

U.S. drone kills 5 suspected militants in Pakistans tribal region

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USPA News - At least five suspected militants were killed Wednesday 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 six missiles at a residential building in the Spinwam area of Pakistan's volatile North Waziristan tribal area, which is also near the Afghan border. The targeted house, which was completely destroyed, was allegedly being used by militants. Pakistani intelligence officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said five bodies were retrieved at the scene. "We don't know their identities," one official said. Another official said all those killed were believed to be militants, and there were no immediate claims of civilian casualties. The strike comes after Pakistan's Ambassador to the U.S., Sherry Rehman, criticized the America's use of drones, describing them as a "direct violation of [Pakistan's] sovereignty," as there is no policy or approval of such attacks. So far this year alone, nearly 50 people have been killed in similar drone strikes in Pakistan. Also on Wednesday, White House Press Secretary Jay Carney emphasized its counter-terrorism efforts are designed to limit civilian casualties. "I think it's fair to say that far fewer civilians lose their lives in an effort to go after senior leadership in al-Qaeda along the lines [of drone strikes] as opposed to an effort to invade a country with hundreds of thousands of troops and take cities and towns," he said. Last month, Ben Emmerson, the United Nations (UN) special rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights, said the UN is opening an investigation into the deaths caused by U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, as well as Palestinian regions. The probe will also investigate the deaths and injuries of civilians as a result of U.S. drone strikes. 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 also killed 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. About a year ago, 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 usually not provided, and the U.S. government does not comment publicly on the strikes. However, the U.S. has used them 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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