



Written by on January 14, 2010

## U.S. Drone Strike Targets Pakistan Taliban

Missiles fired from U.S. drone aircraft struck a militant training camp in the Pakisani village of Pasalkot in a remote area of North Waziristan on January 14. Pakistani security officials say the attack killed 12 Taliban militants.

VOA news reported that following word of the missile strike, representatives for Pakistani Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud contacted the local media, claiming he had escaped unharmed.

Security analyst Inam Wazir told VOA that even if Mehsud was killed, he does not believe it would not make a significant difference in the fight against militants. He said there are many remaining militants that could take Mehsud's place. ?? "There is a series of leadership — even eight to 10 great — in each and every tribal area in their own group," said Wazir.



AFP reported that this was the seventh raid by unmanned U.S. planes this month in Pakistan, and that the attacks fuel anti-American sentiment in the Muslim nation, which possesses nuclear weapons. Pasalkot village is very close to the border with South Waziristan, where Pakistan's military are battling Taliban fighters, according to Pakistani officials.

"It was a US drone strike which took place between 7.00 am and 8.00 am. At least 10 people, mostly militants, have been killed in the missile strike. The toll is likely to rise," said a local intelligence official.

"The targeted site was a militant training camp," he told AFP.

U.S. Senator Carl Levin (D-Mich.), Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, was high critical of Pakistan's leaders because they have privately supported the U.S. drone strikes, but condemn them publicly. "What troubles me is the public attack on these drone attacks when at the same time they've privately obviously not told us that we must stop," said Levin.

Levin complained that Pakistan's leaders "not only understand and acquiesce, but in many cases privately support the drone attacks." He continued: "The minimum we should expect is a silence on their part rather than a public attack on us."

Levin asserted that such criticism "creates real problems for us in terms of the Pakistani public and helps create some real animosity towards us — a sense of revenge, the implication that we're violating Pakistan's sovereignty."

The British *Times* identified the drone strike with the CIA, headlining one story "[CIA drone strike hits Hakimullah Mehsud compound.](#)"



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The report cited a local tribal leader who said that Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud was killed in the U.S. raid, but the Taliban claimed he was still alive.

The *Times* noted that Pasalkot, the site of the recent strike, has become the main sanctuary of Taliban fighters fleeing the Pakistani military operation in South Waziristan and that North Waziristan is also a major stronghold for the Haqqani network, "an Afghan Taliban faction with links to al-Qaeda that many suspect was involved in the last month's suicide bombing on a CIA base in Afghanistan which killed seven agents."

Another report from Bloomberg news also made mention of the fact that the drone attack "comes after a suicide bomber killed seven CIA operatives at a base in the eastern Afghanistan province of Khost."

Another report from Reuters news noted: "Tension over pilot less drone aircraft attacks will likely deepen as the CIA hunts down enemies along the border after a suicide bomber crossed over Pakistan's border and killed seven of its employees in Afghanistan.... The United States has stepped up its drone attacks since the double agent blew himself up at a U.S. base in Afghanistan on December 30, killing seven CIA agents."

If the step-up in drone attacks against Taliban locations in Northwest Pakistan is seen by some observers as retaliatory measures taken by the CIA after the killing of seven of their own agents, one assumption might be that the spy agency has the capability of waging military operations with more precision than has been typical in America's no-win wars over the past 60 years. Furthermore, cross-border strikes do not seem to be a limiting issue for the CIA, as were the limitations that hamstrung the U.S. military in both Korea and Vietnam.

While the CIA may be capable of waging a precise surgical operation when its own interests are threatened, such efficiency seems to be missing from the overall war, which is perhaps symptomatic of a lack of accountability inherent in engaging our military abroad without a congressional declaration of war, as our Constitution requires.

*Photo: AP Images*



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