

The U.S. Is a State Sponsor of Terrorism

Drone attacks are raw terror tactics that terrorize civilian populations

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Region: [USA](#)
Theme: [Terrorism](#)

Now we know exactly how many members of the U.S. House of Representatives care enough about American terrorism to attend a Congressional briefing about a U.S. drone attack that followed a classic terrorist pattern in killing a grandmother and wounding nine children in Pakistan. Five.

Five members of “the people’s house” came to the briefing, and one of them was there for the full 90 minutes.

When one of the witnesses expressed disappointment at the turnout, a congressman reassured him: this was better than we expected. They were all Democrats.

Had any other American lawmakers joined the audience of somewhat more than 100, they would have heard some of the survivors describe the inexplicable (and unexplained, because the CIA does not explain) attack in which the first drone missile blew up a 67-year-old midwife as she was picking okra and wounded two of her grandchildren. Others came out of a nearby house to see what had happened and the second drone missile wounded seven more children.

This is a classic terrorist tactic, sometimes called the “double tap,” using the first explosion to draw a crowd of first responders and onlookers as targets for the second explosion. Typically the double tap attack rings up a higher score.

In a sane world there might be more outcry against the world’s only superpower using terrorist tactics on civilian populations in a half dozen or more countries, based on the rationale of a global war on terror (no longer the official name) that, so far, seems only to have added death and chaos to an already deadly, chaotic world because no one in authority seems capable of coming up with a less destructive way of defending our homeland at the expense of any other homeland we select.

The Pakistanis keep telling us to stop killing their people

Even the organizer of the briefing, Rep. Alan Grayson of Florida, who showed great sympathy to the family of the assassinated grandmother, somehow thinks the killings are ultimately Pakistan’s fault. In a strange application of blame-the-victim, Grayson told the BBC that drone strikes were not possible without the approval of the Pakistani government.

“Pakistan has a strong air force which has the power to impose a restriction on its borders whenever it chooses to,” Grayson said, leaving listeners free to infer that he had no objection to Pakistani planes shooting down American drones. He also claimed that the

Pakistani army of a million soldiers should be able to control hundreds of militants easily, perhaps looking back to the swift American success against counter-insurgencies elsewhere in the region.

Pakistan's information minister, Pervaiz Rashid, promptly rebutted Grayson and reaffirmed the Pakistani government's rejection of drone attacks as violations of Pakistani sovereignty that were most effective in creating more militants. He spoke of Pakistani unanimity in opposition to drone attacks, of growing international opposition to drone attacks, and of his hope that his government would succeed in ending drone attacks soon.

Like Grayson, Rashid avoided the central fact of drone attacks around the world: the United States is an outlaw nation that continues to violate international law with impunity; it is a rogue state that others cannot control at a cost they are willing to bear. (Other states currently waging drone warfare include Great Britain in Afghanistan and Israel in Gaza.)

The day after the Grayson terror-strike briefing, Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif met with President Obama at the White House and reiterated Pakistan's opposition to drone attacks in his country. Publicly, the prime minister put the issue in the broader context of the war on terror:

"Pakistan and the United States have a strong, ongoing counterterrorism cooperation. We have agreed to further strengthen this cooperation. I also brought up the issue of drones in our meeting, emphasizing the need for an end to such strikes." [emphasis added]

Obama doesn't talk about secret wars, even when everyone knows about them

President Obama did not show enough respect for Sharif even to acknowledge publicly that America's drone war might be an issue for those being attacked.

This was the same lack of response the president earlier gave another Pakistani emissary, Malala Yousafzai, the 16-year-old Taliban shooting victim. Malala visited the White House October 11 for a chat with the president and a photo op with his daughters. The only public acknowledgement of the American drone war came in Malala's statement after the meeting:

"I thanked President Obama for the United States' work in supporting education in Pakistan and Afghanistan and for Syrian refugees. I also expressed my concerns that drone attacks are fueling terrorism. Innocent victims are killed in these acts, and they lead to resentment among the Pakistani people."

The cover story for the president is that the CIA runs America's drone wars, so they're by definition secret, regardless of how many people know about them. This is a doublethink decision that was made by the Bush administration when the drone war began, which is thought to be 2004. Any self-respecting war crimes tribunal would explore this issue in detail and assign accountability accordingly. Until then, American drones can kill indiscriminately in a bombing campaign that officially doesn't exist, even though everyone knows it does and many officials talk about it publicly (but anonymously).

The result can sometimes be unintended hilarity, as when the president, in his unresponsive comments about Prime Minister Sharif, said that they had talked about "senseless violence, terrorism, and extremism," which is certainly a usefully euphemistic phrase that describes the U.S. drone wars, among other terrorist activities. The president compounded this dark joke by going on to say with a straight face that "we need to find constructive ways to ...

respect Pakistan's sovereignty."

Respecting other nations' sovereignty really isn't the American Way

The president wouldn't have to go whole hog into respecting Pakistani sovereignty - he could start with a gesture, a small offer of good faith, like forbidding the CIA to exercise the pure terrorism of the double tap technique. Pakistani doctors and nurses and good Samaritans might not be grateful, but they'd be alive.

Or the president could start even smaller, he could just forbid the CIA from blowing up the mourners at funerals of earlier missile attack victims. That would show respect at least on a traditional Mafia level.

The United States doesn't admit that it employs these terrorist tactics in its terror war on terrorism. But there's a sweet spot in that - the president would not have to admit he's stopped them, either.

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