

Beat: News

U.S. drone kills 5 suspected militants in northwest Pakistan

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USPA News - A U.S. drone struck a suspected militant compound in Pakistan's volatile tribal region on Wednesday morning, killing at least five suspected militants, Pakistani intelligence officials said. There were no immediate reports of civilian casualties.

Pakistani intelligence officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the unmanned U.S. drone fired at least four missiles at a suspected militant hideout in the Hurmuz area, located east of Miranshah, the main town of Pakistan's volatile North Waziristan tribal region which is near the border with Afghanistan. The officials said five suspected militants were killed in the airstrike, which completely destroyed the militant compound, but their identities or alleged affiliation were not immediately known. U.S. drones regularly carry out drone attacks against suspected militants in Pakistan. Earlier this month, three suspected militants were killed when a U.S. drone fired a series of missile strikes against a vehicle in the Khaider Khel area of Mir Ali district, located just east of Miranshah. Pakistani officials have repeatedly described the U.S. drone attacks as illegal. Pakistani President Asif Zardari previously expressed the need to establish alternative security operations to the drone strikes, but U.S. officials have indicated that they will continue to carry out drone strikes to take out militants. Few details about casualties from the strikes are usually available, but allegations of civilian casualties regularly spark protests in Pakistan. According to the Washington-based think tank New America Foundation, as many as 3,191 individuals have been killed as a result of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan between 2004 and October 2012. In June, al-Qaeda deputy leader Abu Yahya al-Libi was killed when an unmanned U.S. drone fired at least two missiles at a compound and a nearby pickup truck in the village of Hesokhel, located in the Mir Ali district just east of Miranshah. It was the most serious blow to al-Qaeda since U.S. Navy SEALs killed Osama bin Laden during a secret military operation in the Pakistani city of Abbotabad in May 2011. Earlier this year, in January, U.S. President Barack Obama, for the first time during his presidency, publicly acknowledged that U.S. drones regularly strike suspected militants along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. He confirmed that many of these strikes are carried out in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, targeting al-Qaeda and Taliban suspects in tough terrain. The United States considers the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region to be the most dangerous place on Earth. The area is known to be a stronghold of the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani Network, which is one of the top terrorist organizations and threats to U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan. But controversy has surrounded the drone strikes as local residents and officials have blamed them for killing innocent civilians and motivating young men to join the Taliban. Details about the alleged militants are usually not provided, and the U.S. government does not comment on the strikes because the program is classified.

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