

U.S. refuses to vacate Pakistan drone base

by Mark Hosenball & Kamran Haider via gan - Reuters *Friday, Jul 1 2011, 1:01am*

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How dare those darkies make demands on US!

The United States is rejecting demands from Pakistani officials that American personnel abandon a military base used by the CIA to stage *[illegal, civilian killing]* drone strikes against suspected militants, U.S. officials told Reuters.

U.S. personnel have not left the remote Pakistani military installation known as Shamsi Air Base and there is no plan for them to do so, *[no Paki tells us what to do]* said a U.S. official familiar with the matter, who asked for anonymity to discuss sensitive material.

"That base is neither vacated nor being vacated," the official said. The information was confirmed by a second U.S. official.

The U.S. declaration that drone operations in Pakistan will continue unabated is the latest twist in a fraught relationship between security authorities in Washington and Islamabad, which has been under increasing strain for months.

Regarding the Shamsi base in particular, Pakistani officials have frequently suggested it is being shuttered, comments that may be aimed at quieting domestic opposition to U.S. military operations using Pakistani soil.

Earlier this week, Pakistani Defense Minister Ahmed Mukhtar told the Financial Times that Pakistan had already stopped U.S. drone operations there.

On Thursday, Mukhtar told Reuters: "When they (U.S. forces) will not operate from there, no drone attacks will be carried out."

He said Islamabad had been pressuring the U.S. to vacate the base even before the May 2 commando raid in which U.S. Navy SEAL commandos killed Osama bin Laden. After the raid, Mukhtar said, "We told them again."

A senior Pakistani military official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, added that when U.S. forces first launched counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan, Pakistan "provided Americans two bases in Jacobabad and Shamsi. Jacobabad base has been vacated for long time ago, but Shamsi is still with them."

"They are vacating it," the official insisted. "Shamsi base was for logistic purpose. They also used it for drones for some time but no drones have been flown from there."

DIFFERENT STORIES

The official said no base in Pakistan was presently used by the Americans for drone operations. But he did not give a precise date for when drones supposedly stopped operating from Shamsi.

The U.S. officials disputed that account. If anything, the Obama administration is moving to a counter-terrorism strategy based more on drone strikes and other covert operations than on deploying large numbers of troops.

On Wednesday, John Brennan, president Barack Obama's top counter-terrorism advisor, promised that in the tribal regions along the Afghan/Pakistan border, the U.S. would continue to "deliver precise and overwhelming force against al Qaeda."

"And when necessary, as the President has said repeatedly, if we have information about the whereabouts of al Qaeda, we will do what is required to protect the United States -- as we did with bin Laden," Brennan said in a speech.

Pakistani officials have faced fierce criticism for tacitly allowing the CIA to conduct drone operations on Pakistani soil. Allegations that civilian bystanders have been killed in drone attacks have only compounded the political problems facing Pakistani authorities.

Brennan rejected suggestions that U.S. drone attacks had caused numerous civilian casualties, claiming that the U.S. had been "exceptionally precise and surgical" in its operations. "Not a single collateral death" had been caused by U.S. counter-terrorism operations over the last year, he said.

U.S. officials have said that since the United States in July 2008 greatly increased the rate of drone-borne missile strikes against suspected militants along the Afghan/Pakistan border, the number of civilian deaths caused by such attacks has totaled under 40. Some Pakistani officials and human rights activists have claimed the death toll is much higher.

(Additional reporting by Sanjeev Miglani and Chris Allbritton; Editing by Warren Strobel and Anthony Boadle)

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[Perhaps some lessons in national sovereignty and international diplomacy are warranted for Washington; remember the threat (paper dragon) China issued in relation to attacks on Pakistan's sovereignty? I bet that's got you worried - LOL.

PAKISTAN IS A WOMAN!]

<http://tinyurl.com/3m8vm38>

Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-2592.html>