



Drone Strikes Resume in Pakistan: 16 “Militants” Killed This Week

The holidays are over for drone operators and for due process.

Ending a nearly six-month break on drone strikes conducted in Pakistan, at least 16 people were killed in two separate attacks carried out on June 11. LongWarJournal reports:



In the first strike, the unmanned Predators or the more deadly Reapers fired several missiles at a compound and a vehicle in the village of Darga Mandi in Pakistan’s Taliban-controlled tribal agency of North Waziristan, Dawn [dawn.com] reported. The village is just outside of Miramshah, the home of the Haqqani Network, a Taliban subgroup that is closely tied to al Qaeda.

Four “Uzbeks,” likely from the al Qaeda-allied Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and two members of the Movement of the Taliban in Punjab were reported to have been killed in today’s strike.

The Pakistan theatre of the president’s deadly drone war has seen a ceasefire since the first of the year after the *Washington Post* on February 4 quoted an unnamed administration official saying that in order to give the government of Pakistan time to negotiate peace with the Pakistani Taliban, the Obama administration would dial down the drone strikes in the country.

The *Post* added, however, that the administration would continue to conduct strikes “against senior al-Qaeda targets, if they become available, and move to thwart any direct, imminent threat to U.S. persons.”

Apparently, then, those 16 people killed this week must have posed just that level of veritable threat to the United States or to Americans.

As is its habit, the establishment-owned media reported that the 16 people killed by the president this week were suspected “[militants](#).”

For President Obama and those pulling the triggers on the joysticks guiding the missiles toward their human targets, “suspected militants” are officially defined as “all military-age males in a strike zone.”

For those of us concerned with the Constitution, due process, and the rule of law, however, “suspected militant” is just a euphemism for a person not charged with any crime, not afforded even the most perfunctory due process protections, but executed by presidential decree anyway. In this way, we are no better than those we kill in the name of safety.

One of the many constitutional problems with the execution of the drone war is that there is no way for



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on June 13, 2014

a drone pilot sitting in Nevada to look at the video feed beamed from the drone camera to tell who is a “militant” and who isn’t.

More to the point, when did militancy become a crime? If it is a crime, where is it defined? How can anyone know if he is guilty of militancy if such a crime is not defined? Could one hypothetically be a militant without knowing it, given that the crime is nowhere defined?

Incidentally, it is this very vagueness that dilates the grey area and makes the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) such a fearsome weapon in the arsenal of the seemingly all-powerful president.

President Obama’s order of drone-delivered assassinations is an effrontery to over 650 years of our Anglo-American law’s protection from autocratic decrees of death without due process of law. When any president usurps the power to create a kill list, to add names to that kill list, to keep that kill list secret, and to assassinate people on that kill list, he places our Republic on a trajectory toward tyranny and unbounded, unaccountable, unending government-sponsored terrorism.

Of course, it would be another matter if those targeted and executed by the president were armed enemy combatants. They were not. Were these suspected “militants” enemy soldiers captured during wartime they would be necessarily afforded certain rights granted to POWs.

Those slated for assassination are not allowed any rights — neither the due process rights given to those accused of crimes nor the rights of fair treatment given to enemies captured on the battlefield.

The White House has assumed all power over life and death — at home and abroad — and has created a brand-new category of individual — one who can be indiscriminately deprived of all rights altogether.

There is no doubt that the Obama administration’s dedication to death by remote control is an affront to the sovereignty of Pakistan, as well as the other nations whose skies are buzzing with drones. While such a policy is unsupported by the Constitution specifically or by principles of liberty generally, the number of people being killed without being given an opportunity to answer the charges made against them is inimical to the concept of due process, as well. America is making enemies overseas by making herself an enemy to the Constitution.

Sadly, the tally of those killed by American missiles launched from unmanned aerial vehicles under the control of the CIA is growing.

In a report filed by the Pakistan-based Conflict Monitoring Center, additional details of the CIA’s drone war are revealed. The report offers evidence of the many people who were killed by American drones with no more than a suspicion of being linked to militant groups.

According to an analysis of the report by Global Research, in 2010:

The CIA carried out an unprecedented 132 drone attacks in tribal areas, claiming the lives of 938 people, it said. The Conflict Monitoring Center points out that none of the media organizations throughout last year reported on body counts from independent sources. Many analysts believe the geo-strategic game plan of the US has turned out to be counterproductive. The year 2010 was one of the deadliest years for civilians living in the tribal regions, as the number of drone strikes exceeded the combined number of such attacks carried out from 2004 to 2009. The report states that 2,052 people lost their lives in drone strikes during the 5-year period between 2004 and 2009. The rising civilian casualties have left behind many tragic stories in the tribal areas.

From “double-tap” strikes (that kill not only the target, but also anyone trying to retrieve the body) to



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the “signature strikes” (that target groups displaying “militant behavior” rather than individual suspects believed to be planning attacks on the United States), this indiscriminate assassination of those not charged with any crime or suspected of any ill will is creating more enemies than it is eliminating.

Facts reveal that the prosecution of the drone war throughout the region is ironically increasing al-Qaeda’s success in the region. Al-Qaeda couldn’t cook up a more effective recruitment program than the U.S. drone war that is allegedly aimed at eliminating the “terrorist” organization.

In an interview with the *Times of India*, Akbar Ahmed — diplomat and author of *The Thistle and the Drone: How America’s War on Terror Became a Global War on Tribal Islam* — warned about the rise in recruitment among those targeted by Obama’s drone war.

“Apart from the dubious arguments justifying drones, this is a highly ineffective method of checking violence. With every three bad guys killed, there are some 30 innocent women and children who die. And every strike feeds into anti-Americanism — after over a decade of using drones, neither have suicide bombers stopped, nor have those following them dwindled,” he said.

Beyond the unconscionable murder of thousands, the drone war is doing irreparable damage to the sovereignty of Pakistan (and Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, etc.) and to the sanctity of the U.S. Constitution and the fundamental principles of liberty it protects.

Also being eliminated by President Obama’s drone war is the likelihood that the ranks of the Taliban and al-Qaeda will shrink in fear of the fire from the sky. This brings up the question: If the drone strikes are making more enemies that they kill, what is the real reason for their continued use?

Photo of MQ-9 Reaper drone: AP Images

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