

BRENNAN ATTACKS FIRST RESPONDERS AGAIN

In a sane world, John Brennan would be on his best behavior while his nomination to lead the CIA is pending approval in the Senate. Sadly, the world we inhabit has become so insane that Brennan's "best behavior" appears to be a return to drone strikes that come with alarming frequency and include so many missiles fired at each target that it seems likely Brennan has returned to the war crime of attacking first responders who are attempting to rescue survivors at the attack site.

I had noted last May that at least some US drone strikes appeared to have underpinnings that were as political as they were strategic, and my belief in that premise was strengthened as Brennan and the CIA escalated attacks to near daily at the time when US-Pakistan relations had reached a low point during negotiations to re-open NATO supply routes through Pakistan. Although some of the attacks I have described as political seem to have been very poorly targeted, especially the attack that killed 42 people gathered for a jirga just after the release of Raymond Davis, I was encouraged as the attacks slowed and appeared to be targeted on stronger underlying intelligence last fall and this winter.

However, it appears that the pace of attacks is picking up once again, both in frequency and in the number of people killed in each attack. Bill Roggio noted in Long War Journal that the attack on Sunday was already the fourth attack of January in only its sixth day. That attack left 17 dead, although it appears that three separate compounds were targeted in the attack. Today, we have yet another strike, bringing the total to five in eight days. Today's attack, at least according to the Express Tribune, came in two separate waves, and raises the question of

whether the US is once again targeting first responders who are trying to rescue survivors:

US operated armed drones fired missiles in Mir Ali and Essukhel area of North Waziristan in two sorties early on Tuesday morning killing at least eight people, *Express News* reported.

According to *Express News*, the CIA-operated drones first fired at least eight missiles at a compound in Haiderkhel area of Miranshah killing five people. Four people were also injured in the attack.

Locals are sifting through the rubble to recover the bodies of the dead and rescue the injured.

In a second attack in as many hours, drone attacks killed at least three people.

Although the Express Tribune article could be read in a way to believe that the two sorties might not have hit the same compound, an article by Reuters and two different AP articles in the New York Times and Washington Post all make it clear that today's attack concentrated on a single compound. Going back to the information in the Express Tribune article, then, we see eight missiles fired in the first volley. We have no information on how much time passed between missiles or if first responders had time to get to the scene and begin rescue operations. However, the second sortie, described as within two hours, seems quite likely to have been carried out despite the presence of "Locals" described by the Express Tribune as "sifting through the rubble to recover the bodies of the dead and rescue the injured".

Such is the moral rectitude of the man who has been nominated to be the Director of the CIA. He has once again knowingly targeted first responders who were attempting to rescue survivors from a previous attack.

Update: Long War Journal now reports that today's strikes were on two different compounds. The primary conclusion about targeting first responders still stands, since it still is being reported that eight missiles were fired at the first compound.