

# DAYS AFTER LAST AMERICAN JOURNALIST EXPELLED FROM YEMEN, RAY DAVIS-LIKE STORY BREAKS

On Monday, the last remaining American journalist in Yemen, Adam Baron, got kicked out.

Baron's ordeal began at midnight Monday with a phone call from a security officer ordering him to report to an immigration office the following day because of missing papers in his residency file. Fearing that he was being set up by Al Qaeda – the phone call came a day after a French guard was killed in Sanaa – Baron's friends refused to let him go. Instead, they sent a Yemeni to check the validity of the request; he found it to be true and said Baron had to report to the authorities.

At about noon on Tuesday, Baron appeared at the immigration office, where he was promptly stripped of his passport and cellphone and was told, "You're no longer welcome in Yemen." He was then kept in a holding cell and was told he would remain there until his associates could bring a plane ticket for his exit.

Baron's friends immediately began calling officials on his behalf, but the politicians and sheikhs turned out to be powerless to reverse the order. A senior military figure told Baron's friends that the deportation was because officials were worried about his safety, an explanation they dismissed as untrue.

Baron's reporting has served as a crucial check

to a lot of the officially sanctioned journalism from Yemen, not least on the actual outcome of drone strikes.

Which is why I find it interesting that this story – of one JSOC and one CIA official killing attempted abductors in Yemen, similar to the Ray Davis episode in Pakistan – is only breaking now, several weeks after it happened.

Exactly what the two Americans were doing at the time of the shooting on April 24 is unclear. Some American officials said they were merely getting a haircut in a barbershop on Hadda Street in Sana, in an upscale district frequently visited by foreigners, playing down any suggestions that they were engaged in a clandestine operation.

Late Friday, both the Pentagon and C.I.A. declined to comment on the shooting, and referred all questions to the State Department.

[snip]

American officials refused to identify the Americans or their jobs in Yemen, where the Pentagon and the C.I.A. have been training Yemeni security forces in addition to carrying out the drone strikes. But a senior American official said one individual involved in the shooting was a lieutenant colonel with the elite Joint Special Operations Command and the other was a C.I.A. officer.

This is precisely the kind of story on which Baron has been critical in the past. But he won't be around to put more local context on it.

Update: WSJ's Ellen Knickmeyer is apparently in Yemen right now; she's based in the Gulf. Yemen tried to deny her entry when she arrived 2 weeks ago. Here's her account of the killing:

The Yemeni Interior Ministry officials said the Yemeni attackers approached the barber shop as one American was inside. Meanwhile, a Western-looking man standing on the sidewalk shot and killed both attackers, two Yemeni shop workers who witnessed the confrontation from an adjoining, glass-fronted store said.

“He didn’t move” from where he was standing while he pulled out a handgun and shot, said one of two Yemeni witnesses of the Westerner who fired. The second witness, in the same shop, gave a similar account.

One of the Yemeni attackers was carrying what witnesses said was a machine gun, the witnesses said. The other carried only an electric stun-gun, witnesses said.

[snip]

Shopkeepers surrounding the barbershop said Westerners took away the shop’s barber the day after the shooting. The shop remained closed in early May, when two Wall Street Journal reporters came to speak to shopkeepers at the site.