

US Covert Actions in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia - May 2014 Update

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Global Research, June 10, 2014

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June 2014

CIA drones have not hit Pakistan for over five months – some now suggest it is a permanent end to strikes.

The hiatus in drone strikes continues as [Pakistan's](#) military takes the fight to the Taliban.

A US drone strike kills at least four amid an ongoing [Yemen](#) military offensive against al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

Another month without a reported US attack in [Somalia](#) as al Shabaab attacks neighbouring countries.

New case studies added to the [Naming the Dead](#) project.

Pakistan

May 2014 actions

Total CIA strikes in May: **0**

Total killed in strikes in May: **0**

All actions 2004 - May 31 2014

Total Obama strikes: **332**

Total US strikes since 2004: **383**

Total reported killed: **2,296-3,719**

Civilians reported killed: **416-957**

Children reported killed: **168-202**

Total reported injured: **1,089-1,639**

[For the Bureau's full Pakistan databases click here.](#)

More than five months have passed without a drone strike in Pakistan, and some analysts suggest the campaign is drawing to a close.

The Associated Press [reported](#) that CIA drones are still flying armed missions over Pakistan and analysts are still adding targets to the kill list. But the US intends to continue drawing

down its forces in Afghanistan, leaving altogether by 2016. This would mean the air bases from which the drones fly and the intelligence outposts that provide them with their targets will close.

Congressman Mike Rogers, chair of the House Intelligence Committee, told AP: 'By the end of this year we will have a noticeable degradation in our ability to collect intelligence on people of concern.'

President Obama made a [major speech](#) on foreign policy at West Point military academy, in which he confirmed the US will continue to conduct off-battlefield drone strikes. But he mentioned Pakistan only once, declaring that 'al Qaeda's leadership on the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been decimated'.

The Pakistan military has stepped up operations in North Waziristan, continuing the air strikes that began in April and also attacking Taliban targets with artillery, helicopters and ground forces. There have been reports of [high casualties](#) from the strikes; at least 60 people reportedly died in a series of attacks on May 21. Thousands of people have already [reportedly been displaced](#), fleeing to neighbouring Bannu region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The Pakistan Taliban has reportedly [fragmented this month](#) as infighting between factions continued. A faction based in South Waziristan, made up of Mehsud tribesmen commanded by **Khan Said**, has broken from the main group commanded by Mullah Fazlullah. [Said's Mehsud group](#) is reportedly on good terms with the Pakistani government and there is hope this schism could lead to increased stability in South Waziristan.

The US government [agreed to](#) publish a redacted version of [the memo](#) outlining the legal basis for killing US citizens overseas. The move came after an appeals court ordered the publication last month. However, a week after the judgment, the Justice Department sought a fresh court hearing to redact further sections of the memo, beyond those agreed by the court. The government also sought to have the new hearing held in secret. The court [agreed to hear the government's case](#) for further redactions but refused to do so entirely behind closed doors.

This month the Bureau published major research analysing all strikes that have taken place in Pakistan. This [revealed](#) that drones have attacked more domestic buildings than another type of target - more than 60% of strikes hit houses, killing at least 222 civilians.

Since 2008 in Afghanistan air strikes on domestic buildings have been banned in all but the most urgent situations, as part of measures to reduce civilian casualties. But they have been the most frequent targets of attacks in Pakistan in each year of the campaign, including since 2008. The research, a collaboration with Forensic Architecture and Situ Research, is also presented in an interactive map, [Where the Drones Strike](#).

Yemen

May 2014 actions

Confirmed US drone strikes: **1**

Further reported/possible US strike events: **0**

Total reported killed in US operations: **4-6**

Civilians reported killed in US strikes: **0**

All actions 2002 - May 31 2014*

Confirmed US drone strikes: **64-76**

Total reported killed: **334-488**

Civilians reported killed: **34-84**

Children reported killed: **7-8**

Reported injured: **78-196**

Possible extra US drone strikes: **93-112**

Total reported killed: **315-505**

Civilians reported killed: **24-48**

Children reported killed: **6-9**

Reported injured: **85-118**

All other US covert operations: **14-79**

Total reported killed: **150-386**

Civilians reported killed: **59-88**

Children reported killed: **24-26**

Reported injured: **22-115**

[Click here for the full Yemen data.](#)

** All but one of these actions have taken place during Obama's presidency. Reports of incidents in Yemen often conflate individual strikes. The range we have recorded in US drone strikes and covert operations reflects this.*

A US drone killed [at least four people](#) in a vehicle in the Wadi Abeeda area of Mareb province. Witnesses named two of the dead as alleged al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) members **Naif Faraj** and **Mousleh al Arahabi**.

The Yemeni military continued to carry out operations against AQAP in the central and southern Yemeni provinces of Shabwa, Abyan and al Bayda, with casualties to both sides. AQAP responded with [attacks](#) and [bombings](#) in the capital and other cities.

The UN estimates more than [24,000 refugees have been displaced](#) by the fighting, as of May 20. The International Committee of the Red Cross and the Yemen Red Crescent have been providing [humanitarian relief](#).

There have been few reports of civilian casualties beyond [five civilians killed on May 22](#), when Yemeni government forces targeted their vehicle with artillery. However the Yemeni government appears to have been taking steps to shut down critical media coverage of its activities.

On May 20 [a team of al Jazeera reporters](#) were detained in Shabwa by government forces while covering the conflict and 'evacuated' to the capital, Sana'a.

On May 8 the Yemeni authorities expelled Adam Baron, [a reporter for McClatchy](#) who had worked in the country for more than three years. [On May 12](#) Iona Craig of The Times left the

country; at the airport she was told she would not be allowed to return. She later wrote: 'The foreign media may not be welcome in Yemen, but if they are quietly trying to remove us then the greatest threat to be faced will be to domestic reporters.'

Barack Obama cited Yemen in his West Point speech, as part of his declaration that the US will continue to launch drone strikes 'when we have actionable intelligence'. He also announced the US would spend \$5bn on developing and training counter-terrorism forces in countries around the world, pointing to the US's direct support for Yemen's security forces as an example of the work this new programme will do.

Also this month, [it emerged Saudi Arabia](#) had bombed northern Yemen with US-made cluster bombs in 2009 and 2010.

Somalia

May 2014 actions

Total reported US operations: **0**

All actions 2007 - May 31 2014

US drone strikes: **5-8**

Total reported killed: **10-24**

Civilians reported killed: **0-1**

Children reported killed: **0**

Reported injured: **2-3**

All other US covert operations: **8-11**

Total reported killed: **40-141**

Civilians reported killed: **7-47**

Children reported killed: **0-2**

Reported injured: **11-21**

[Click here for the Bureau's full data on Somalia.](#)

There was again no reported US strikes in Somalia - it is now more than four months since [the last confirmed US attack](#) in the country.

However al Shabaab continues to penetrate security to carry out attacks in Mogadishu, including an attack on the parliament building that [killed 10 people](#).

The attack came two weeks after [100 Somali MPs signed a letter](#) calling on the president to resign for failing to improve the security situation. The MPs threatened to impeach him. The president [rejected the call](#) for his resignation.

African Union peacekeeping forces (Amisom) continue to battle al Shabaab south and west of the capital. On May 18 Kenyan jets killed [at least 50 alleged militants](#) in a strike described as an Amisom operation. However [the peacekeeper's UN mandate](#) extends to 'an appropriate aviation component of up to twelve military helicopters'; not jets. On May 28 the militants hit back, [ambushing](#) a column of Amisom forces and killing 32 Ethiopian troops.

Al Shabaab also attacked a restaurant in the tiny African state, Djibouti to the north of Somalia, [killing three people](#). This country is home to the only permanent US base in Africa as well as a French base and EU and Nato naval forces involved in counter-piracy operations. [The group has also vowed](#) to take its fight into Kenya. It has [continued to attack targets in Kenya](#), in the capital, Nairobi and in the coastal city of Mombassa. At least 13 were killed in two bomb blasts in Nairobi on May 16.

There is increasing concern that the attacks in Kenya are doing serious damage to the economy, particularly to the [tourism industry](#) – the country’s [second-biggest source of foreign currency](#).

Kenya has continued to crack down on ethnic Somalis living in the country in operations [Amnesty International described](#) as ‘a disturbing wave of serious human rights violations’.

Naming the Dead

New case studies on the Naming the Dead website this month include profiles of British brothers [Abdul Jabbar](#) and [Mohammed Azmir Khan](#), who died in separate drone strikes in North Waziristan in 2010 and 2011. Following reports that an Australian and Yemeni citizen died in a drone strike in Yemen, we have profiled [Saifullah](#), described in reports as an Australian militant, and [Zahirullah](#), the owner of the house in which Saifullah died. [Emeti Yakuf](#), commander of a Chinese militant group, has also been profiled.

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