

This month saw a strike in Arakzai, Pakistan, the country's first outside North and South Waziristan since December 2010, writes Elayne Jude of Great North News Services. In Yemen, a rare strike occurred in Saada province the north of the country, killing a local AQAP commander, and two Saudis. The area is the locus of fighting between the Houthis, a Shia splinter group, and local Salafist groups, including al Qaeda, allegedly used as proxies by the Sunni Yemeni government.

On October 20, Said al Shihri, a former Guantanamo detainee and the current deputy emir of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, issued a statement denying the reports of his death that emerged in the media in September. Shihri called the reports 'a rumor to cover the killing of the innocent, unarmed Muslims in Yemen', propagated by the Yemeni government after civilians were killed in a drone strike. Thirteen civilians were reportedly killed in a strike in Baydah province on 2 September. On September 10, the Yemeni military claimed that al Shihri was killed in a military operation in Hadramout province. Shihri's statement was released in the form of an audiotape on jihadist Internet forums.

October 1 - North Waziristan. Three 'rebels' killed near Mir Ali. Four missiles were fired at a vehicle in the village of Khaderkhail in the Mir Ali area. Pakistani officials said that three 'rebels' were killed. The exact target of the strike has not been disclosed. No senior al Qaeda or allied jihadist commanders from foreign terrorist groups are reported to have been killed in the strike.

The strike is the second in the village since Sept. 24, when a compound there was struck. Five 'militants', including al Qaeda leader Abu Kasha al Iraqi and Fateh al Turki, a previously unidentified leader, are said to have been killed. Their deaths have not been confirmed.

Despite the known presence of al Qaeda and other foreign groups in North Waziristan, and requests by the US that action be taken against these groups, 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.

Today's drone strike in Mir Ali area is the third in Pakistan in 10 days. In addition to the Sept. 24 strike in Mir Ali, three 'militants' were killed in the Datta Khel area of North Waziristan on Sept. 22. Prior to the Sept. 22 strike, the US last hit targets in North Waziristan on Sept. 1.

October 4 - Yemen. Four AQAP killed. Several missiles were fired at a vehicle as it was travelling in the Maqbala area in Shabwa province, killing four 'heavily armed' AQAP operatives, according to a Yemeni official and residents. Two more 'militants' were wounded and another escaped. The exact target has not been disclosed; no senior AQAP leaders was reported killed in the attack. It was later reported that AQAP's senior sharia, or Islamic law, official was among the dead, according to a Yemeni journalist who is closely connected to the terror group. Sheikh

Abu Zubeir 'Adil al'Abab, the sharia official, was described as the "fourth man in the hierarchy of Qaedat al-Jihad Organization in the Arabian Peninsula," in a report by Abdul Razzaq al Jamal.

The strike is the first recorded in Yemen since Sept. 5, when eight missiles launched at a compound in the Wadi al Ain area of Hadramout province killed six AQAP operatives. Said al Shihri, a former Guantanamo detainee and the current deputy emir of AQAP, was rumoured to have been in the strike in Wadi al Ain, but the report was never confirmed. An unnamed Yemeni official said DNA tests concluded that al Shihri was not among those killed in the attack.

Today's strike takes place six days after Yemeni President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi praised the US drone strikes in Yemen during a speech at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Hadi confirmed that the US conducted the nighttime strikes 'because the Yemeni Air Force cannot carry out missions at night'.

October 10 - North Waziristan. Three 'militants' killed in Mir Ali district. Four missiles at a compound in the Hurmuz area, east of Miranshah, after circling the area. Hurmuz is in the Mir Ali area of North Waziristan, according to The News.

Pakistani intelligence officials said that five "militants" were killed in the attack. The exact target of the airstrike has not been disclosed. No senior al Qaeda or allied jihadist commanders from foreign terrorist groups are reported to have been killed in the strike.

The strike is the second in Pakistan this month. The first strike took place on Oct. 1 in the Mir Ali area.

October 11 - Arakzai. 16 'militants' killed in a strike on a compound in Pakistan's tribal agency of Arakzai. The strike is the first recorded outside of Pakistan's tribal agencies of North and South Waziristan since December 2010.

Four missiles were fired at a compound in the Buland Khel area of Arakzai. The compound belonged to Maulana Shakirullah, commander of the Hafiz Gul Bahadar group of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP or Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan). Shakirullah is said to be allied with the Haqqani Network and al Qaeda. No senior al Qaeda or allied jihadist commanders from foreign terrorist groups are reported to have been killed in the strike.

Strikes outside of the designated 'kill boxes' in North and South Waziristan are rare. Of the 318 drone strikes recorded in the region since 2004, only 17 have taken place outside of North and South Waziristan.

Today's is the first that has been reported outside of North and South Waziristan since December 2010, training camps belonging to Taliban commander Tariq Afridi in the tribal agency of Khyber were hit.

The US has conducted only one strike in Arakzai in the past, on April 1, 2009. A Taliban compound in the town of Khadzai, a region run by Hakeemullah Mehsud, the emir of the al Qaeda-linked Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan, was targeted. 12 Taliban fighters and al

Qaeda operatives were killed and 12 more were wounded. Hakeemullah was thought to be attending a senior Taliban leadership meeting at the compound, but was not killed. Abdullah Hamas al Filistini, a senior al Qaeda trainer, was among those killed in that strike.

October 18 - Yemen. Eight AQAP fighters killed. In the first strike against AQAP in southern Yemen in two weeks, nine were killed, including one described by the Yemeni military as a 'dangerous leader.'

A farmhouse was attacked at dawn today outside of Jaar in Abyan province. The house was struck three times. The Yemeni military claimed that a joint raid 'by the champions of the 119th Infantry Brigade and the popular committees', or local anti-AQAP militias, conducted the attack. They described Nadir Haider Nasser al Shaddadi, the AQAP commander killed in the raid, as 'the terrorist and dangerous leader of the al Qaeda'. The Yemeni military often takes credit for operations carried out by US drones.

October 21 - Yemen. Four AQAP fighters killed. In the second attack in the country in four days, several missiles were fired at a vehicle as it was travelling in the Wadi Abida area in Marib province.

An AQAP operative known as Sanad Oraidan al Okailim, whose brother was killed in Abyan province earlier this year, was among four people killed in the nighttime attack. A second vehicle arrived at the scene following the strike, and its occupants removed the bodies of the dead.

October 24 - North Waziristan. Four 'militants' and one civilian killed. US drones killed four "militants" and one civilian in a strike today on a compound in Pakistan's Taliban-controlled tribal agency of North Waziristan.

Pakistani officials said three missiles were fired at a compound and a vehicle in the village of Tappi, near Miramshah. Three cows were also killed, and the house was completely destroyed. The target of today's strike has not been disclosed. No senior al Qaeda or allied jihadist commanders from foreign terrorist groups are reported to have been killed in the strike. The village of Tappi has been struck five other times since the beginning of 2008.

The Haqqani Network, a Taliban group that operates in North Waziristan and Kurram, as well as in eastern Afghanistan, administers the area where today's attack took place. Al Qaeda leaders and operatives closely allied with the Haqqani Network shelter in the area, as do other terror groups. The US added the Haqqani Network to the list of global terror groups in September 2012, for supporting al Qaeda and conducting attacks in Afghanistan.

October 28 - Yemen. Four AQAP killed. Several missiles were fired at two compounds in the Abu Jabara area of Saada province. A local AQAP commander known as Hadi al Tais was said to be the target of the airstrike; it is unclear if he was killed. The strike is the first recorded against AQAP in northern Yemen since the US began targeting the group in late 2009. All other strikes have targeted fighters in the southern provinces.

Saada is a hotspot where local Salafist groups, backed by AQAP and the government, battle the Houthis, a Shia separatist group that is supported by Iran. Based in Al Jawf and Saada, the Houthis have been fighting the Sunni government for years. In 2010, the Houthis also clashed with Saudi security forces along the northern border. Hundreds of Houthi fighters and Saudi troops were killed in the fighting.

In early December 2011, AQAP officially declared war on the Houthis. Ibrahim Suleiman al Rubaish, AQAP's Mufti, issued the announcement, calling the Shia a "virus" on the Sunni people. Rubaish was held at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility before his release in 2006. AQAP has conducted several suicide attacks against the Houthis.

The Yemeni government has used al Qaeda and other local terror groups, as well as pro-government tribes, to battle the Houthis. In January 2008, a spokesman for an al Qaeda cell in Yemen said the government had recruited some of its members to fight in the Saada War. In exchange, the security forces agreed to ease the persecution of al Qaeda members.

In the past, the government encouraged its young men to fight in Iraq and then return to fight against the Houthis. In early 2007, a Yemeni newspaper counted more than 1,800 Yemenis who travelled to Iraq for jihad; their families said the young men were trained by top-level Yemeni military commanders.