

## **Al Qaeda No. 2 Abu Khayr al-Masri killed in US drone strike in Syria: Report**

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**Washington:** Al Qaeda's alleged deputy leader Abu Khayr al-Masri was killed in a drone strike in northwest Syria, US-based terrorism-tracking website SITE Intelligence said on Monday, citing jihadist sources.

### **REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE**

The 59-year-old Egyptian national, the deputy of Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in Syria died in the US drone strike near the city of Idlib, according to the report.

Abdullah Muhammad Rajab Abdulrahman, known more widely by his nom de guerre Abu al-Khayr al-Masri, may have been killed in a U.S. airstrike on an unmarked sedan on Sunday evening, the SITE said citing reports circulating on Jihadist social media accounts.

On Monday, the Pentagon confirmed it carried out a strike in northwest Syria on Sunday but did not say who the attack had targeted.

The northwestern province falls largely under the control of an al-Qaida-linked rebel coalition. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians displaced by fighting are living as refugees there.

Images of the vehicle purported to have been carrying Abdulrahman, known more widely by his nom de guerre Abu al-Khayr al-Masri, showed damage to the passenger compartment of the beige Kia sedan but no damage to the engine block. The roof was blown open on the right side of the vehicle.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that a top al-Qaida official was killed in a drone strike, but could not confirm it was al-Masri.

Al-Masri was a close affiliate to late al-Qaida founder Osama Bin Laden and was once the chairman of the organization's management council, according to a Washington Post report citing leaked US intelligence documents dating back to 2008.

He was implicated in the 1998 bombings of two US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in which more than 200 people, mostly civilians, died.

Iranian authorities are believed to have jailed him following the 9/11 attacks before releasing him in a prison exchange with al-Qaida in Yemen in 2015.

He was part of the global jihadist organisation for three decades and was one of Al Qaeda's most senior leaders. He fought alongside bin Laden in Afghanistan and was a veteran of conflicts in Egypt, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Pakistan according to terrorism experts.

A senior official at a rival jihadist faction in northern Syria urged caution over the reports, saying other top al-Qaida officials in Syria had staged their own deaths only to defect from the organization. The official asked not to be identified because of rivalries between the various factions.

There was no immediate comment from the Pentagon.

He was born Abdullah Muhammad Rajab abd al-Rahman in Kafr al-Shaykh, Egypt, on November 3, 1957, according to the US Treasury Department.

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