

Satellite Imagery Reveals Secret U.S. Drone Base in Africa



Washington, October 23 (RHC)-- Satellite imagery has revealed the secret expansion of a U.S. drone base in the African country of Djibouti, according to a new report.

Satellite images available on the online mapping service, Google Earth, along with U.S. Defense Department documents show that the Pentagon has turned Chabelley Airfield in Djibouti into a hive of high-tech military equipment, the Intercept reported on Thursday.

The airport is an isolated airstrip located some 6 miles (9.5km) to the southwest of Djibouti City, the capital of the country. In satellite images from several years ago, the airport resembles a strip of tarmac in the middle of a vast desert.

One document by the Pentagon which dates back to June, shows that U.S. military officials have asked the U.S. House of Representatives for the appropriation of a \$7.6 million funding in order to “construct perimeter boundary” at the site.

This is while the U.S. military has always remained tight-lipped about Chabelley, refusing to mention it on its public list of overseas bases and evading questions about its existence.

Chabelley Airfield allows U.S. drones to cover Yemen, southwest Saudi Arabia, a large part of Somalia, and parts of Ethiopia and southern Egypt, according to Tim Brown, a senior fellow at GlobalSecurity.org and an expert on analyzing satellite imagery.

“This base is now very important because it’s a major hub for most drone operations in northwest Africa,” Brown said.

The expansion of Chabelley and its rise in importance to the US military began in 2013, when the Pentagon moved a fleet of remotely controlled aircraft from its only acknowledged “major military facility” in Africa, Camp Lemonnier, which is also located in Djibouti, to this lower-profile airstrip.

Lemonnier has also been dramatically expanded since it was built in 2001. The number of personnel stationed there, for example, has jumped from 900 to 5,000 since 2002.

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