

SPECIAL ANALYSIS**Abu Yahya al-Libi Targeted by Drone Strike**

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Prepared by MSA's Research and Intelligence Analysis Team

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Overview

The June 4th US drone strike in Mir Ali, located in the North Waziristan tribal area of Pakistan, reportedly killed a total of 15 al-Qaeda linked individuals. Targeted in the strike was al-Qaeda's second-in-command, Abu Yahya al-Libi. At this time, Pakistani officials claim they have evidence that al-Libi was in a house hit by the drone and among the 15 dead, but US officials have yet to confirm his death. In recent years, al-Libi has emerged as one of the most high profile faces of al-Qaeda. It is believed that he has appeared in more than 30 training and propaganda videos since 2005, which have been especially popular with young militant jihadists in the Arab world.



Source: Associated Press

A Libyan citizen, Al-Libi studied Islamic theology in the early 1990s in Mauretania, prior to relocating to Afghanistan to fight alongside Osama bin Laden. He carried over his theological studies to al-Qaeda and preaches to groups of militants, shown in videos released by al-Qaeda's media arm Al-Sahab. Terror experts assess that al-Libi took over as deputy leader following the death of Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, who was killed in a drone strike in North Waziristan last August. The following provides more insight into his role:

- As al-Qaeda's second ranking leader, al-Libi oversaw the group's daily operations in the tribal areas of Pakistan and liaised with regional al-Qaeda affiliates.
- In 2002, al-Libi was sentenced to a high security US prison in Bagram, Afghanistan for his relations to the Taliban. He escaped three years later in July 2005 to rejoin militants in the tribal region between Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- Bryant Neal Vinas, an American citizen convicted of plotting to attack New York's Penn Station, appeared in a video featuring al-Libi released in the fall of 2008.

Implications

Though unconfirmed, Abu Yahya al-Libi's death would serve as yet another significant blow to the al-Qaeda network. His name would be added to the list of the now 12+ senior militant commanders killed after bin Laden's death last year, including Ilyas Kashmiri (strategic militant leader in Pakistan), Atiyah Abd al-Rahman (former number two to Zawahiri) and Abu Hafs al-Shahri (al-Qaeda's chief of operations in Pakistan). With the loss of the second-in-command, al-Qaeda would once again have a weakened leadership. Furthermore, al-Libi's death would signify the loss of one of al-Qaeda's most prominent inspirational and public figures.