

Beat: Technology

U.S. drone strike kills 12 suspected militants in Pakistan

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USPA News - At least twelve suspected militants were killed Sunday after a U.S. drone struck militant hideouts in Pakistan's volatile tribal region, intelligence officials said. There were no immediate reports or allegations of civilian casualties.

The unmanned aircraft targeted the Babar Ghar village in South Waziristan, firing a number of missiles at suspected militant hideouts. The village is located in a tribal district bordering Afghanistan where U.S. drone strikes are not uncommon. Initial reports indicated that eight militants were killed, but local security officials later said at least 12 militants were killed in the attack, which hit two compounds in area. However, some reports said as many as 17 people were killed with a number of others being injured. According to reports, among those killed were several members of the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), which is better known as the Pakistani Taliban. Among those militant casualties is Commander Wali Muhammad, who is also known as Tufan Meshud and is a relative of TTP chief Hakimullah Meshud. Two weeks ago, another U.S. drone fired at least two missiles at a suspected militant hideout in the town of Shiwal in the Shawal Tehsil area, located about 50 kilometers (31 miles) southwest of Miranshah, the main town of Pakistan's North Waziristan, killing at least four suspected militants and injuring two others. The strike took place on December 29, 2012, bringing the total number of deaths caused by drone strikes in 2012 to well over 300. According to the Washington-based think tank New America Foundation, as many as 3,239 individuals have been killed as a result of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan between 2004 and January 2013. In 2012, the outlet said 349 were killed, with the most number of deaths occurring in 2010 with 1,028. In June 2012, 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. And around one year ago, 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 U.S. considers the Pakistan-Afghan border 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.

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