



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on October 15, 2012

U.S. Drones Kill 16 in Pakistan; Victims Left Unidentified

Despite having declared war on no one — not al-Qaeda, not the Taliban, no one — the United States fired four missiles from a drone Thursday killing 16 “suspected militants.”

Although stories relating the event will not say it, “suspected militant” is a post-9/11 euphemism for someone not charged with any crime, not identified as an enemy combatant, but killed by our government anyway.



[According to Pakistani news outlet Dawn.com](#), the Buland Khel area of the Orakzai agency in Pakistan was the site of the attack on October 11, the 39th drone attack in Pakistan this year.

“The attack was aimed at the compound of Maulana Shakirullah, who is the commander of the Hafiz Gul Bahadur group of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP),” officials said according to the Dawn.com report.

The author of the Dawn.com article explains the relationship between the group targeted by President Obama and the known coterie of alleged terrorists:

The militant wing run by Shakirullah has been linked with the Haqqani network and Al-Qaeda. The Hafiz Gul Bahadur group has been repeatedly accused by the US for being involved in cross-border attacks into Afghanistan.

This was the second drone attack in Orakzai agency. The first came in 2009 in the Khadezai area of Mamozai in Upper Orakzai agency, in which 11 militants affiliated to TTP’s Hakimullah group were killed.

As has become standard operating procedure for these drone strikes, the unmanned vehicles were reportedly still buzzing over the site of the attack, keeping anyone from approaching the rubble and retrieving the bodies.

Another regular feature of the president’s death-by-drone program is the lack of names associated with the attack — neither the target nor the victims are identified. Logically, it would be very difficult to eliminate “suspected militants” when that term goes undefined by those ordering the attacks. Of course, by not explicitly defining that term, anyone killed in the drone war can be so identified without fear of contradiction.

Just a day earlier, [five other “suspected militants”](#) were killed in a U.S. drone strike and none of those victims has been identified, either.

In the narratives of both attacks, however, the failure of the strikes to kill any “[senior al Qaeda or allied jihadist commanders from foreign terrorist groups](#)” was mentioned.

Apart from the horrific human toll of the president’s drone war, there is the irrefutable and as yet unaddressed fact that the U.S. Constitution forbids the taking of life, liberty, or property without the due process of law.

President Barack Obama, despite the multiplicity and feigned sincerity of his denials, has set himself up



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as the judge, jury, and executioner of those he alone deems a threat to national security. And notwithstanding the Constitution, he does not believe he is obliged to provide any explanation to the American people or to the families of those murdered by attacks he ordered.

In fact, according to a recent report on the various aspects of the drone war, the White House and CIA's targeted killing programs are rattling the already war-ravaged psyches of the civilian population of Pakistan.

For example, in a subsection of the report entitled "Mental Health Impacts of Drone Strikes and the Presence of Drones," the authors relate the story of [David Rohde](#). The two-time Pulitzer-Prize-winning reporter 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 is quoted in the drone report: "The drones were terrifying. From the ground, it is impossible to determine who or what they are 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.

In light of the foregoing and the president's haughty reluctance to even officially admit the existence of his kill list and the program to send drones to winnow it down, it would be very naïve to believe the assassination of innocents is an unfortunate miscalculation. When the judicial and executive powers of government are consolidated and restraints on the exercise of power are cast aside, it can be expected — based both on our knowledge of history and on the nature of man — that power will be abused and no one's rights or life will be safe from elimination by despots.

The presidential presumption of guilt by association followed by an autocratic order of a lethal drone strike rightly worries many friends of liberty in the United States and abroad. With regard to due process, one asks why the alleged terrorists who are the purported targets of these attacks cannot be tried in our federal court system? For decades those accused of terroristic crimes have been formally charged with those crimes, had those charges heard before an impartial federal judge, and been permitted to mount a defense to those crimes.

Perhaps President Obama has created in his mind a place where the burden of killing so many people without due process is lifted by the fact that, as a story reporting on a lawsuit filed against the government of Pakistan for its participation in the targeting of its own citizens, "a soldier carries out the killing from a cubicle using a joystick to operate the predatory drone."

Regardless of such psychological speculation, the facts are that there are scores of unidentified and uncounted dead as a result of this program and the United States killed them without charge, without trial, and without any official remorse.

President Obama's ordering 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 place names on a kill list and then have those people summarily executed without due process, he places our Republic on a trajectory toward tyranny and government-sponsored terrorism.



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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.

President Barack Obama has assumed — with the collusion of Congress — dictatorial power only dreamed of by the most ruthless Roman ruler, as well as all power over life and death. Like those Roman tyrants, Obama has composed [a proscription list](#) populated with the names of suspected militants — a group deprived of rights altogether.

Since 2006, [2,566 people have been killed in Pakistan](#) by missiles fired from American drones.

Photo: AP Images



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