

Since the 28th May the United States has carried out seven unmanned airstrikes:

June 10th: U.S. unmanned aircraft targeted a 'sprawling compound' in the village of Norak, North Waziristan, killing three suspected terrorists. Whilst the compound was known to be used by the Taliban no senior figures were reported killed. However on June 17th the Long War Journal reported that two al Qaeda commanders and a Turkish fighter were killed in this attack. The al Qaida casualties were confirmed as Sheikh Inshanullah, an 'Arab al Qaeda commander' and Ibrahim, commander of the Fursan-i-Mohammed Group. All three deaths were confirmed in a statement from Taifatul Mansura Group, a Turkish jihadist organisation operating along the Af-Pak border.

June 11th: Unmanned aircraft attacked two villages in North Waziristan. The airstrike targeted Taliban safe houses in the villages of Bahader Khel and Khaddi, killing eleven and four terrorists respectively. Three 'foreigners' were reported killed in Bahader Khel, and two in Khaddi. The term 'foreigner' is used by Pakistani security forces to describe Arab or Central Asian al Qaida operatives. No senior al Qaeda or Taliban figures were reported killed at this time.

June 19th: An unmanned airstrike attacked a Taliban safe house in the Mir Ali area of North Waziristan, killing 16 terrorists. Several 'foreigners' were killed in the strike, including an al Qaeda commander known as Abu Ahmed. Alongside Ahmed, twelve insurgents belonging to Islamic Jihad Union were also killed. This organisation is a splinter group of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Members of Islamic Jihad Union are predominantly of German or Turkish origin.

June 26th: Unmanned U.S. aircraft killed two militants in an attack on a Taliban compound in the town of Mir Ali, North Waziristan. Mir Ali is a known stronghold of the Iraqi al Qaeda leader known as Abu Akash.

June 27th: An unmanned aircraft fired two missiles at a 'known militant compound' in the village of Tabbi Tolkhel, North Waziristan. Among the five people reported killed was a local Taliban commander identified as Hamza Mehsud.

June 29th: Seven terrorists were killed in an airstrike on a known al Qaeda compound in the village of Karikot, South Waziristan. An Egyptian al Qaeda operative known as Hawza al Jawfi, two Punjabi fighters, and five local Taliban fighters are said to have been killed in the strike. Jawfi is said to have led Jundallah, a Karachi-based terror group with close ties to al Qaeda.

After two months of relative quiet the United States appears to have reinvigorated its unmanned campaign against al Qaida, the Taliban and other insurgents. According to the Long War Journal the United States has so far carried out 45 unmanned airstrikes throughout 2010. It seems likely that U.S. airstrikes in 2010 will exceed the 53 undertaken the previous year.

The deployment of unmanned aircraft within South Asia has recently experienced a change in dynamics. On the 29th June, India issued a Request for Information (RFI) for 'state of the art,' stealthy, high-endurance unmanned combat aerial vehicles. Currently, India deploys 'killer' drones like the Israeli-made Harpy. These aircraft detect and destroy targets by functioning like cruise missiles. India also deploys Heron and Searcher II aircraft for surveillance activities on its borders with Pakistan and China. However India's RFI suggests that they are interested in acquiring more sophisticated aircraft akin to those used by the United States. Should India make such purchases it would be interesting to observe changes in its regional relations and the Kashmir dispute.