

US attacks on Pakistan kill hundreds

Sunday 18 January 2009, by [SULEHRIA Farooq](#) (Date first published: 17 January 2009).

On January 1, US drones pounded Waziristan in Pakistan's north-western tribal areas, killing five people.

It was an obnoxious new year message to Pakistan (reiterated on January 2, leaving three dead): 2009 would be no different from 2008.

"In 2008, US attacked tribal areas and Frontier province at least 35 times", a defence official told this writer. "Since 2004, the US has attacked Pakistan at least 50 times, claiming over 450 lives."

These strikes — by Predator drones as well as commando raids via helicopter — increased in frequency during outgoing US president George Bush's waning months and have been seen in Pakistan as the US's third war.

Unlike the other two, Iraq and Afghanistan, the war against Pakistan is undeclared — yet it was, according to New York Times, approved by Bush in July last year.

Commentators fear an increased US onslaught as president-elect Barack Obama assumes office, since he has been publicly advocating that the US must be willing to strike al-Qaeda targets inside Pakistan. His comments have caused great anxiety in Pakistan.

Apparently, the Pakistani government has strongly condemned the US strikes but has not reacted militarily. However, recurring Taliban attacks on NATO supplies moving through Peshawar have been seen as a Pakistani shot across the bow to Washington.

Reportedly, 70% of NATO supplies destined for Afghanistan move through Pakistan. In last six months, 230 trucks have been destroyed in six attacks.

Besides precipitating the so-far undeclared US-Pakistan war, the occupation of Afghanistan has further inflamed India-Pakistan tensions. The November Mumbai terrorist attack was yet another effect of this occupation.

Many observers believe the attack was an attempt to provoke tensions between India and Pakistan, thus forcing Pakistan to move 130,000 troops from Afghan border to Indian border.

However, Pakistan is also nervous over growing Indian influence in Kabul. A deadly suicide attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul in July last year was blamed on Pakistan.

Iran is understandably nervous over the US presence in Afghanistan, while Russia and China, concerned over the US presence, have conducted joint military operations on each other's territory. Both these countries understand that US want to place military facilities on their borders under the guise of "war on terror".

If anything, US occupation of Afghanistan has not merely triggered further terrorism but, most dangerously, district after district in the Frontier province is being lost to the Taliban while the writ of Pakistani state has evaporated.

Since 2003, 13,648 people have been killed in clashes between Taliban and Pakistan's security forces, 5282 of them civilians, 1833 security forces' personnel and 6305 Taliban fighters.

P.S.

* From: International News, Green Left Weekly issue #779 21 January 2009.