

The Use Of Drones Against Al-Qaeda Is Inefficient To Prevent New Attacks In Europe And USA

Javier Jordán, an expert in jihadism and a University of Granada professor states that, although drones are not efficient in preventing terrorist attacks in Europe and USA, they are the only instrument that USA has to undermine Al-Qaeda's leadership and operativity in Pakistan

The unmanned aerial vehicles –also named “drones”– that the CIA is employing against Al-Qaeda in Pakistan are inefficient to prevent new terrorist attacks against Europe and the USA. Nevertheless, drones are likely to keep being employed at the short and medium term since, as CIA's director states, these vehicles are the only instrument that the USA has to undermine Al-Qaeda and taliban's leadership and operating capacity in Pakistan.

This is the conclusion exposed in an article recently published in the Newsletters of the Real Instituto Elcano, prepared by a University of Granada professor and an expert in jihadism Javier Jordán Enamorado. In his article, professor Jordán notes that the campaign launched by the CIA is reducing Al-Qaeda's troops and is negatively affecting its operating capacity.

The employment of armed drones to undermine Al-Qaeda's capacity was an option that was already being considered before the 11-S attacks. They started to be operated at the start of the intervention in Afghanistan, although it was Obama's administration that finally launched drone attacks in Pakistan, which have gained a very significant intensity. This situation is putting the legal and ethical aspects of this strategy into question, while discussion has arisen as to the effectiveness of eliminating enemy leaders, in the light of the poor results obtained in previous experiences against other Al-Qaeda groups.

Lack of reprisals

Professor Jordán stresses “the lack of reprisals from Al-Qaeda in response to CIA's strategy of eliminating their leaders”. Recently, Al-Qaeda has launched only one attack –against the CIA in Khost in December 2009- where they made it clear through a later communiqué that they acted out of a desire for revenge, for their leaders being eliminated by drones.

Javier Jordán notes that, in 2009, the number of attacks by armed unmanned aircraft vehicles was higher than that launched in 2004 and 2008 –53 against 43-. In September 2010, the number of attacks already exceeded the total number of attacks launched in 2010 (69).

Currently, most of the drones flying in Afghanistan belong to the US Air Force and perform military tasks –route and facility protection, infantry support, etc. These CIA-operated vehicles employed in Pakistan are of a different type. Their main aim is eliminating Al-Qaeda's key leaders and the taliban insurgency, and their activities are secret.

CIA's attacks have caused intense controversy within Pakistani society, which explains Islamabad's administration ambiguity. On the one hand, Pakistani's government has openly condemned what they consider a violation of their sovereignty, while at the same time, they are allowing drones to use their air space and the airfield of Shamsi, which belongs to the Pakistani Air Force, Javier Jordán states in his article.

Simultaneously, these attacks have caused critics in the USA. The legality of these actions is being questioned, and there are many critics to the unintended civil casualties caused. “As these attacks are launched in a region inaccessible to the media and to humanitarian relief organizations, having a clear perspective of the collateral damage caused is difficult” –the University of Granada professor affirms.

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