

'At war' US justifies drone attacks in Pak as act of 'self-defence'

By [Global Research](#)

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Amid growing discontent in Pakistan over the continuous drone attacks in the ungoverned tribal regions near the Afghan-Pak border, the United States has justified the Central Investigation Agency (CIA) operated missile hits against Al-Qaeda and Taliban extremists citing the right to "self-defence" under international law.

The drone attacks in Pakistan as well in Somalia have increased considerably under the Obama Administration, which have been severely criticised by human rights groups across the world.

Speaking during a conference of the American Society of International Law, State Department's legal advisor Harold Koh argued that the missile hits were justified.

"The United States is in "an armed conflict" with Al-Qaeda, the Taliban and its affiliates as a result of the September 11 attacks, and may use force consistent with its inherent right to self-defence under the international law," Koh said without mentioning Pakistan or other countries where the unmanned Predators have struck.

"What I can say is that it is the considered view of this administration, and it has certainly been my experience during my time as legal adviser that the US targeting practices, including lethal operations conducted with the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, comply with all applicable law, including the laws of war," he said justifying the strikes, a topic which has remained off-limits of US officials.

Koh, who remained a fierce critic of former President George W Bush's policies, said the drone strikes can not be considered as 'assassination', as it is an act of 'self-defence' by Washington.

"The use of lawful weapons systems, consistent with the applicable laws of war, for precision targeting of specific high-level belligerent leaders when acting in self-defence or during an armed conflict is not unlawful, and hence does not constitute assassination," The News quoted Koh, as saying.

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