



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on October 24, 2013

Pakistan's Sharif Asks Obama to End Drone Strikes

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (shown, at left), meeting with President Obama at the White House at the culmination of a three-day visit to Washington on October 23, asked U.S. President Barack Obama to end drone strikes on his country.



[VOA News](#) reported that Sharif emphasized “the need for an end to such strikes.” However, Obama did not mention drones in his remarks to reporters.

The president also said he tried to reassure Sharif about the situation in Afghanistan, where U.S. combat forces are scheduled to withdraw next year. Obama said he is “confident” of a solution “that is good for Afghanistan, but also helps to protect Pakistan over the long term.”

A [White House news release](#) issued on the 23rd stated that the two leaders “held wide-ranging discussions ... about the importance of a U.S.-Pakistan partnership built on a foundation of mutual interest and respect” and noted that “our enduring partnership is based on the principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

The news release noted that Sharif thanked President Obama for “the important contribution the United States has made in supporting Pakistan’s development efforts, including through the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009.”

The Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009 (also known as the Kerry-Lugar-Bergman Act) was passed into law on October 15, 2010. It authorized \$1.5 billion dollars per year in non-military aid to Pakistan for the period from 2010 to 2014. It significantly increased the civil aid given to Pakistan from previous years.

Both Obama and Sharif, noted the release, “condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Sharif also “shared his perspective on effective counterterrorism cooperation to achieve the mutual objective of defeating terrorism.”

[Bloomberg News](#) reported that, following their meeting, President Obama told reporters that he and Sharif spent much of the time discussing economic issues, including expanding trade.

“I applauded the prime minister for some of the reforms steps he has already taken,” said Obama. “Not all of them are easy, but they promise to put Pakistan’s finances and economy on a more stable footing.”

The Bloomberg report quoted a statement from Daniel Markey, identified as a senior fellow at the internationalist Council on Foreign Relations and a State Department official during President George W. Bush’s administration, saying: “All the top issues are contentious ones, but there are a variety of economic issues where both sides see eye to eye.”

Reading between the lines, it might be said that even though the Pakistanis do not like the U.S. program of using drone strikes against terrorists within Pakistan, they are still interested in continuing to be the beneficiaries of programs such as the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act.



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Bloomberg reported that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has released details of projects that will assist Pakistan's development of economic resources such as energy.

The new U.S. aid package will include an \$80 million hydroelectric power project that will reportedly provide electricity to 300,000 people in 42,000 homes and help irrigate 16,000 acres of land. The project is part of a longer-range U.S. program in Pakistan to help expand the capacity of the national energy grid by 1,200 megawatts.

Bloomberg also cited a report produced by the London-based Amnesty International saying that it is believed that civilians were among those killed in several of the 45 known drone strikes in Pakistan's North Waziristan region from January 2012 to August 2013. Amnesty International called the deaths "potentially unlawful killings" and said the U.S. should fully disclose the facts and legal basis for each strike.

During a [press briefing](#) held by White House Press Secretary Jay Carney on October 22, a reporter mentioned the Amnesty International report, noting: "It has new details about civilian victims, including a 68-year-old grandmother who was hit while farming with her grandchildren. I'm wondering how the White House sees these types of reports squaring with the President's comments that the U.S. doesn't conduct drone strikes unless there is near certainty that no civilians are killed, and also, what the President plans to say about these drone strikes when he has his meeting with the Pakistani leader tomorrow."

Carney replied, in part:

As a part of his commitment to transparency, in a comprehensive address at NDU on May 23rd of this year, President Obama laid out the legal and policy framework for the U.S. counterterrorism strategy. The President directly addressed the issue of civilian casualties in that speech and he made clear that it is a hard fact that U.S. strikes have resulted in civilian casualties — a risk that exists in every war.

He also made clear that there is a wide gap between U.S. assessments of such casualties and nongovernmental reports. To the extent these reports claim that the U.S. has acted contrary to international law, we would strongly disagree....

In the President's speech, he addressed why the United States may choose to undertake strikes using drones. He said, "Conventional airpower or missiles are far less precise than drones and are likely to cause more civilian casualties and more local outrage. Invasions lead us to be viewed as occupying armies, unleash a torrent of unintended consequences, are difficult to contain, result in large numbers of civilian casualties and ultimately empower those who thrive on violent conflict."...

Of particular note, before we take any counterterrorism strike outside areas of active hostilities, there must be near certainty that no civilians will be killed or injured, and that is the highest standard we can set.

A report published by the [Washington Post](#) on October 23, written by Greg Miller and Bob Woodard (of Watergate fame), citing top-secret CIA documents and Pakistani diplomatic memos obtained by the *Post*, asserts that "top officials in Pakistan's government have for years secretly endorsed the program and routinely received classified briefings on strikes and casualty counts."

The *Post* report states that markings on the documents it collected indicate that "many of them were prepared by the CIA's Counterterrorism Center specifically to be shared with Pakistan's government."



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The documents reportedly “tout the success of strikes that killed dozens of alleged al-Qaeda operatives and assert repeatedly that no civilians were harmed.”

The *Post* also quoted Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, the spokesman for Pakistan’s Foreign Ministry, who restated Prime Minister Sharif’s position that “the drone strikes must stop.”

“Whatever understandings there may or may not have been in the past, the present government has been very clear regarding its policy on the issue,” Chaudhry said. “We regard such strikes as a violation of our sovereignty as well as international law. They are also counter-productive.”

The U.S. drone-strike program has [received criticism at home](#) as well as from abroad. Last November, three members of Congress — former Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio), Rep. Rush Holt Jr. (D-N.J.), and former Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas) — challenged the Obama administration to release documents it uses to justify the legality of drone strikes overseas.

Called a “resolution of inquiry,” the congressmen’s demand would have required Attorney General Eric Holder to “transmit to the House of Representatives not later than 14 days after the date of the adoption of this resolution, any documents and legal memoranda in the Attorney General’s possession relating to the practice of targeted killing of United States citizens and targets abroad.”

“Our strikes are creating a legal precedent that the world will emulate. From Iran to China, other nations are very close to developing comparable technology. If Congress doesn’t act to ensure proper oversight and legal authority for the use of this technology, the consequences could be dire for the American people,” said former Rep. Kucinich.

Photo of Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif meeting with President Barack Obama on Oct. 23: AP Images



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