



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on September 26, 2012

Report Reveals Details of Obama's Drone Program

The [headline in the *Long War Journal* reports](#): "2 al Qaeda leaders reported killed in Mir Ali drone strike." The story fills in the details — those that can be ascertained without any official recognition of the strike or the deaths — saying:

Two al Qaeda commanders are reported to have been killed in Monday's drone strike in the Mir Ali area of Pakistan's Taliban-controlled tribal agency of North Waziristan. The report of the al Qaeda commanders' deaths has not been confirmed.

Abu Kasha al Iraqi, an al Qaeda leader who serves as a key link to the Taliban and supports al Qaeda's external operations network, and Fateh al Turki, a previously unidentified leader, are said to have been killed [in the Sept. 24 airstrike in the Mir Ali area](#), Pakistani intelligence officials, Taliban commanders, and local tribesmen told [Dawn](#). Between five and six people were reportedly killed in the drone strike on a compound.



As Pakistan continues to be bombarded by missiles fired from U.S. drones, information revealed in a recent report compiled jointly by the law schools of New York University and Stanford demonstrates that such attacks "cause considerable and under-accounted for harm to the daily lives of ordinary civilians, beyond death and physical injury."

The report entitled [Living Under Drones: Death, Injury and Trauma to Civilians From US Drone Practices in Pakistan](#) contains tragic details of the myriad ways that President Obama's death-by-drone program is devastating the lives of ordinary Pakistanis who have no connection to terror other than the fact that they are being constantly terrorized by the government of the United States.

Glen Greenwald of the *Guardian* (U.K.) [artfully describes the situation on the ground in Pakistan](#):

the people in the areas targeted by Obama's drone campaign are being systematically terrorized. There's just no other word for it. It is a campaign of terror — highly effective terror - regardless of what noble progressive sentiments one wishes to believe reside in the heart of the leader ordering it. And that's precisely why the report, to its great credit, uses that term to describe the Obama policy: the drone campaign "terrorizes men, women, and children.

Twenty-seven pages of the 182-page document is devoted to enumerating the various ways the use of drones in the White House and CIA's targeted killing programs are adversely affecting the civilian population of Pakistan.

For example, in the subsection entitled "Mental Health Impacts of Drone Strikes and the Presence of Drones," the authors relates the story of two-time Pulitzer Prize winning reporter [David Rohde](#) who was kidnapped in November 2008 and held for seven months by the Taliban while covering Afghanistan and Pakistan for the *New York Times* in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of northwest Pakistan. Rohde's story as quoted in the drone report:

"The drones were terrifying. From the ground, it is impossible to determine who or what they are



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tracking as they circle overhead. The buzz of a distant propeller is a constant reminder of imminent death.” Describing the experience of living under drones as ‘hell on earth,’ Rohde explained that even in the areas where strikes were less frequent, the people living there still feared for their lives.

Many in the United States may discount the importance of such a story, pointing out that such an existence is the price of harboring terrorists and those intent on threatening the national security of the United States.

One wonders if that attitude will change in the next couple of years when [30,000 drones fill the skies of the United States](#). Will we come to know the ever-present sound of a “distant propeller” stirring up the otherwise placid domestic skies with the inimitable buzz of imminent death? Will we live in constant fear of “when is the next drone attack going to happen” as one mental health professional hears daily from the men and women of Waziristan?

Perhaps even more disturbing than the mental anxiety permanently paralyzing those left alive after a lethal drone attack is the fact that the [Obama administration is preventing them](#) from adequately mourning the death of innocent loved ones caught in the blast zone.

These surviving relatives are denied the opportunity to bury their dead and perform the ancient rites associated with placing a body in its final resting place. The NYU/Stanford report cites a story told by one man severely injured in a drone attack who says that “people are reluctant to go to the funerals of people who have been killed in drone strikes because they are afraid of being targeted.”

Page 92 of the report begins with interviews of several Pakistanis who were intentionally targeted by the Hellfire missiles fired at funerals. The sad accounts told by these men are heart-wrenching and demoralizing, made even more so by the fact that the trigger that fired this missile was American and the orders to do so came from the American president.

One man who lost several relatives in a drone strike tells how the dead from that strike were buried: “They held a funeral for everybody, in the same location, one by one. Their bodies were scattered into tiny pieces. They...couldn’t be identified,” said Massod Afwan.

Of this unconscionable policy, Greenwald writes:

In the hierarchy of war crimes, deliberately targeting rescuers and funerals — so that aid workers are petrified to treat the wounded and family members are intimidated out of mourning their loved ones — ranks rather high, to put that mildly. Indeed, the US itself has [long maintained](#) that such “secondary strikes” are a prime hallmark of some of the world’s most despised terrorist groups.

If the information contained in this report is accurate — and it is likely so given the hundreds of footnotes documenting its claims — it seems that the cure for terrorism has become worse than the disease. The United States’ response to the suspected presence of the suspected militants who might potentially pose a threat to our national security is the systematic and summary execution of thousands of innocent Pakistanis and Afghanis. Adding to the injustice and the incalculable cost of such a policy is the fact that the Obama administration [doesn’t even bother to make a sincere effort to count the civilian casualties](#).

Drones deployed by the command of the president of the United States and piloted by members of the U.S. armed forces are murdering people while they eat, while they sleep, while they shop, and while they attempt to bury those already victims of the state-supported violence.

This is certainly not due process and it is certainly not the American way. More importantly, perhaps, it is



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not the way to dissuade those of the rising generation of Pakistanis, Yemenis, Afghanis, Somalians, etc. from becoming that which they otherwise may never have considered — terrorists.

President Obama’s drone war is [sowing the wind](#) without regard for the whirlwind that others will reap as a result. The frenzy being whipped up by the propellers of these drones is not eliminating the threat from al-Qaeda, the Taliban, or any other “associated force.” In fact, [a story published by the Associated Press](#) cites two senior U.S. officials who claim that rather than surrender or abandon their alleged anti-American plans, suspected militants simply “leave Pakistan for other battlefields in Syria, Yemen, Iraq or their home countries.”

Simply stated, the surgical strikes carried out by drones launched by the president are not destroying the anti-American cancer, but are spreading it throughout the region and accelerating its rate of metastasization.

As Robert Wright recognized in [a recent article in the Atlantic](#), “the strikes scatter terrorists to new arenas where the self-defeating cycle can be repeated! If this is a strategy for eliminating terrorists, what would a strategy for creating them look like?”



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