

Airship operations will be supported by three HU-1H helicopters, one in each of the southern provinces of Narathiwat, Yala and Pattani. On the ground, a 22-ton Grizzly Armored Personnel Carrier acts as a mobile command-and-control vehicle. The airship also requires the construction of a hangar and support facility in Pattani province.

The U.S. military has deployed cable-tethered blimps – aerostats – as part of its RAID (Rapid Aerostat Initial Deployment) surveillance system in Iraq and Afghanistan (Defense Industry Daily, July 18, 2009). Though the aerostats use low-pressure gas to prevent being brought down by a single bullet-hole, insurgents have discovered that if you put enough bullet-holes in an aerostat, it needs to be brought down for maintenance. In many cases this has reduced a projected 30-day aerostat deployment to a length of only several days. Though their effectiveness in South Thailand is yet unproven, airships may soon play an important role on the modern battlefield. The U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the U.S. Air Force have plans to launch a massive unmanned military airship capable of flying a ten-year mission at 70,000 feet. Dubbed ISIS (Integrated Sensor Is Structure), the airship will be 1,000 feet in length, with two enormous radar antennas integrated into the framework of the airship and an advanced radar system designed by Raytheon. According to DARPA, “ISIS will revolutionize theater-wide surveillance, tracking and fire control” (Defense News, May 11, 2009). A prototype built by Lockheed is scheduled to make its first flight in 2013.

Pakistani Responses to the CIA’s Predator Drone Campaign against the Taliban and al-Qaeda

By Brian Glyn Williams

Conventional wisdom in the West seems to have coalesced around the notion that the CIA’s airborne assassination campaign against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Pakistan’s remote FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) is driving Pakistanis to new levels of anti-Americanism. Western news sources report routinely on Pakistani discontent with the strikes. In truth, Pakistani leaders have spoken against them, the Pakistani media regularly condemns

them and they do seem to be genuinely unpopular with Pakistanis according to opinion surveys. [1] But not everyone in Pakistan is against the killing of al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters by the CIA’s robotic killers in the sky. Recent accounts from the Pakistani media and blogs show that an increasing number of Pakistanis have turned against al-Qaeda and the Taliban and many have come to see the Predator and Reaper strikes on al-Qaeda as a legitimate response to terrorism (see *Terrorism Monitor*, September 25, 2009; October 1, 2009).

In April 2009, Pakistani security expert Amir Mir published figures which showed that 687 civilians have been killed along with 14 al-Qaeda leaders by American drones since January 2008 (*The News*, April 10, 2009). The newspaper reported that this translated to over 50 civilians killed for every slain al-Qaeda member. In January 2010, another Pakistani daily described an increased death toll for the year 2009 and claimed, “Of the 44 Predator strikes carried out by U.S. drones in the tribal areas of Pakistan over the past 12 months, only five were able to hit their actual targets, killing five key al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders, but at the cost of over 700 innocent civilians... for each al-Qaeda and Taliban terrorist killed by the American drones, 140 civilian Pakistanis also had to die” (*Dawn*, January 2). While such statistics of 50 or 140 civilians per al-Qaeda death are unproven (neither the Pakistani media nor the military can get to the remote, Taliban-controlled areas to do assessments on drone strikes on hujra guest houses, compounds, convoys or madrassas), these numbers have widespread currency among Pakistanis who are prone to anti-Americanism. An October 2009 report by Peter Bergen paints a lower number, giving a total of 760 to 1,000 deaths (including Taliban and civilians) over the three years from 2006 to 2009. [2].

Pakistani government officials have officially condemned the drone attacks in an effort to distance themselves from the unpopular strikes which are covertly supported by the Pakistani military and government. The Pakistani Defense Minister claimed the strikes were generating “anti-American sentiments” and creating “outrage and uproar among the people.” Another military official said the missile strikes were “counterproductive” and “driving a wedge between the government and the tribal people.” Pakistani Prime Minister Yusuf Gilani complained, “We are trying to separate militants from tribesmen, but the drone attacks are doing exactly the opposite” (PakTribune, November 16, 2009).

For all their efforts to distance themselves from the unpopular drone strikes, it was revealed in 2009 that the Pakistani government actually permits the CIA's Predators to be flown from Pakistani soil. When this news was leaked one Pakistani blogger wrote, "Now the cat is out of the bag... it is once more proved how much regard America and our own government has for the people who reside in Pakistan. Their lives are of no value and our own government is involved in the killings. What a shame and what a sorry state of affairs. Another lie of our president has been caught and nobody knows how many more are on the way." [3]

But not everyone shares the above sentiment. In the spring of 2009 a poll was carried out in the FATA tribal area by the Pakistani-based Aryana Institute for Regional Research and Advocacy that was to demonstrate that in this area at least there was widespread support for the drone attacks (*The News* [Islamabad], March 5, 2009). [4] The pollsters found that "the popular notion outside the Pakhtun [Pashtun] belt that a large majority of the local population supports the Taliban movement lacks substance." Most importantly the study rejected the notion that the drone strikes are seen as a violation of Pashtun lands or Pakistani sovereignty. It would seem that Pashtun tribesmen who have seen their maliks (tribal chiefs) killed by the Taliban, their theaters closed, their women forced out of work, Islamic law brutally enforced, girls' schools closed, and "spies, traitors and informers" killed in their hundreds by the Taliban are more inclined to be tolerant of the "machays" or "bangana" ("wasps" or "thunder," as the drones are known in Pashtun) than Pakistanis living outside of the FATA zone.

In December 2009, a coalition of FATA-based political parties and civil organizations opposed to terrorism issued the "Peshawar Declaration." Among other provisions, it stated:

- The conference demands that targeted and immediate operations against all centers and networks of terrorism should be initiated.
- This conference also demands the elimination of all foreign, non-local and local terrorists in FATA.

The declaration also dealt with the drone attacks in detail:

The issue of Drone attacks is the most important one. If the people of the war-affected areas are satisfied with any counter-militancy strategy, it is the Drone attacks which they support the most. According to the people of Waziristan, Drones have never killed any civilian. Even some people in Waziristan compare Drones with Ababels (The holy swallows sent by God to avenge Abraham, the intended conqueror of the Khana Kaaba). A component of the Pakistani media, some retired generals, a few journalists/analysts and pro-Taliban political parties never tire in their baseless propaganda against Drone attacks. [5]

Tellingly, when a CIA drone killed Baitullah Mahsud, the notorious head of the Pakistani Taliban who had sent numerous suicide bombers into Pakistani cities, there was no public outcry in Pakistan. On the contrary, many Pakistanis celebrated. One internet forum member from Karachi said, "If (his death is) true, it would be good news and shows the value of drone attacks," while another claimed, "The mass murderer has met his fate. He was responsible for the death of thousands of innocent Pakistanis. May he burn in hell for eternity." [6] When Tahir Yuldushev, the head of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, a FATA-based terrorist group tied to al-Qaeda was killed by a missile strike in the fall of 2009, the *Daily Times* reported, "The death of Tahir Yuldashev at the hands of the Americans has, as in the case of Baitullah Mehsud, provided relief to Pakistan" (*Daily Times* [Lahore], October 3, 2009).

FATA-based Farhat Taj of the Aryana Institute described the sentiments of the natives of Waziristan as follows:

They want al-Qaeda along with the Taliban burnt to ashes on the soil of Waziristan through relentless drone attacks. The drone attacks, they believe, are the one and only "cure" for these anti-civilization creatures and the U.S. must robustly administer them the "cure" until their existence is annihilated from the world. The people of Waziristan, including tribal leaders, women and religious people, asked me to convey in categorical terms to the U.S. the following in my column. Your new drone attack strategy is brilliant, i.e. one attack closely followed by

another. After the first attack the terrorists cordon off the area and none but the terrorists are allowed on the spot. Another attack at that point kills so many of them. Excellent! Keep it up! (Daily Times. February 6).

The previous remarks would seem to demonstrate that Pakistanis are far from unified in their opposition to the drone strikes. There would seem to be mounting evidence that many Pakistanis, especially those in direct contact with the Taliban, do not oppose the American drone campaign.

Dr. Brian Glyn Williams is Associate Professor of Islamic History at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth.

Notes:

1. "Pakistani Public Turns against Taliban, But Still Negative on U.S." World Public Opinion.org. July 1, 2009. <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/brasiapacificra/619.php?lb=bras&pnt=619&nid=&id=>
2. Peter Bergen, "Pakistan Drone War Takes Toll on Militants and Civilians," Foreign Policy.com. - Af/Pak Channel, October 29, 2009. Bergen's figures are partially based on the figures from *Dawn* and *The News*.
3. "Dianne Feinstein. We Know Drones Are From HERE." *Chowrangi*, n.d., <http://www.chowrangi.com/dianne-feinstein-we-know-drones-are-from-here.html>
4. "Drone Attacks--A Survey." The Aryana Institute for Regional Research and Advocacy. March 5, 2009. <http://www.airra.org/news/DroneAttacks.htm>
5. Short version - <http://www.airra.org/newsandanalysis/Peshawardeclaration.php>; Full text at http://www.thesouthasian.org/archives/2010/peshawar_declaration_a_path_fo.html. According to organizers; "The workshop was attended by the provincial leadership of Awami National Party (ANP), Pukhtunkhwa Mili Awami Party (PMAP), Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), Pakistan Peoples Party Sherpao (PPP-S), National Party (NP) and Awami Party Pakistan (APP), civil society organizations under the banner of Aman Tehrik (Peace Movement), businessmen, doctors, lawyers, teachers, students, laborers and intellectuals... Representatives from all the agencies of FATA, Swat, Malakand and Buner also participated."
6. <http://www.paklinks.com/gs/pakistan-affairs/339128-baitullah-mehsud-dead.html>

Pakistani Taliban Display Effectiveness of their Intelligence Network with Attack on U.S. Special Forces

By Andrew McGregor

Following the Afghan Taliban intelligence coup that led to the late December suicide-bombing at an American base in Khost province that killed seven CIA agents, Pakistan's Taliban have apparently scored an intelligence success of their own, exposing a secret U.S. operation in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) by killing three American Special Forces operatives in a carefully targeted suicide car-bombing. The attack took place outside the re-opening of a girls' school in Shahi Koto, an area of the Lower Dir district of the NWFP. The Pakistani military claimed to have cleared Upper and Lower Dir of militants in the summer of 2009.

The suicide bomber appears to have waited for the paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC) vehicle carrying the Americans before driving his car alongside and detonating a powerful bomb of 50 to 60 kilograms of explosives. Other than the three Americans, five schoolgirls and an FC soldier were killed. Dozens of schoolgirls were wounded after being trapped under the rubble of the demolished school building (AFP, February 4). The girls' school was one of dozens destroyed by TTP forces under the command of Maulana Fazlullah last year. It was rebuilt with the assistance of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Investigators from Pakistan's security services claimed the suicide bomber was an Uzbek who was part of a group of militants fleeing from military operations in Bajaur (*The News* [Islamabad], February 8; see also *Terrorism Monitor*, February 11).

The suicide bombing was carried out with deliberation; the attacker appeared to know when the convoy was destined to arrive and which of the five vehicles contained the Americans. Police are investigating whether the attacker had inside information (*Daily Times* [Lahore], February 5).

Besides proving their ability to strike targets even in areas "cleared" of insurgents by the Pakistani military, those behind the bombing also sent a powerful signal to the local community that their children will not be safe at schools which are not authorized by the TTP.