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Terminology

Drone attack in Yemen kills 9 militants

AS LEADER CLINGS TO POWER AMID TURMOIL 18 slain in worst bloodshed in capital in weeks

BY HANZA HENDAWI
The Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen — The United States has raised the tempo in its war against al-Qaida in Yemen, killing nine of the terror group's militants in the second, high-profile airstrike in as many weeks. The dead in the Friday-night strike included the son of Anwar al-Awlaki, the prominent American-Yemeni militant killed in a Sept. 30 strike.

Yemeni officials on Saturday attributed the recent U.S. successes against al-Qaida to better intelligence from an army of Yemeni informers and cooperation with the Saudis, longtime allies of the U.S. The successes come even as the situation in Yemen falls deeper into turmoil, with President Ali

Abdullah Saleh clinging to power in the face of months of massive protests.

Saturday saw the worst bloodshed in weeks in the capital, Sanaa: At least 18 people were killed when Saleh's troops fired on protesters and clashed with rivals. Witnesses estimated up to 300,000 people joined Saturday's demonstrations, the largest in the capital in several months.

"Everyone with interests in Yemen, including al-Qaida and the Americans, is raising the stakes at this time of uncertainty," said analyst Abdul-Bari Taher. "The Americans are wasting no time to try and eliminate the al-Qaida threat before the militants dig in deeper and cannot be easily dislodged." Also dead in the Friday



Anti-government protesters in Sanaa, Yemen, shout slogans and demand the resignation on Saturday of President Ali Abdullah Saleh near an effigy of him.

HANI MOHAMMED / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

airstrike in the southeastern province of Shabwa was Egyptian-born Ibrahim al-Banna, identified by the nation's Defense Ministry as the media chief of the Yemeni branch of al-Qaida.

Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, as the branch is known, is considered by the U.S. the most dangerous of the terror network's affiliates after it plotted two re-

cent failed attacks on American soil.

Its fighters and other Islamic militants have taken advantage of Yemen's chaos to seize control of several cities and towns in a southern province. That has

raised American fears they can establish a firm foothold in the strategically located country close to the vast oil fields of the Gulf and

overlooking key shipping routes.

The U.S. airstrikes in Shabwa pointed to Washington, D.C.'s growing use of drones to target al-Qaida militants in Yemen. The missile attacks appear to be part of a determined effort to stamp out the threat from the group.

Yemeni officials familiar with the U.S. military drive

against al-Qaida in Yemen said a shift of strategy by the Americans was finally yielding results, with human assets on the ground directly providing actionable intelligence to U.S. commanders rather than relying entirely on Yemen's security agencies. The Americans had long considered inefficient or even suspected of leaking word on planned operations.

They said there were as many as 3,000 informers on the U.S. payroll around the country — some without even knowing it.

Security officials said the strike was one of five carried out overnight by American drones on suspected al-Qaida positions in Shabwa and neighboring Abyan province in Yemen's largely lawless south. They said two more militants were killed and 12 wounded in other strikes in the two provinces.

Yemen's al-Qaida offshoot has taken advantage of the political turmoil roiling the country. Saleh, who has ruled the country for more than 30 years, has been struggling to stay in power in the face of eight months of massive street protests demanding his ouster and the defection to the opposition of key aides and military commanders.