

Beat: Politics

U.S. drone kills 4 suspected militants in Pakistan's tribal region

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USPA News - At least four suspected militants were killed Sunday when a U.S. drone targeted a suspected militant compound in Pakistan's volatile tribal region, Pakistani intelligence officials said. There were no immediate reports of civilian casualties.

The unmanned U.S. drone fired at least two missiles at a residential building in the remote Ghulam Khan area of Pakistan's volatile North Waziristan tribal area, which is also near the Afghan border. The targeted house, which was badly damaged, was allegedly being used by militants. Pakistani intelligence officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said two bodies were recovered at the scene while two others later died of their injuries. One official said all those killed were believed to be militants, affiliated with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), better known as the Pakistani Taliban, and there were no immediate claims of civilian casualties. Pakistan's foreign ministry strongly condemned Sunday's drone strike, calling them "counter-productive" and blaming them for civilian casualties. "These unilateral strikes are a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity," the ministry said in a statement. "Pakistan has repeatedly emphasized the importance of bringing an immediate end to drone strikes." The ministry statement said the continuing drone strikes by the United States also set "dangerous precedents" for relations between the countries. "These drone strikes have a negative impact on the mutual desire of both countries to forge a cordial and cooperative relationship and to ensure peace and stability in the region," it said. U.S. drone strikes have become relatively common during President Barack Obama's tenure in which the unmanned aircraft have targeted suspected militants, their hideouts, and training facilities. However, the number of civilians killed along with militants during such attacks has remained uncertain. The total number of deaths caused by drone strikes in 2012 stood well over 300, according to the Washington-based think tank New America Foundation, and as many as 3,239 individuals have been killed as a result of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan alone between 2004 and January 2013. In January 2012, President 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. Pakistan's government has been public in its stance against 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 almost never provided, and the U.S. government does not comment publicly on the strikes. However, the U.S. has used drones as an important tool in their fight against terrorism. 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 Abbottabad in May 2011.

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