

By Jack Serle and Jessica Purkiss

From [MintPress News](#) | Original Article

In an unprecedented intensification of America's counter-terrorism operations in Yemen, [the US has confirmed](#) it carried out 20 strikes across three central provinces.

The strikes, which were carried out in the early morning, targeted fighters from the regional arm of al Qaeda, known as AQAP, their equipment and infrastructure, in the Yemeni provinces of Abyan, al Bayda and Shabwah, according to a press release from the US Department of Defense.

Pentagon Spokesman Captain Jeff Davis said in the statement that the strikes were conducted in partnership with the Government of Yemen, and were coordinated with President Hadi.

The statement made no mention of how many people were killed and injured – neither AQAP fighters or civilians. However Yemeni officials told AFP seven people died in two of the strikes.

The attacks come a month after a botched US special forces raid ended in the deaths of 25 civilians, including nine children under the age of 13 [as revealed by the Bureau](#), and a US Navy SEAL. Earlier this week, a Pentagon official [told NBC News](#) that the Pentagon did not dispute these numbers.

US Special Forces descended on Yakla village in Bayda province on January 29 with the hope of capturing key intelligence on AQAP.

While President Donald Trump has said it was successful in this regard, a US defense official [told CNN](#) that the latest strikes, which it reported were both air and drones strikes, had been planned for some time and were not the result of any intelligence gathered in the raid.

The latest strikes are a considerable increase in military activity in Yemen. The bombardment is a break from the steady pace of strikes in recent years, with the US carrying out an average of three strikes per month last year and never going above two strikes in a single day.

The US was routinely conducting multiple strikes a day in 2012 during its efforts to expel AQAP from its stronghold in Abyan province. The province was the scene of heavy clashes between the Yemeni military and AQAP fighters – AQAP had taken advantage of the political unrest with the Arab Spring in 2011 to gain control of several towns.

But even then, the highest number of confirmed strikes on a single day at any point of the Abyan offensive was four.

In total, the Bureau has recorded at least 186 US air and drone strikes, and special forces raids, since the first in 2002. At least 853 people have been killed, 158 of them reported to be civilians, according to [Bureau data](#).

---