



Written by on September 29, 2010

CIA Drones Attack Pakistan to Prevent Terror Attack in Europe

The British Daily Mail reported on September 29 that U.S. CIA-directed forces had launched “a devastating series of missile strikes against militants in Pakistan to help foil Mumbai-style attacks on cities in Europe.”

“Mumbai” refers to the series of 10 coordinated attacks by armed terrorists from the Pakistani Lashkar-e-Taiba group in Mumbai (formerly Bombay) India, for three days in 2008, which resulted in 173 deaths and 308 injuries, as well as severe damage to a few of the city’s landmarks and luxury hotels.



The *Daily Mail* cited statements from intelligence that militants based in Pakistan were planning simultaneous strikes on London and other European cities and noted that the information revealed by the intelligence reports may be linked to the September 28 evacuation of the Eiffel Tower in Paris because of a bomb scare — the second such incident in two weeks.

The report also noted that French authorities had stated the previous week that they had uncovered a suicide bombing plot to attack the Paris subway, which was linked to al-Qaeda’s North African affiliate.

A September 28 [Wall Street Journal](#) report quoted an unnamed U.S. counterterrorism official who said: “You have folks increasingly concerned about: Is it not just Europe that needs to be careful, but is there a threat here as well?” The official continued: “This isn’t just your typical Washington talk about how the threats have evolved. People are very concerned about what they’re seeing.”

The report noted that the CIA has increased the frequency of its drone attacks against suspected terrorist locations in Pakistan in order to disrupt the London plot, and others. An unnamed U.S. official quoted by the *Journal* said: “As is so often the case, details are scarce when it comes to timing or even precise targets. You often have to work backwards, with your starting point being individuals you believe are involved in plotting, even when you don’t have the full outlines of the plot itself.”

As they compile additional information, noted the report, intelligence officials have been targeting locations in Pakistan believed to be connected to the plot. “That’s why we have been striking — with precision — people and facilities that are part of these conspiracies,” said a U.S. official, explaining further, “We’ve also been hitting groups planning to cross the border to kill people in Afghanistan or in Pakistan itself.”

A report on the terrorist plot in Britain’s [Telegraph](#) for September 28 noted:

The plot was foiled after Western intelligence agencies, including MI6 [Secret Intelligence Service] and GCHQ, uncovered the plans by senior al-Qaeda operatives in the lawless tribal areas.

The CIA launched a series of attacks against militants in the area using unmanned Predator drones



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armed with Hellfire missiles.

A senior al-Qaeda commander from Egypt was killed in North Waziristan, disrupting the planned attacks.

Britain has remained on a heightened state of alert since January, and Jonathan Evans, the director general of MI5 [Security Service], warned two weeks ago “The fact that there are real plots uncovered on a fairly regular basis demonstrates that there is a persistent intent on the part of Al Qaida and its associates to attack the UK.”

The *Telegraph* also quoted U.S. Secretary for Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, who warned last week that there was “increased activity by a more diverse set of groups and a more diverse set of threats” that was “directed at the West generally” and included the use of firearms.

The increased Western focus on Pakistan as a base for al-Qaeda terrorist operations increases speculation that the ongoing NATO military operation in Afghanistan — originally initiated to deny al-Qaeda a safe haven for its operations — may be expanded into Pakistan.

The third installment of a *Washington Post* series adapted from *Post* reporter Bob Woodward’s expose, *Obama’s Wars*, concentrated on President Obama’s increased interest in Afghanistan’s eastern neighbor since Faisal Shahzad, a Pakistani-born terrorist, tried to detonate a car bomb in New York’s Times Square on May 1. As an article in [Wikipedia](#) notes: “The alleged ties to elements of the Pakistani Taliban sharpened the Obama Administration’s need for retaliatory options including unilateral military strike in Pakistan if a future successful attack was to be traced to Pakistan based militants.”

In *Obama’s Wars*, Woodward noted:

Fears about Pakistan had been driving President Obama’s national security team for more than a year. Obama had said toward the start of his fall 2009.

Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy review that the more pressing U.S. interests were really in Pakistan, a nuclear power with a fragile civilian government, a dominant military and an intelligence service that sponsored terrorist groups.

Not only did al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban operate from safe havens within Pakistan, but — as U.S. intelligence officials had repeatedly warned Obama — terrorist groups were recruiting Westerners whose passports would allow them to move freely in Europe and North America.

Safe havens would no longer be tolerated, Obama had decided. “*We need to make clear to people that the cancer is in Pakistan,*” he declared during an Oval Office meeting on Nov. 25, 2009, near the end of the strategy review. The reason to create a secure, self-governing Afghanistan, he said, was “so the cancer doesn’t spread there.” [Emphasis added.]

In our article about Woodward’s book for this website on September 22, “[Woodward Book Explores Obama Afghanistan Exit Strategy](#),” we cited several excerpts that indicated President Obama was adverse to a long-term presence in Afghanistan and was eager to wind down the war, such as Obama’s statement in an October 2009 meeting about his planned duration for the war in Afghanistan, directed at Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton: “I’m not doing 10 years. I’m not doing long-term nation-building. I am not spending a trillion dollars.”

Which raises the question: How long can the United States continue to hopscotch from one Middle Eastern nation to another — from Iraq, to Afghanistan, to Pakistan — in an effort to track down every last al-Qaeda operative planning a jihad against the United States?



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Mark Phillips, a veteran London-based CBS News correspondent, wrote an interesting analysis of the West's current battle against terrorism on September 29 entitled: "[Beware of Governments Trumpeting Terror Threats.](#)" Noted Phillips:

According to reports attributed to security forces, al Qaeda affiliated groups have been planning Mumbai-style commando attacks in western Europe — and only strikes using unmanned U.S. drones in the lawless tribal areas of Pakistan have derailed those attacks by targeting the terror cells which have been planning them.

After summarizing the commonly accepted premise above, Phillips offers another perspective, including these points:

- Tellingly in this case, neither Britain nor Germany — two of the allegedly targeted countries — have raised their security alert levels.
- There has been an increase in unmanned drone strikes in Pakistan lately and that is being tied to the story of this new threat.
- Germany's interior minister said Wednesday that there are "no concrete pointers to imminent attacks in Germany ... the current pointers do not warrant a change in the assessment danger level." German intelligence sources have told news outlets there that the plot was an "aspiration" but "no substantial plans and no explosives."
- Meanwhile, a well-informed British source went so far as to tell CBS News he's been told by law enforcement officials that the reports of a foiled plot are, "a load of old rubbish which have been planted to justify the increased drone attacks taking place in the tribal areas" of Pakistan.
- Another thing: moving to higher threat alert levels would start to cost money. More security personnel would have to be put on duty. Closing train stations and airports even temporarily costs a fortune. Terror groups can have a destabilizing effect without actually blowing anything up.

While protecting its citizens against foreign attack is certainly one of the few legitimate prerogatives of any sovereign government, citizens also have a right to expect that their government perform this function efficiently and effectively. This might include any number of options including improved internal intelligence and security, more secure borders, a non-interventionist foreign policy, and better diplomacy. If the United States and its allies could defeat the powerful Axis powers in World War II in only four years, why, after nine years, are we no closer to defeating al-Qaeda?

Photo: In this Jan. 31, 2010 file photo, a U.S. Predator drone flies above Kandahar Air Field, southern Afghanistan: AP Images



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