

compiled by Elayne Jude for Great North News Service

After an interlude of almost one month, July opened with 17 killed in a strike in Pakistan. In Yemen, a 49 day hiatus was broken on July 28, with the deaths of six alleged fighters. The month concluded with a surge of strikes in Yemen.

The REMUS 600 family of unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs) has been used by the US Navy's special warfare units and EOD since the early 2000s. Now they are expected to play a prominent part in US operations in the Pacific:

<http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/07/08/underwater-drones-absorb-some-risk-for-elite-navy-units>

The Imperial War Museum commissioned artist Omar Fast to make a piece about UACV pilots operating in Nevada. The resulting film, 5,000 Feet is The Best, is now showing at the Museum's main building in Southwark, South London.

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/exhibitions/iwm-london/iwm-contemporary-omer-fast>

<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/video/2013/jul/25/drone-iwm-contemporary-omer-fast-art-video>

<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/video/2013/jul/25/drone-iwm-contemporary-omer-fast-art-video>

Strikes during the month are on the next page.

July 2, North Waziristan - 17 killed in first strike for almost one month.

Missiles were fired at a compound in the village of Danday Darpa Khel near Miramshah.

Four Haqqani Network members killed and two wounded were reported by Pakistani officials. Reuters later reported that 17 people, mostly Haqqani Network fighters, were killed. The target was not disclosed, and no senior jihadist commanders were reported dead. Later regional press reports identified as among the dead the al Qaeda commander Abu Saif al Jaziri, Maulana Akhtar Zadran, a Haqqani Network officer, Rana Ashraf from Sargodha and Navid Butt from Lahore.

The deaths were not confirmed. Al Qaeda and the Haqqani Network often do not announce the deaths of military commanders.

Danday Darpa Khel is a known hub of the Haqqani Network. Two of the group's top leaders have been killed in strikes in the village over the past few years. In 2010, Mohammed Haqqani, a son of Jalaluddin Haqqani, patriarch of the family, was killed. He was a military commander. In 2011, a strike killed Jan Baz Zadran, described as the organization's third in command.

The Haqqani Network is close to al Qaeda, and is supported by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI).

July 13, North Waziristan - Two "militants" reported killed in the Mir Ali district.

A pair of missiles were fired at the two as they travelled by motorcycle in the village of Musaki. The target of the strike was not identified, and no senior leaders or operatives are reported killed.

The Mir Ali area is in the sphere of influence of Abu Kasha al Iraqi, an al Qaeda leader who is a key link to the Taliban. His death in a strike last year was never confirmed.

Mir Ali is a known hub for Al Qaeda and allied groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Islamic Jihad Group, the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Party, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and others.

Despite requests by the US that

action be taken against these groups, the Pakistani military has indicated that it has no plans to move against the Haqqani Network or Hafiz Gul Bahadar. The Haqqanis and Bahadar are considered "good Taliban" by the Pakistani military establishment, as they do not carry out attacks inside Pakistan.

July 17, Yemen - Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has confirmed that deputy leader Said al Shihri was killed in a strike in 2012, confirming the Yemeni government's earlier report.

AQAP announced the death of al Shihri in a video released on July 16. The video's production date is given as Ramadan 1434.

Al Shihri, whose real name was Abu Sufyan al Azdi, was first reported killed in mid-January by a Yemeni journalist. The Yemeni government issued an official statement shortly after, confirming his death. In April 2013, AQAP released a statement from al Shihri, and referred to him as if he were alive.

Al Shihri is thought to have been wounded in a drone strike in late 2012, dying later of his wounds. The exact date of the strike is unclear. No strikes were reported in Yemen between Nov. 8, 2012 and Dec. 23, 2012.

July 28, Yemen - Six "militants" died in an attack on a convoy in a southern town controlled by al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. This is the first strike in Yemen in 49 days.

Missiles were fired at a vehicle in the Al Mahfad area in the southern province of Abyan. Six members of AQAP were killed; three of them were identified but their names have not been disclosed. No senior AQAP operatives or leaders are reported to have been killed.

AQAP has regrouped in the Al Mahfad area after being driven from cities such as Zinjibar, Jaar, Lawdar, and Shaqra by a Yemeni military offensive that began in the spring of 2012. AQAP controlled the cities in Abyan after launching its own offensive a year earlier.

The US launched two previous strikes in Al Mahfad, on June 1 and May 18 2013.

July 29, North Waziristan - Eight "militants" were killed in a strike in an area of North Waziristan known to serve as a gateway for terrorist groups entering Afghanistan. This strike is the first in Pakistan in two weeks.

A pair of missiles were fired at a compound in the village of Shinkai Narai, in the Shawal area of North Waziristan, as the fighters were preparing to break their fast with their Iftar dinner.

In a statement released by the Pakistani Foreign Ministry the attack was described as counter-productive:

"The Government of Pakistan strongly condemns the US drone strike that took place in Shawal Area in North Waziristan on the night of 28 July 2013. These unilateral strikes are a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Pakistan has repeatedly emphasized the importance of bringing an immediate end to drone strikes."

Three alleged AQ military trainers were later identified among the dead: Abu Rashid from Saudi Arabia, Muhammed Ilyas Kuwaiti from Kuwait, and Muhammed Sajid Yamani from Yemen.

July 30, Yemen - Three AQAP operatives were killed as they traveled in the south of the country.

Missiles were launched at a vehicle as it drove through the town of Saeed in the southern province of Shabwa.

Yemeni tribesmen said that "a known Saudi member" of AQAP along with two Yemenis was among the dead. A second car escaped the strike altogether.

Today's strike is the second in Yemen in four days. The US has launched 14 strikes in Yemen so far in 2013.

Three alleged al Qaeda military training experts were killed in a strike in North Waziristan that took place last weekend. Al Qaeda continues to support Taliban military operations in Afghanistan and conduct its own attacks despite claims from US commanders that the terrorist group is merely fighting

for its survival in the country and maintains a minimal presence.

The US drone strike, which took place on July 28 in the Shawal Valley in North Waziristan, a known hub for terrorists crossing into Afghanistan, is reported to have killed four Arabs and four Taliban fighters.

The Taliban commander told Reuters that the Arab fighters were "al Qaeda training experts who had crossed the border from Afghanistan to look at ways of setting up a similar camp on Pakistani territory." The al Qaeda fighters were identified as "Abu Rashid from Saudi Arabia, Muhammed Ilyas Kuwaiti from Kuwait, and Muhammed Sajid Yamani from Yemen."

US intelligence officials who track al Qaeda in the region told The Long War Journal that they are aware of the reports of the deaths of the al Qaeda operatives, but would neither confirm nor deny them.

The Lashkar-al-Zil, or the Shadow Army, al Qaeda's paramilitary force that fields small conventional units in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, is known to operate training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan's tribal areas, which include North and South Waziristan, host training camps for al Qaeda as well as a multitude of allied jihadist groups from inside and outside of Pakistan. In Afghanistan, al Qaeda is known to operate training camps in the remote northeastern provinces of Kunar and Nuristan.

The Lashkar-al-Zil embeds military trainers within Taliban units in both countries. These trainers provide instructions for battling security forces in local insurgencies and furnish knowledge, expertise, funding, and resources for conducting local and international attacks. The US Treasury Department officially acknowledged the existence of this unit when it added one such Pakistan-based trainer and commander of al Qaeda's "paramilitary brigades" to the list of global terrorists in June. [For more information on this unit, see LWJ report, Al Qaeda's paramilitary 'Shadow Army,' from February 2009.]

The US may have killed Abu Saif al Jaziri, a mid-level paramilitary commander from Algeria who works with the Haqqani Network in the region, in a drone strike on July 2 in North Waziristan. A Haqqani Network commander known as Maulana Akhtar Zadran and two Pakistani jihadists are also reported to have been killed in the strike.

US officials downplay al Qaeda's importance in Afghanistan

US military officials continue to downplay al Qaeda's presence in Afghanistan, despite ample evidence that the group is active in the country as well as in Pakistan.

In an interview on July 28, General Joseph Dunford Jr., the Coalition commander in Afghanistan, said al Qaeda was merely a "shell" of its former self, with only about 75 members in Afghanistan, who were mostly too busy trying to stay alive to plan attacks against the West, the New York Times reported.