters were to hit the city and facilities with fighters disguised as policemen. Yemeni officials later distanced themselves from the claim.

August 11 - Yemen. Two AQAP operatives killed in southern Yemen.

The strike, in the province of Lahj, targeted a vehicle as it traveled on a mountain road late in the evening. The vehicle was believed to be carrying arms and its occupants were suspected members of AQAP.

No senior al Qaeda operatives or leaders were reported killed at this time. The identities of the dead have not been disclosed. Two others were wounded and another escaped uninjured.

Today's the first reported strike in the southern province. The Al Anad airbase in Lahj hosts the Reapers used in Yemen.

August 30, Yemen - Three killed including a local commander for AQAP, in the first reported strike in Yemen in 20 days. Kaid al Dhahab, the AQAP commander, served as the group's emir in the central province of Baydah.

Missiles were fired at a vehicle travelling in the village of Manasseh, in Baydah province. Mohammed Albasha, Yemen's official spokesman in Washington, confirmed Kaid's death. AQAP has not yet done so. The identities of the other two killed in the strike have not been disclosed.

Kaid's brother Tariq seized control of Baydah. Kaid and Nabil were tasked with regrouping after Tariq's killing. The two are also the brothers-in-law of slain AQAP leader Anwar al Awlaki, who was killed in a strike in 2011.

Strikes began in Baydah in March 2012. There have been 13 to date.

August 31, North Waziristan - Four killed in the Mir Ali area.. Foreign fighters from Turkmenistan were struck by pair of missiles as their vehicle traveled in the village of Hisokhel.

The four fighters have been identified as members of the Turkistan Islamic Party, allied with North Waziristan Taliban leader Hafiz Gul Bahadar.

The Turkistan Islamic Party, allied with al Qaeda, is known to host training camps in North Waziristan, particularly in the Mir Ali area. In July, the group released a video of women training for jihad at one of its camps. The Party has also released videos of children training to wage jihad.

The Mir Ali area is in the sphere of influence of Abu Kasha al Iraqi, an al Qaeda leader linked to the Taliban. He is rumoured to have been killed in a strike last year, but the report was never confirmed.

Bahadar and the Haqqani Network also operate in the Mir Ali area, a known hub for al Qaeda's military and external operations councils. Al Qaeda and other terror groups host or share camps in the area.

The Pakistani military has indicated that it has no plans to take on Hafiz Gul Bahadar or the Haqqani Network. Bahadar and the Haqqanis are considered "good Taliban" by the Pakistani military establishment as they do not carry out attacks inside Pakistan.

In June 2012, Bahadar banned polio vaccinations in North Waziristan, in protest against US drone strikes.

Today's strike is the fifth since President Obama's speech at the end of May outlining a reduced US counterterrorism role in the world.