

Beat: Miscellaneous

U.S. drone kills 9 al-Qaeda militants in southern Yemen

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USPA News - A U.S. drone fired at a farm in southern Yemen on Thursday, killing at least nine suspected al-Qaeda militants who were planning to attack security forces, Yemeni officials said on Friday. Among those killed was a man identified as a local leader of al-Qaeda.

Yemeni security officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the incident, said the attack happened when an unmanned U.S. drone fired several missiles at a farm and vehicles near the town of Jaar in southern Yemen's Abyan province. The country's defense ministry confirmed nine al-Qaeda militants were killed in the area but claimed they were killed by service members of the 119th Infantry Brigade. The Yemeni government is known to frequently credit its security forces for militant casualties, even when they were caused by a U.S. drone. Among the nine militants killed Thursday morning was a local al-Qaeda leader identified as Nadir Haider Nasser al-Shaddadi. The farm was located only several miles (kilometers) from a military post, and the officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity said one of the militants was about to attack security forces in a suicide bombing. Yemen is currently undergoing a transition process after a popular uprising erupted in the country last year, similar to protests seen in other countries across the Middle East and North Africa. Yemen held presidential elections in February, 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 early September, the deputy commander of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Saudi national Said al-Shihri, was killed in the remote eastern province of Hadhramaut. The Yemeni government claimed al-Shihri was killed by Yemeni troops during a military operation, but some reports have suggested he was actually killed by a U.S. drone.

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