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CIA Poised to Begin Drone Strikes Against Yemen

By Jason Ditz

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It is already well-documented that the Obama Administration has been escalating the number of air strikes against targets inside Yemen. While the CIA has played a role in those military strikes, officials say, the agency is now preparing to launch attacks of its own.

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The CIA has been responsible for a massive drone campaign against Pakistan's tribal areas, launching scores of strikes and killing thousands of people over the past several years of escalations. As with the Pakistan attacks, the Yemen strikes will nominally be aimed at "assassination" of al-Qaeda members.

But with the Pakistan program a dreadful failure, killing massive numbers of random people and rarely killing anyone officials have even heard of, the Yemeni program looks to be even more complex, targeting a tribal area that encompasses most of the nation, and which despite recent increases in presence officials have conceded is largely a mystery to intelligence agencies.

The CIA strikes will like center if part on attempts to assassinate US citizen Anwar Awlaki, who officials admitted last year was the first confirmed US citizen to be tapped for assassination by the president. Officials have alleged ties to al-Qaeda, but have mostly complained about Awlaki's religious sermons being critical of American foreign policy.