

White House Admits Airstrikes Killed Up to 116 Civilians



Washington, July 2 (RHC)-- U.S. aerial strikes “outside areas of active hostilities” have killed up to 116 civilians since President Barack Obama took office in 2009, according to a report by the White House. The strikes were conducted by drones, traditional aircraft or cruise missiles in Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen and other African countries, shows the report which was released on Friday.

From January 20, 2009 to December 31, 2015, 473 strikes were conducted that killed between 64 and 116 civilians, the report says, claiming the strikes also took the lives of between 2,372 and 2,581 combatants. The report acknowledges that the civilian death toll provided by human rights organizations “generally estimates significantly higher figures.”

“As the statement today from the DNI (Director of National Intelligence) notes, in releasing these figures, the US Government also acknowledges that there are differences between US Government assessments and reporting from non-governmental organizations on non-combatant deaths resulting from US operations,” the White House said.

Also, the DNI said that “the figures released today should be considered in light of the inherent limitations on the ability to determine the precise number of combatant and non-combatant deaths given the non-permissive environments in which these strikes often occur.”

Federico Borello of the Center for Civilians in Conflict said that “the numbers reported by the White House today simply don’t add up, and we’re disappointed by that.”

“We’re concerned that as more countries gain access to armed drone technology, it’s more likely that drones will be used as a first response in conflicts and more likely civilians will pay the price,” Borello added. The new report does not include Iraq, Afghanistan or Syria, where the Obama administration has conducted thousands of air attacks.

Also on Friday, the White House released an executive order outlining the steps and measures to better prevent non-combatants from being killed in drone strikes.

“These steps include promulgating an Executive Order on United States Policy on Pre- and Post-Strike Measures to Address Civilian Casualties in US Operations Involving the Use of Force, as well as releasing aggregate data regarding both the number of strikes undertaken during this Administration by the US Government against terrorist targets located outside areas of active hostilities and the range of assessed combatant and non-combatant deaths resulting from those strikes.”

The U.S. claims the airstrikes target members of al-Qaeda and other militants, but according to local officials and witnesses, civilians have been the victims of the attacks in most cases.

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