

January saw the resumption of multiple strikes in Yemen, A pattern emerging suggests several strikes launched over a short period of time, followed by weeks of inactivity. Over the past eight months, AQAP have been targeted outside of the traditional strongholds of Abyan and Shabwah provinces in the south . Of the 25 strikes against AQAP since the beginning of June 2012, only four have hit AQAP in Abyan and Shabwah. The other 21 strikes have occurred in the provinces of Aden, Al Baydah, Al Jawf, Hadramout, Marib, Saada, and Sana'a, reports Elayne Jude of Great North News Services.

In 2012, there were 42 strikes in Yemen against AQAP and its political front, Ansar al Sharia. In 2011, there were ten.

The New York Times reports (29 January) that the USA is preparing to establish a drone base in northwest Africa, to increase surveillance of the local affiliate of Al Qaeda and other Islamist extremist groups in the region. The NYT adds: "Officials say they envision flying only unarmed surveillance drones from the base, though they have not ruled out conducting missile strikes at some point if the threat worsens".

January 2 - South Waziristan. Five 'militants' killed "a house suspected of being a militant hideout," in the Angoor Agga area. Four strike aircraft are thought to have been circling a compound before firing four missiles just after midnight. Usually Predator UCAVs fire a pair of missiles. This attack took place in a territory controlled by "good Taliban" leader, Mullah Nazir, leader in the Wazir areas of South Waziristan. "Good Taliban" are so-called by Pakistan if they do not openly seek the overthrow of the Pakistani state.

Nazir has openly supported Mullah Omar and bin Laden. Ilyas Kashmiri, Abu Khabab al Masri, Osama al Kini, Sheikh Ahmed Salim Swedan, and Abu Zaid al Iraqi, all senior AQ, have been killed while under Nazir's protection.

The strike was the first of the new year.

In 2012 the US launched 46 strikes in Pakistan; in 2011, 64 strikes; in 2010, 117 strikes. Since the first strikes in 2004, many of AQ's senior ranks have been killed, but been replaced.

January 3 - South Waziristan. Five 'militants' killed, including a leading Taliban. Mullah Nazir, head of the Taliban in the Wazir area of South Waziristan, was killed in a strike in the Birmal area. A pair of missiles were fired at a vehicle. Nazir, two of his deputies, Atta Ullah and Rafey Khan, Rata Khan, a commander, and two other fighters, were killed. Nazir and his followers had been the targets of numerous US drone strikes in the past several years.

Separately, a strike killed Faisal Khan, a Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan commander, and two Uzbeks in the village of Mubarak Shahi, in the Mir Ali area. The drones circled back and fired a second salvo of missiles as an attempt was made to recover the bodies. It is not known if there were further deaths.

January 3 - Yemen. Three AQAP killed in Baydah province. Mukbel Abbad and two fighters died as their vehicle was targeted in the town of Rada'a.

Yemeni officials said that Abbad, a senior AQAP leader in the province, was the brother-in-law of Tariq al Dahab, top AQAP leader in Baydah before his death early last year in a feud with his brother Hazam, a senior tribal leader in the town.

AQAP has increased its presence in Baydah province over the past year. On May 28, 2012, the US targeted Kaid al Dhahab, AQAP's emir in the province, and his brother Nabil, also a senior AQAP.

January 6 - South Waziristan. Seventeen killed in strikes on three compounds. in the Babargarh area in South Waziristan.

10 or more suspected Taliban fighters were killed, , including a commander known as Wali Mohammed, or Toofan, said to have directed suicide operations for the Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan.

The three compounds belonged to Qari Imran, a militant commander believed to be affiliated

with North Waziristan Taliban leader Hafiz Gul Bahadur. Bahadar operates separately from the Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan. The compounds may have been used by the Punjabi Taliban, allies of Bahadar. Imran was the target of the attack. His fate is unknown.

January 8 - North Waziristan. Eight 'militants' killed in two separate strikes. A compound was targeted in the village of Haider Khel, near Mir Ali. Eight missiles were fired at the compound. Reuters reported that one of those killed was a "foreign tactical trainer" from either Somalia or the United Arab Emirates. He was identified later as Sheikh Yasin Al Kuwaiti, a "key al Qaeda paramilitary commander". Sheikh Yasin was a top commander and trainer for the Lashkar al Zil, or Shadow Army, al Qaeda's military cadre.

Two unidentified "Uzbeks," probably from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan or its splinter group, the Islamic Jihad Group, were killed. Sheikh Yasin's wife and daughter died in the airstrike. AQ commanders and fighters often marry locally to cement ties to the Taliban and the tribes.

In a separate strike, several missiles were fired at a compound in the nearby village of Eissu Khel. Three people were reported killed in the strike, but it is unclear if they were militants or civilians.

January 10 - North Waziristan. Six 'militants' killed near the town of Mir Ali. Four missiles were fired at a compound and a motorcycle in the village of Hisokhel Khel. Pakistani officials claimed that six fighters were killed in the strike. None were identified at the time.

January 20 - Yemen. Eight people, including two Saudi AQAP fighters, killed in central Yemen. Two missiles were fired at a car in the Abieda Valley, in Marib province. One of the Saudis is tentatively identified as Ismail bin Jamil. Yemeni tribesmen blocked the road from Marib to the capital, Sana'a, to protest the strikes.

January 21 - Yemen. Three AQAP killed in Marib Province. The strike is the second in Marib in three days.

Two missiles were fired at a car as it travelled outside the city of Marib. Three AQAP members, identified as Ali Saleh Toaiman, Qassim Nasser Toaiman, and Ahmed al Ziadi, a local commander in the province, were killed in the attack, and two more were wounded.

The three AQAP were captured after the Yemeni military regained control of Abyan province from AQAP, but were released as part of an amnesty in April 2012.

January 22 - Yemen. Four AQAP fighters killed in northern Yemen. The third strike in four days, targeted AQAP in the northern province of Al Jawf.

Missiles hit a vehicle as it travelled in the desert in Al Jawf province, targeting a gathering of AQAP who had made the area a centre for training, according to a Yemeni official. The province borders Saudi Arabia, and is considered a base for fighters crossing the border between the two countries.

AQAP in Al Jawf have been targeted twice previously. Both strikes targeted top AQAP leaders. In September 2011, Anwar al Awlaki, the American propagandist, ideologue, recruiter, and operational commander, was in an airstrike in the province. Awlaki sheltered at the homes of Islah leaders in Al Jawf before he was killed. In January 2010, Qasim al Raymi, AQAP's top military commander., was targeted. He and other senior AQAP officials survived.

January 23 - Yemen. Six AQAP killed near Sana'a.

Missiles struck a vehicle travelling in a rural area outside of Sana'a. No senior AQAP fighters are reported killed.

AQAP in Sana'a were targeted once before. On Nov. 7, 2012, Adnan al Qadhi, an al Qaeda commander who was involved in the attack on the US Embassy in Sana'a in 2008, was killed along with two fighters. Al Qadhi commanded local AQAP forces in and around Sana'a. The strike is the fourth in Yemen in five days, and the fifth this month.