

U.S. Drone Attacks Wreak Material, Psychological Damage In Pakistan

By [Global Research](#)

Global Research, September 28, 2010

[Xinhua News Agency](#) 28 September 2010

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Pakistani tribesmen ask for sedatives amid stepped-up U.S. drone strikes

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-The approximately 25:1 horrific ratio of civilians killed for each suspected militant has attracted severe criticism from around the world including the United Nations and prominent human rights watchdogs.

WANA, Pakistan: Sudden ear-ripping explosions, splinter bodies in rubble amid clouds of spreading dust as soon as U.S. drones start hovering like vultures in the sky, it is what generally constitutes nightmares that frequently wake Naseemullah Wazir up in the middle of night with the rapidly increasing pace of U.S. surgical strikes in Pakistan.

Over 130 suspected militants and civilians have so far been killed in 19 unmanned drone attacks till Sunday night with a fresh wave of intensified controversial spy plane strikes from Sept. 3, according to local media and official reports.

"I am not scared but haunted by the uncertainty that anything can happen anytime to my home and my loved ones," commented Naseemullah, a native of Wana, the main administrative town in the South Waziristan tribal area who goes to a college in Dera Ismail Khan in the northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan.

"Usage of tranquilizers has been increased," local physician Dr. Faizur Rehman Burki told Xinhua in an interview, as the increasing sudden drone strikes have not only panicked people but also catalyzed uncertainty.

During the past week, over 40 people were killed in seven drone strikes by Sunday overnight, all concentrating on the sub-district Dattakhel area near the Afghan border in rugged North Waziristan, as the U.S.-led NATO forces are tightening the noose around insurgent Sirajuddin Haqqani and Hafiz Gul Bahadur's network area, where the United States believes Al-Qaeda is currently concentrated.

Some 1,753 people have so far been killed in 167 drone strikes since the first unmanned missile killed five people in 2004, according to official reports. However, over 1,100 people were killed, mostly civilians, in more than 130 drone strikes on Pakistani territory since August 2008.

The United States holds it to be the most successful strategy in the war against terror so far

that certainly has helped smash certain high value targets, but at a questionably high controversial cost of a greater number of innocent civilian lives.

“People generally complain of insomnia and ask to be prescribed sleeping pills,” Dr. Burki added, “the uncertainty about further deteriorating law and order and the fragile future is quiet vivid on their faces.”

“Younger people asks more for sedative pills,” said Dr. Burki, observing that years of continuing militancy is taking a toll on youths as now they feel more vulnerable and are falling prey to different types of neurosis.

“Peace and tranquility is nonexistent,” a local notable businessman Allauddin Wazir told Xinhua, adding the fear of sudden drone strikes have brought business activities to a standstill. “The economic and financial backbone is broken and they can hardly sustain life,” the elderly businessman said.

“Whether Osama bin Laden or Mullah Omar might have been killed in a volley of drone attacks or not, one thing is for sure – that all those martyred in such attacks were innocent civilians,” Malik Safdar Hayat Dawar, a North Waziristan resident, told Xinhua. He believes the controversial drone strikes are a “direct attack on Pakistan’s sovereignty, which should be stopped, now.”

The approximately 25:1 horrific ratio of civilians killed for each suspected militant has attracted severe criticism from around the world including the United Nations and prominent human rights watchdogs.

Unheeding of the repeated Pakistani request of transferring drone technology with a logic of understanding its own territory and people best, the U.S. had rather intensified the strikes that compelled most of residents in tribal areas to start migrating out of their native homelands.

A single unmanned remotely controlled spy plane can carry up to four precision guided missiles. Drone sorties are usually conducted in a pair or sometimes even four to six participate in a “licensed to kill” mission. Reports say they fly from two to three U.S. Air Force bases in Afghanistan operating under the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). However, certain unconfirmed reports had earlier suggested that drones had even been used from certain air strips in Pakistan that had been leased to the United States.

The whole tribal population of North Waziristan would opt to leave the area due to increasing “extra-judicial” drone strikes, Dawar said, fearing that “all major cities of Pakistan would be swarmed by internally displaced persons (IDPs) soon,” if unbridled drone strikes continued with an ever increasing frequency.

“We are unable to offer prayers in mosques, visit crowded places or tourism spots for even a little picnic,” complained Shah Noor, a college student at Razmak city of North Waziristan. “The future of our education is in the doldrums. We can’t even sleep peacefully because a drone strike can eliminate our lives anytime, ” he told Xinhua.

Local watchers foresee that it would trigger another IDPs crisis in the making as Pakistan is already challenged by a severe human crisis in its history’s worst devastating floods that had displaced over 20 million people this summer

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