



Written by [Dennis Behrendt](#) on August 23, 2010

Drone Attack Kills 20 in Attack on Insurgents in Pakistan

A strike from an unmanned aerial vehicle killed 20 people in Pakistan on August 23. According to Reuters news service, "missiles fired from a U.S. pilotless drone aircraft killed 13 militants and 7 civilians in Pakistan's North Waziristan." The attack, and the deaths, illustrate how the unintended consequences of policy decisions and operations conducted decades ago continue to shape events of the present.

The sketchy information on the strike was provided by unnamed Pakistani intelligence officials who said the missiles were fired at a militant hideout. According to Reuters, the victims included members of the Afghan Taliban as well as four women and three children.



More precisely, however, the area in which the drone attack took place is considered to be stronghold of the Haqqani Network and has been on the receiving end of a number of similar drone attacks.

"The Haqqani network is probably one of the most dangerous networks here that we face — direct tie right back into Kabul, for years has been based out of Khost and Paktia, and has now moved into several different provinces like Wardak and Logar," Major General John Campbell [told reporters](#) via a video conference in late July.

Bill Roggio, managing editor of *The Long War Journal*, notes that the Haqqani Network is a Taliban group led by "mujahedeen commander" Jalaludin Haqqani and his son Siraj. [According to Roggio](#), "The Haqqani family runs the Manba Ulom madrassa in the village of Danda Darpa Khel, a hub of activity for the terror group. The US has struck at targets in Danda Darpa Khel six times since Aug. 20, 2009, and eight times since September 2008."

Jalaludin Haqqani has a long history as a militant. In the 1980s he might have been considered, at least nominally, as a U.S. ally in the region fighting against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. In 2006, *PBS Frontline* [reported](#):

During the Afghan jihad against the Soviets, he was one of the favored commanders and received millions of dollars from the West and the Saudis, as well as Stinger missiles, rocket propelled grenades, mortars, explosives and tanks. He became close to Osama bin Laden during the jihad and after the Taliban took control, he served as minister of tribal affairs in its government.

As with many of the militants who are now targets in the War on Terror, including the Taliban, Haqqani has had what Steve Coll, author of *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, describes as "a long and very close relationship with the ISI and particularly the Afghan Bureau of the ISI." The ISI is Pakistan's Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence.



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Writing in *Ghost Wars*, Coll describes Haqqani during the Soviet occupation as "an unshaven, thin man, who draped himself in bandoliers of assault rifle ammunition" who "emerged in the late 1980s as the ISI's main anticommunist battering ram around Khost."

But he also quickly became a favorite of the CIA. Haqqani had battlefield "cred," widely considered, according to Coll, as one of the best battlefield commanders in the effort to oppose the Soviets. Wounded, he recovered in Saudi Arabia and there he made connections with Saudi intelligence. And, ominously, "he was in frequent contact with bin Laden and with ISI's brigadiers," Coll writes. He was, therefore, valuable to the United States: "the CIA came to rely on Haqqani for testing and experimentation with new weapons systems and tactics. Haqqani was so favored with supplies that he was in a position to broker them and to help equip the Arab volunteers in his region. The CIA officers working from Islamabad regarded him as a proven commander who could put a lot of men under arms at short notice."

Haqqani, Coll summarizes, "had the CIA's full support."

The extent to which Haqqani was supported and sponsored by the United States was described by Peter Tomsen, who served as special envoy and ambassador to the Afghan resistance from 1989 to 1992 under President George H.W. Bush. Asked by PBS *Frontline* about the infrastructure built in Afghanistan during that time, he [admitted](#): "Well, we gave Haqqani the infrastructure."

Elsewhere, in the flood-ravaged nation of Pakistan, violence related to the War on Terror continued to mount as insurgents struck at government-funded anti-Taliban militia. In northwest Pakistan, three bombs killed "at least 36 people," the Associate Press [reported](#), citing at least one witness as well as Pakistani officials.

Near the city of Peshawar, one of the bombs killed Israr Khan, described as the leader of an anti-Taliban militia, as well as two of his aides. The explosion occurred as they passed through a market in the town of Matni. Three others were injured in the blast.

Another attack, this time carried out by a suicide bomber at a mosque in a religious school, killed 26 and injured 40 in South Waziristan. The head of the school, Maulana Noor Mohammad, a former lawmaker, was among those killed, according to an anonymous intelligence official.

Yet another bombing, according to AP, occurred earlier in the day, again at a school. In that attack, the bomb "exploded inside a school during a meeting of elders in the Kurram tribal region, killing seven people."

Photo of U.S. drone: AP Images



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