

# No end to drone strikes in Pakistan: Prelude to another US led war?

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*According to media reports, the new ISI chief, General Zaheer-ul-Islam would be in Washington on 2nd of August to hold talks with CIA Director David Petraeus on counter-terror cooperation and intelligence sharing. Since after the 'uncivilized and unethical' raid of the US marines in search of Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, the relationship between the two countries is continuously at stake. Moreover the Salala incident in November 2011 and beheading of 17 Pakistani soldiers by the Afghan insurgents in the last week of June 2012 added salt to the injuries.*

US reaction over the sentencing of Dr. Afridi who illegally helped the US authorities in locating Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad also widened the gulf. But the most painfully pinching issue has been the continuous recurrence of drone attacks on innocent people who in fact have nothing to do with the terrorists and terrorism.

Though the government of Pakistan responded vehemently to all these issues by ordering the US authorities to vacate the Shamsi Air Base and by closing the NATO supply route through Pakistan but these actions could not pacify the Pakistani nation. On the other hand, misguided by their arrogance of power and ecstasy of opulence, the US authorities started discrediting Pakistan's civil-military leadership by criticising their policy decisions and pressuring them through financial sanctions instead of offering apology. Resultantly diplomatic relations between Pakistan and the US suffered a setback.

Since after the Salala incident, the people of Pakistan have been demanding two things; a clear-cut apology from the US authorities over Salala incident and a full-stop to the drone attacks. In the beginning the US authorities paid no heed to the demand of apology but ultimately they had to surrender before the increasing pressure exerted by the government of Pakistan and consequently there came an 'unwilling apology' from the US government regarding the Salala brutality.

As far as the drone attack issue is concerned, the situation is still the same. After reopening of the NATO supply line it was expected that there would be a considerable reduction in drone attacks but things have never changed.

Gen. Zaheer-ul-Islam will have to concentrate largely upon the issue of drone attacks during his talks with the US authorities in Washington. On behalf of the whole Pakistani nation, he will have to convey the message to his US counterpart that the security forces of Pakistan have all required ability and skill to counter the drone attacks and Pakistan's silence over the drone attacks must not be taken as cowardice or inability to respond to aggression; this

silence is simply an attempt to avoid apparently 'imminent' Third World War. War in itself is a terrorist activity.

Being a peace loving country, Pakistan has always tried to avoid any conflict and confrontation with its neighbouring countries. It has always been a well-wisher even of its very unfriendly neighbours like Afghanistan and India but it does not mean that Pakistan has no ability of responding to insurgencies. Everyone has its own boiling point, some boil early and some take more time.

The drones are doing nothing but pushing the Pak-US relations to a point of no return. It is an important thing to be noted that Pak-US relations at official level have been taking different turns and changes but the relationship between the two nations has never been as bitter and pungent as it is now. There was no hatred for America among the people of Pakistan before the beginning of the drone attacks. The cruel drone attacks have pushed the Pakistani nation to the verge of enmity with the US because these drones have become a grave threat and a serious challenge to their existence and survival. If drones stop slaughtering the innocent Pakistanis and the so-called war on terror is kept limited only to the Afghan lands, all this hatred and enmity would at once come to an end.

Our American friends, who are wasting a lot of their precious time and valuable sources in showering a rain of drones on innocent and helpless women and children in the tribal areas of Pakistan, must realise that this action of theirs is nothing but a callous brutality. The Pakistani nation has already suffered from heavy losses in the form of damage to its economy, casualties at the hands of terrorists and suicidal attacks on officials of security forces and intelligence agencies and even on the common public in the name of the global war on terror.

This immense loss deserves not to be paid back in the form of drones; it is certainly a very unfair deal. Gen. Zaheer-ul-Islam will have to convey the actual situation to his US counterpart that the people of Pakistan don't hate America but strongly protest the way America is treating 'a friend in need'. This protest is gradually turning into hostility and hatred with the passage of time.

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