

Two days of US drone attacks kill nearly 80 in Pakistan

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The United States fired multiple missiles from pilotless drones on Wednesday in two separate attacks on insurgents in Pakistan's South Waziristan district, killing up to 60 people. The attacks followed a US missile strike in South Waziristan on Tuesday that reportedly killed 16 people.

The missile strikes mark a further escalation of US drone attacks, bringing the total since last August to 45. The stepped-up US military violence in Pakistan coincides with an ongoing offensive by the Pakistani military in the Swat Valley and preparations to launch an offensive in South Waziristan, a mountainous region in the northwest of the country bordering Afghanistan.

At the same time, the Obama administration has launched a major ground offensive in Afghanistan's southern Helmand Province. Taken as a whole, the intensification of US military actions in the two countries, together with Pakistani air and ground operations launched at the insistence of Washington, constitute a massive military escalation aimed at drowning the insurgencies in blood and terrorizing the civilian populations on both sides of the border.

The Pakistani offensive in the Swat Valley has turned 2 million residents of the region into internal refugees. There are no reliable figures on the number of dead and wounded.

US drone attacks have increasingly been aimed at Pakistani militants led by Baitullah Mehsud, who are based in South Waziristan. Mehsud is considered by the regime in Islamabad to be its most dangerous internal enemy. He is not, however, involved in cross-border attacks on US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, the original justification for CIA-launched drone strikes on

Pakistan's tribal regions.

The first drone attack on Wednesday took place before dawn. Six missiles slammed into what Pakistani officials say is a militant training camp in the Karwan Manza area of South Waziristan, close to the Afghan border. Ten people, described as militants, were reportedly killed in the attack.

Hours later, 12 miles to the east, missiles hit a convoy said to be carrying Taliban militants, killing between 35 and 50 people.

On Tuesday, a US drone attack pulverized a compound in another part of South Waziristan, killing up to 16 people.

On June 23, a US drone attack on a funeral procession in South Waziristan killed as many as 80 people and wounded many more. That was the most deadly US attack in Pakistan to date.

The mourners had gathered for the funeral of seven victims of another US drone attack that had taken place earlier the same day. US media accounts described the target as a "Taliban training center in South Waziristan." According to local sources, those killed and wounded in the attack were mostly civilians.



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