Beat: News

Report: Top Pakistani Taliban leader killed in U.S. drone strike

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USPA News - A United States drone strike on Wednesday reportedly killed a top terrorist suspect in Pakistan, local media reported. The airstrike occurred near Miranshah, the main town of Pakistan`s tribal region of North Waziristan, near the Afghan border, when a small house was reportedly hit by two missile strikes.

The strike reportedly killed six people, including Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) commander Wali-ur-Rehman, who was set to succeed Hakimullah Mehsud to lead the country`s Taliban forces. However, death toll in drone strikes have been difficult to verify. The total number of deaths caused by drone strikes in 2012 stood well over 300, according to the Washington-based think tank New America Foundation, and as many as 3,239 individuals have been killed as a result of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan alone between 2004 and January 2013. TTP militants have launched attacks against both Pakistani military forces as well as civilians in different parts of the country. Local media outlets have cited foreign news agencies of the killing, but the Taliban has denied Wali-ur-Rehman`s death. U.S. drone strikes have become relatively common during President Barack Obama`s tenure in which the unmanned aircraft have targeted suspected militants, their hideouts, and training facilities. However, the number of civilians also killed during such attacks has remained uncertain. Over a year ago, in January 2012, President Obama, for the first time during his presidency, publicly acknowledged that U.S. drones regularly strike suspected militants along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. He confirmed that many of these strikes are carried out in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, targeting al-Qaeda and Taliban suspects in tough terrain. Pakistan`s government has been public in its stance against the drone strikes, as local residents and officials have blamed them for killing innocent civilians and motivating young men to join the Taliban. Details about the alleged militants are usually not provided, and the U.S. government does not comment publicly on the strikes. However, the U.S. has used them as an important tool in their fight against terrorism. In June 2012, al-Qaeda deputy leader Abu Yahya al-Libi was killed when an unmanned U.S. drone fired at least two missiles at a compound and a nearby pickup truck in the village of Hesokhel, located in the Mir Ali district just east of Miranshah. It was the most serious blow to al-Qaeda since U.S. Navy SEALs killed Osama bin Laden during a secret military operation in the Pakistani city of Abbotabad in May 2011.

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