

THE US STILL DOESN'T WANT TO ADMIT TO THE 44 DEAD YEMENIS

In a timely report, the Bureau of Independent Journalism yesterday released a report on the increased number of US drone strikes in Yemen in the last year, since Arab Spring uprisings challenged Ali Abdullah Saleh's power and insurgents made significant gains in the south.

Covert US strikes against alleged militants in Yemen have risen steeply during the Arab spring, and are currently at the same level as the CIA's controversial drone campaign in Pakistan, a new study by the Bureau reveals.

At least 26 US military and CIA strikes involving cruise missiles, aircraft, drones or naval bombardments have taken place in the volatile Gulf nation to date, killing hundreds of alleged militants linked to the regional al Qaeda franchise. But at least 54 civilians have died too, the study found.

[snip]

The recent surge in attacks appears linked to the appointment of the new president, Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi. In his inauguration speech he called for 'the continuation of war against al-Qaida as a religious and national duty.'

Along with an update on drone strike numbers in Yemen, TBIJ released the results of a report the Yemeni government commission did into the December 17, 2009 strike in which—the report concludes—44 civilians were killed. The report provides names and ages of those civilian victims; half are children. It also describes

the lethal effect of cluster bombs included in the missiles.

This is the attack, of course, that journalist Abdelelah Haider Shaye reported on, one of the reasons, presumably the President Obama personally intervened to keep Shaye in prison. And the Yemeni government found even more civilians had died in the attack than Shaye first reported.

Among other things, the release of the report gave TBIJ to ask State–WikiLeaked cables from which clearly confirm the US role in this strike–for comment on the strike. And in spite of irrefutable evidence we were behind the attack, here’s what State said to TBIJ.

A State Department spokesperson, speaking on background terms, replied: ‘I don’t have any information for you with respect to the December 17, 2009 incident in question. I refer you to the Government of Yemen for additional information on its counterterrorism efforts.’

It’s bad enough that State pretends to know nothing of this strike. But at this point, deferring questions to Yemen really destroys our credibility.