

US Drone War in Pakistan Targets and Timings

60% of Drone Strikes Target Civilian Structures

An analysis of 383 drone strikes in Northern Pakistan from June 2006 through December 2013 (Fig.1 and Table1) shows that up to 60 percent aimed domestic buildings (that may be rented or commandeered by militant groups); 33.5 percent vehicles (cars, pick-up trucks, four-wheel drives and motorbikes); 3.6 percent religious buildings (residential facilities for children and youths; a very small proportion of all attacks have hit madrassas or mosques, but they have tended to have very high death tolls); and 2.8 percent other buildings (commercial buildings and disused government buildings).

21st Century "Crusade"

The deep nature of the US drone war is betrayed, if need be, by such details. On the eve of launching his war against Iraq, George W. Bush proudly compared his initiative to a "crusade" against evil Muslims. By appealing to the medieval concept, he was confident to enlist both hesitant U.S. citizens and reluctant western allies, as well as to demoralize the enemy. Partisans and adversaries alike reacted with such outrage that he quickly

dropped the word from the official vocabulary. Nevertheless, it is very much a crusade that the U.S. engaged against a large fraction of the world.

The early 13th century Albigensian or Cathar crusade, initiated by Pope Innocent III allegedly to eliminate the Cathar heresy in the South of France, offered a blend of political and ideological convenient excuses, quite akin to the contemporary U.S.

rationale for their global war. As stated, the purpose of the crusade was to save the people's souls by imposing the catholic orthodoxy upon them. Similarly, the U.S. global war purports to ensure the peoples' happiness by imposing on them the US brand of "democracy" and "human rights". The hidden agendas are far more worldly. For the crusade, it was a matter of extending the jurisdiction of the king of France, and crash the local rival lords. Likewise, the U.S. want to secure the natural resources of Middle East and Central Asia, and to rein in the expansion potential of such adversaries as China, Russia or Iran.

"God will know his own"

The likeness of goals is complemented by the likeness of methods. Both endeavors rely on similar rules of engagement. During the sack

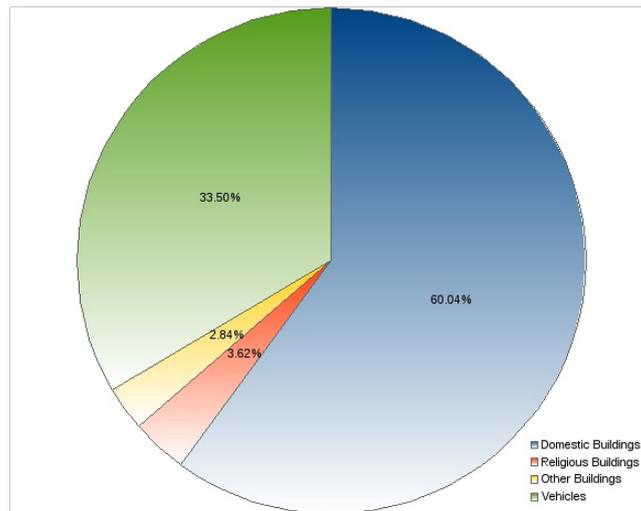


Fig.1: Actual targets of US drone strikes in Northern Pakistan.

of Béziers in 1209, the crusaders, ordered to slaughter the inhabitants, asked archbishop Arnaud Amaury, the papal legate and inquisitor, what should be done with the orthodox catholics living among the heretics. The holy man did not have to think twice to provide a snappy response. "Just kill them all, God will recognize his children!"

Washington "kill list" signatories follow the Amaury rule: shoot first and ask the questions later. Raze the domestic dwellings, religious schools, mosques or transportation buses, send to hell whomever happens to be there, enemy and civilian, child and grownup, male and female alike — God will know his own.

The Goal: to Generate Fear

Such a conduct is proscribed by the international war law (IHL) that strongly commands military forces to refrain from deliberately attacking civilian targets or endangering civilian lives. Obviously, it cannot

achieve any worthwhile military objective. The crux of the issue is that the drone strategy does not purport to rout the enemy, but indeed to generate widespread awe and fear, to the extent that the terrorized populations will undermine the insurgents' resolve to fight. It has been a fiasco — drone strikes have only succeeded in increasing the strength of the enemy, by arousing insurgent vocations.

Whatever the excuses, civilian targeted drone strikes are neither a tactics to win the war, nor a vehicle to promote democracy and human rights. They are plainly and simply the high technology avatar of the coarse Béziers general slaughter of the Middle Ages, or of the Guernica, Dresden, Hiroshima or North Vietnam massive air bombings of yesterday. They are a tool to terrorize the world. 

Strike in the Night

Roughly half of the 383 analyzed US drone strikes in northern Pakistan from June 2004 through December 2013 were performed between 18:00 and 04:59 hours, In other words in the evening (23.6%) and during the night (22.7%).

While regular military operations are mainly carried out in daylight, sneak operations as well as assassination attempts tend to be executed in the darkness, not only to ensure stealthiness and minimize the risk of

effective counter-attacks, but also to induce maximum panic and hysterical behavior among the victims. Striking in the middle of the night, while targeted people are asleep, is a harrowing experience that time can never erase from the survivors' memory.

Maximize Terror

Drone strikes during night time are not planned for reasons of covertness, or to maximize the effect of surprise. Local sources testify that, long before the strike, drones circle long hours above their heads, unruffled, menacing,

humming monotonously, without any pursue an unrelenting state-terror attempt to remain invisible. In fact, by keeping drones in full sight, by making them come and go intermittently, strike planners enhance the nerve-racking power of the attack, thus achieving the terrorizing full potential. That is precisely the goal: to maximize terror.

A Dubious Strategy

Having exposed publicly their pitiful powerlessness to win the wars engaged in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and elsewhere, the U.S. and their allies resort to a two-edged policy. On the one hand, they forcefully push universal surveillance, and the criminalization of any and all forms of internal dissent, with the fallacy of preventing or curbing "terrorism". On the other hand, they

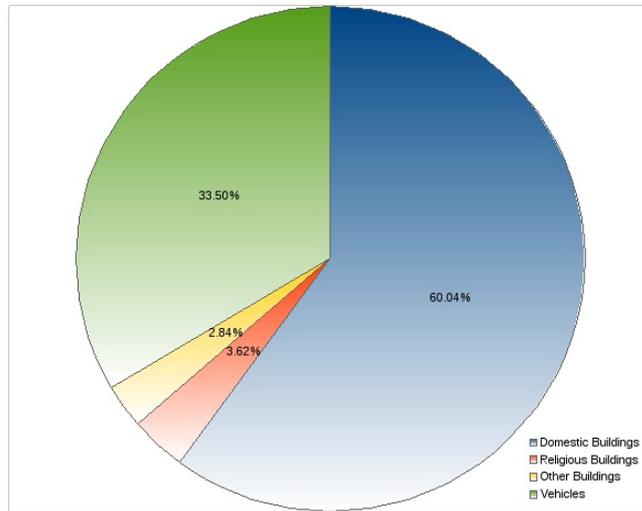


Fig.2: Timing of US drone strikes in Northern Pakistan.

course of action, by means of air and particularly drone strikes, whenever and wherever they deem appropriate, with the aim, not to win the war against the elusive enemy, but to produce widespread fear, to anesthetize the populations, and thus isolate the insurgency hotbeds.

History shows that similar tactics have

proved vain in the past. Tragically, western powers did not learn the 20th century lesson of decolonization and national independence, and insist on repeating the same mistakes. The recent spread of the seemingly unstoppable insurgency from Iraq and Afghanistan, to Syria, Yemen, and Saharan Africa, underscores the ignominious failure of their contemptible policies. ❏

US Drone Strikes				
Actual Targets				
Targets ¹	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Percent
Domestic Buildings	241	372	306.5	60.0%
Religious Buildings	8	29	18.5	3.6%
Other Buildings	6	23	14.5	2.8%
Vehicles	116	226	171	33.5%
All Targets	371	650	510.5	100.0%

¹ Analysis of 383 strikes that hit North and South Waziristan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, from June 2004 through 2013.

Table 1: Actual targets of US drone strikes in Northern Pakistan.

US Drone Strikes		
Timing		
Period	Time of Day	Percent
Morning	05:00-11:59	23.3%
Afternoon	12:00-17:59	23.3%
Evening	18:00-21:59	23.6%
Night	22:00-04:59	22.7%
Unsure ¹		7.1%

¹ Reports of time period were at times contradictory or overly vague and do not fall into one of the above four categories.

Table 2: Timing of US drone strikes in Northern Pakistan.

References :

Bureau of Investigative Journalism [<http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com>].

Sources :

<http://stats.areppim.com/war.htm>