

**TRACKING DRONE
STRIKES IN AFGHANISTAN:
A SCOPING STUDY**
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Examining changes in military engagement



The Remote Control project is a project of the **Network for Social Change** hosted by **Oxford Research Group**. The project examines changes in military engagement, in particular the use of drones, special forces, private military companies and cyber warfare.

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism is an independent not-for-profit organisation. The Bureau pursues journalism which is of public benefit, undertaking in depth research into the governance of public, private and third sector organisations and their influence.

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Cover image: An MQ-9 Reaper comes into land at Kandahar Airbase in Helmand, Afghanistan. Creative Commons, Source: UK Ministry of Defence

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Executive Summary

- Armed drones (remotely piloted aircraft) are an important weapon in the Afghan conflict. The country has seen more than 1,000 drone strikes, carried out by both US and UK forces. As full-scale operations wind down, and an expected slimmed-down US force takes on counter-terrorism operations, drones are likely to be a prominent aspect of the continuing US presence.

- Little is known about where the drones strike, or who they kill. This report explores the feasibility of using open-source materials to track drone strikes and their casualties in Afghanistan, using established techniques developed by the Bureau to track secret drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen.

- Numerous organisations track civilian casualties in Afghanistan, and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan earlier this year reported a steep rise in civilian drone deaths. But nobody systematically publishes insurgent and civilian deaths from drones on a strike-by-strike basis. Neither the US nor UK authorities publishes data on the casualties of their drone operations.

- The research team interviewed journalists and researchers about the context in which strikes occur, the challenges of researching them, and possible approaches for investigating. Interviewees were asked about likely future scenarios, and many predicted drones will play a larger role.

- The Bureau also conducted a 'sample month' exercise to examine how comprehensively drone strikes are reported. The team gathered media reports and other open-source data on all the strikes occurring in September 2013. As we have found in other theatres including Yemen, it is hard to reliably distinguish drone strikes from other air strikes on the basis of open-source reports, so we gathered reports of both.

- This revealed that reporting of air strikes is far less comprehensive than in other

theatres: almost 60% of reported air strikes are effectively reported by a single source, and many strikes appear to go unreported. Based on available reporting, it appears that drone strikes are significantly more likely to kill civilians than conventional air strikes.

- The study concludes that media reports would not be sufficient as a primary source for developing a full record of drone strikes in Afghanistan. Instead, this would require a network of local contacts who could gather data such as eyewitness reports where possible, and data compiled by local sources.

- However, owing to the safety risks and the difficulty in distinguishing drone strikes from air strikes, even these steps would be likely to be incomplete. Instead, any such effort would also require a sustained engagement with the military forces involved to encourage them to release their own data for public scrutiny. Partnering with academics or NGOs could help to facilitate this process.

- Despite the considerable difficulties involved, it is clear that developing a strike-by-strike database of attacks in Afghanistan is vitally needed. Over the past three years the Bureau and others have pieced together a detailed picture of drone usage in secret wars, revealing controversial tactics and questionable strategies. Without similar efforts for Afghanistan, this picture remains frustratingly incomplete.

Introduction

This report assesses the feasibility of a strike-by-strike survey of drone strikes in Afghanistan, modelled on the Bureau's existing databases of drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia.¹

We know from our previous experience tracking drone strikes that each country presents its own research challenges and has its own unique set of sources. In order to explore what these might be in Afghanistan, we have created a database compiling what has been reported in the media and other open sources about drone and air strikes that reportedly took place in September 2013.

We have also interviewed journalists and human rights researchers to gather their views on the challenges of carrying out such work in Afghanistan, and the broader context in which the drone strikes take place.

The report provides an overview of current drone operations in Afghanistan and examines how these are likely to develop as the drawdown by international troops approaches. It also surveys the existing casualty counting and explores how this may be accessed.

Why it matters: The importance of analysing the use of drones in the Afghan conflict

The use of drones in warfare is a relatively new phenomenon. At present only three nations - the US, the UK and Israel - are known to have carried out armed drone strikes. But a recent report by the Council on Foreign Relations noted that other nations including China and Iran are believed to have deployed armed drones without firing missiles, and countries including India, Pakistan, Turkey and a collaboration between Switzerland and EU member states including France, Italy, Spain, Greece and Sweden have all announced that they are developing armed drones of their own.²

The US has repeatedly claimed that drones offer a forensic level of accuracy due to their ability to loiter for lengthy periods of time, gathering intelligence and tracking a target before an attack. John Brennan, during his time as President Obama's chief counter-terrorism adviser, described them as a 'surgical' weapon, capable of hunting and eliminating targets with minimal civilian

casualties.³

Yet the armed forces that operate drones publish no data on casualties to corroborate these claims. The Bureau has tracked drone attacks in Pakistan and Yemen, and has found evidence that suggests hundreds of civilians have been killed in drone attacks. And the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which conducts independent investigations of claims of civilian deaths in the country, has found credible reports of non-combatant deaths in drone strikes.

Amassing and analysing data on a strike-by-strike basis reveals important trends and tactics - such as the controversial tactic in Pakistan of carrying out 'follow-up' strikes targeting rescuers, a tactic that has been labelled a potential war crime by a UN special rapporteur.⁴ It also allows for analysis and comparison of the use of drones between different theatres, including both covert conflicts and 'hot' battlefields, enabling the public to scrutinise the claims of exceptional accuracy and to question why, for example, a significant decline in civilian casualties in one theatre (Pakistan) is not matched by comparable declines elsewhere (Yemen).

The data the Bureau and others have gathered on drone attacks in covert war situations has significantly informed the public debate. But this debate has largely focused on Pakistan and Yemen. Surprisingly, there is much less known about the use of drones in an official theatre of war than in these covert conflicts, as there is no comprehensive record of drone use in Afghanistan, as this report will show. This lack of transparent data stifles wider debate.

Although casualty data has not been published, it is recorded, and last year an analysis carried out on behalf of the US military using classified ISAF data revealed the troubling finding that missions carried out by drones are more likely than manned aircraft to cause civilian casualties, by a factor of 10.⁵ However, the forensic detail of this report remains classified.

The current lack of disclosure creates an accountability vacuum around civilian casualties.⁶ This is evident from

1 Bureau of Investigative Journalism, *Get the Data: Drone Wars* <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/category/projects/drones/>

2 Micah Zenko and Sarah Kreps, *Council on Foreign Relations, Limiting Armed Drone Proliferation*, June 2014 (p. 3) <http://www.cfr.org/drones/limiting-armed-drone-proliferation/p33127>

3 John Brennan, *United States Homeland Security Adviser, Obama Administration Counterterrorism Strategy* (June 29, 2011), <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/AdministrationCo>.

4 Chris Woods and Christina Lamb, *Bureau of Investigative Journalism/Sunday Times, CIA tactics in Pakistan include targeting civilians and rescuers*, February 4 2012 <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2012/02/04/obama-terror-drones-cia-tactics-in-pakistan-include-targeting-rescuers-and-funerals/>

5 Dr Larry Lewis, *Center for Naval Analyses, Drone Strikes: Civilian Casualty Considerations (Unclassified Executive Summary)*, June 18 2013 https://www.cna.org/sites/default/files/research/Drone_Strikes.pdf

6 UNAMA, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2013, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, February 2014 (p. 46-48) <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/>

the findings of the current UNAMA report. No force has acknowledged responsibility for the attacks, but the British government's statements on civilian casualties implicitly disclaim any responsibility for the incidents identified by UNAMA. But the US has not commented on or publicly acknowledged the civilian deaths, apparently denying the families of victims the chance for accountability and redress.

Drones in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is the most heavily drone-bombed country in the world. Data released to the Bureau in 2012 by the US military showed that over 1,000 drone strikes conducted by British and US-operated drones have hit the country - more than in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia combined.⁷ But little is known about where drones have struck, or who they have killed.

Military data shows how drones have played an increasingly important role in the Afghan air campaign in recent years. In 2011, drones fired 5% of all missiles fired in air strikes. By 2012, this had risen to 18%.⁸ In March 2013, the military reclassified its data on drone strikes, so we have no clear insight into how drones have been used since then, nor do we know how many strikes have been conducted in total.

The US has declined to specify how many drones it operates in Afghanistan, but its fleet includes both the MQ-1 Predator and the more advanced MQ-9 Reaper drone.⁹ Britain operates a small fleet of 10 armed Reaper drones. British pilots have also operated US drones, both through a long-running secondment programme, and by borrowing them on an ad hoc basis.¹⁰

Britain's drone fleet is small but highly active, having carried out over 300 drone strikes between 2008 and 2013.¹¹ Figures released to the British parliament in July

2014 show the central role occupied by drones in the UK's air campaign: remotely piloted aircraft fired more than 80% of the precision-guided munitions fired by UK aircraft between 2011 and 2014.¹²



A British MQ-9 Reaper drone prepares for takeoff in Afghanistan. Image: Creative Commons, Source: UK Ministry of Defence on flickr

We know markedly little about the details of those strikes, though the campaign group Drone Wars UK is due to go to a tribunal in an attempt to overturn the Ministry of Defence's consistent refusal to release information on where and when British drone strikes took place.

There is also no data released on the overall casualties of these strikes, but the UK government has repeatedly stated that it is aware of just four non-combatant deaths in British-piloted drone strikes - all of these took place in a single attack in March 2011.

Despite the claimed exceptional accuracy of drones, reports of civilian casualties in drone strikes persist in Afghanistan - and the 2013 UN report on civilian deaths in the country showed they rose alarmingly, tripling compared to the previous year.¹³ Drones accounted for a third of all civilian deaths in Afghan air strikes - 45 non-combatants died in 2013. This is a greater proportion than any other type of air strike. Data released to the Bureau by UNAMA showed that eight civilians were killed in the first half of 2014 - a large fall compared to the same period of the previous year, but still representing almost a third of all air strike deaths.

Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf

7 Chris Woods and Alice K Ross, *Bureau of Investigative Journalism, Revealed: US and Britain launched 1,200 drone strikes in recent wars, December 4 2012* <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2012/12/04/revealed-us-and-britain-launched-1200-drone-strikes-in-recent-wars/>

8 *Ibid*

9 A briefing on unmanned systems prepared for the US Congress in January 2012 shows that at this point the Department of Defense operated 54 Reaper and 161 Predator armed drones. But it was not clear how many of these are in operation in the Afghan theatre, nor how many armed drones other agencies, such as the CIA, own or operate in the theatre. (source: Jeremiah Gertler, *Congressional Research Service, US Unmanned Aerial Systems*, p. 8)

10 Hansard, *HC Deb April 24 2013, Vol 561 Col 906W* http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130424/text/130424w0001.htm#130424w0001.htm_wqn18

11 Hansard, *HC Deb September 5 2013, Vol 567, Col 481W* http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm130905/text/130905w0001.htm#130905w0001.htm_spnw86

12 Hansard, *HC Deb July 7 2014, Vol 584, Col 138W 71* http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm140707/text/140707w0006.htm#140707w0006.htm_wqn213

13 United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, *Afghanistan Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: 2013* (p. 46) http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf

The context

We approached Afghan and international journalists, as well as human rights organisations, to understand the context in which strikes take place, the challenges of reporting strikes in Afghanistan, and the possible future of drone strikes in the country. We gathered their views through informal interviews, aiming to get as broad a sense of the issues as possible.

- Jeremy Kelly is currently the Kabul correspondent for The Times (London).
- Javed Hamim Kakar is a Senior Editor at Pajhwok news agency.
- Ahmadshah Ghanizada is Deputy Chief Editor at Khaama Press.
- Horia Mosadiq is Afghanistan researcher for Amnesty International.
- Rachel Reid is director of the Regional Policy Initiative on Afghanistan and Pakistan at the Open Society Foundation.
- We have also spoken to other representatives of international media organisations and humanitarian organisations on background terms.

Current trends in drone usage

The number of air strikes carried out across the country has fallen steeply in the past year. Data provided to the Bureau by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which commands international operations in Afghanistan, shows that the number of munitions fired by all aircraft - including drones, but also fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters - in 2013 was half that of the peak, in 2011. The data does not disaggregate between drone strikes and those carried out by other aircraft.

The Times' Jeremy Kelly notes that air strikes have largely ceased in many parts of the country. 'We've seen a massive drop in the use of airpower since late last year - it's fairly nonexistent in the North and East, areas [that have] transitioned to Afghan forces,' he said.

'Americans are saying "no" to air strikes called in by the Afghan National Army - they're not wasting their time with mid-level IED makers. They're trying to get Afghan security forces in a scenario where [they can deal with incidents without US assistance] - they're not going to have the airpower forever.'

However, several sources agreed that with the Coalition forces' drawdown approaching and key eastern provinces almost completely under Taliban control, there is an increasing reliance on drone strikes and other air operations in the provinces bordering Pakistan, including Kunar, Nuristan, Wardak, Paktia and Khost.

Ahmadshah Ghanizada said strikes tend to target suspected militants belonging to the Taliban and the Haqqani Network, a Taliban-allied insurgent group,

along the border with Pakistan.

Ghanizada said that although in the past reports of civilian casualties have been common, with non-combatants allegedly frequently used as human shields by militant groups, such reports have become less frequent in recent months.

However, other sources disagreed over the prevalence of civilian casualties in drone strikes. UNAMA's most recent casualty report found that civilian deaths tripled in 2013.

Rachel Reid, of the Open Society Foundation, raised concerns that the US's closure of its forward operating bases could impact intelligence-gathering. 'As the US withdraws from Afghanistan, the networks of informants that provide human intelligence on potential targets is dismantled, the quality of intelligence that informs the strikes will degrade, making misidentifications and civilian casualties more likely, particularly in Afghanistan, but to some degree in Pakistan.'

Drones after drawdown



In May President Obama said he wants more than 9,800 US troops to remain in Afghanistan after the end of 2014. Image: Creative Commons, Source: cmccain202dc on flickr

The role of international forces in Afghanistan will change at the end of this year, as almost all Coalition troops leave. The US and Afghanistan are currently negotiating what role US forces will play in the country next year and beyond, through an arrangement called the bilateral security agreement (BSA). Although this has yet to be finalised at the time of writing, both candidates in Afghanistan's ongoing presidential elections had indicated that they are willing to sign the deal.

In May 2014 President Obama told reporters that this force would comprise 9,800 troops, servicemen training the Afghan National Army, as well as special forces troops engaged in counter-terrorism missions.¹⁴ This force, which will be accompanied by a NATO contingent, is expected to halve after a year, leading to

¹⁴ Karen DeYoung, *Washington Post*, *Obama to leave 9,800 US troops in Afghanistan*, May 27 2014 http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/obama-to-leave-9800-us-troops-in-afghanistan-senior-official-says/2014/05/27/57f37e72-e5b2-11e3-a86b-362fd5443d19_story.html

full withdrawal by the end of 2016.

The counter-terrorism component would focus on tracking al Qaeda, rather than tackling other Afghan militant groups such as the Haqqani Network, anonymous defence officials told the Washington Post.¹⁵

The analysts and reporters the Bureau spoke to agreed overwhelmingly that the counter-terrorism section of the US mission is likely to rely strongly on drone surveillance and strikes. This is partly because unmanned aircraft are well-suited to the task of tracking individuals and small groups. They offer the ability to conduct intensive visual and telecommunications surveillance of large swathes of territory, including hard-to-reach regions, with no risk to personnel. Unlike a jet, drones can loiter overhead, waiting for the right moment to attack, when the target does not appear to be in the vicinity of civilians.

Horia Mosadiq pointed out a further advantage over jets: drones are 'small and easier to be flown from a smaller airport, whereas for jet fighters, you need bigger airports with more equipment,' she said. For a small force attempting to monitor an area more than two and a half times the size of the UK, this is a significant advantage.

Analysts were generally pessimistic about Afghanistan's prospects following withdrawal, anticipating violence and human rights violations from both the government forces and the insurgents. These concerns extended to the possible role of drones.

As the established reporting and casualty recording infrastructure is dismantled and the role of special forces increases, Mosadiq fears that getting information on casualties will become even more difficult than at present. 'Our experience from the past few years has shown that these groups are not accountable to anyone, and it is difficult to get any information from them,' she said.

Drone operations in Afghanistan are currently far from transparent: although at various points limited information has emerged concerning total numbers of strikes, in general the international forces have shown a marked reluctance to discuss the use of drones. However there appears to be a significant likelihood that these operations will become even less transparent - and accountable - from 2015 onwards.

Who's counting the casualties?

After 13 years of continuous combat, there are a number of national and international organisations that count casualties, particularly civilian casualties, in Afghanistan. These include UNAMA, ISAF, and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). Their casualty recording in this area is examined below. But there is no organisation that systematically counts, and makes publicly available, the specific casualties of drone attacks, both civilian and insurgent.

Challenges to information-gathering

The poor security situation in many parts of the country severely hinders reporting of drone strikes and other incidents. Some areas are entirely controlled by the Taliban - including those that are most prone to drone strikes - and so are extremely dangerous for journalists, who often find themselves confined to the provincial capitals.

This has become more problematic as international forces have started to pull-out of Afghanistan. As troops, particularly combat units, have pulled-back and out of remoter areas, so the media has lost an important level of protection and has been forced to pull back its operations too.

The more remote provinces, such as Nuristan, are particularly difficult to report on, the Times' Kelly said. '[There's] very little phone coverage, few people with phones. Those who do [have phones] are generally just in the provincial capital, where strikes don't take place. It's similar, but to a lesser extent, in Kunar.

Incidents sometimes get reported by local media through Twitter, and Kelly describes how local contacts in the provinces will sometimes call with news of an attack. 'They generally know that when foreigners kill Afghans, it's news,' he said.

Gathering information from those affected by drone strikes can also be complicated, Amnesty's Mosadiq observed. In Afghanistan's more remote districts, people are commonly illiterate and poorly educated, which impedes the level of detail they can provide about the attack.

A further challenge to gathering information from eyewitnesses lies in the Taliban's suspicion of communication with the outside world. Mosadiq describes how Afghans she spoke to were afraid of lodging complaints about drone strikes, telling her: 'If the Taliban know that we went to the government and we went to complain, they will kill us ... Once the Taliban see you leaving [your town] to come to Jalalabad [for example], they sense that they can brand you as a spy who will pass information to the Americans, and it can put your life in danger.'

15 *Ibid*

Because of such challenges, it is quite common for strikes to go entirely unreported in the media, several sources said. This is supported by our analysis of drone strikes in our sample month. Data provided to the Bureau by ISAF shows that in September 2013, aircraft fired 232 missiles. The media reporting identifies only 32 attacks. A single attack can include several missiles - but this still indicates that many incidents are going unreported.

Where strikes are reported, Kelly said that reports of the deaths of women and children tend to be reliable: 'I've never come across a case where women and kids were reported dead and that turned out not to be the case.'

However, reports of other deaths can be 'a little bit more complicated', and verifying whether adult men were civilian or insurgent can be very difficult, particularly in more remote provinces, he added. 'We've always struggled to find out info about some of these strikes - who they've killed, who was 'bad', who was 'good'. It's far easier in Helmand or Kandahar,' he said.

Official reporting

Drone strikes in Afghanistan take place in a situation of non-international armed conflict, unlike those monitored by the Bureau in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, where the legal basis for the strikes is more contentious. Strikes take place under a lower category of classification and therefore the barriers to official sources - whether Afghan or international - sharing data should, in theory, be lower. Several of the media reports we identified featured named local officials speaking on the record - something that is almost unheard-of in Pakistan.

But experts we spoke to warned that even official record-keeping is often incomplete. 'It's amazing to me, because we've been in this war for more than a dozen years, and basic daily incidents [are] not entirely well collected,' said one analyst. The disparity between ISAF's estimates of civilian casualties in an attack on September 7 2013 and UNAMA's view of the same incident is indicative of the potential discrepancies that could exist even in casualty counts of ISAF engagements. This is detailed later in this report.

The analyst suggested that casualty data collected by Nato and others is 'starting to look a little bit messier as these institutions lose their eyes on the ground' as the international forces disengage.

A further potential source of information is records maintained by central and local government. In Pakistan the Bureau has uncovered record-keeping by central government as well as examples of ad hoc casualty recording by local officials.

An experienced Afghanistan reporter and an influential blogger both suggested that a promising area to explore would be any records kept by the various branches of local and central government. Governors, police chiefs and intelligence chiefs at both provincial and district

level might record incidents taking place in their district. The Interior and Defence ministries might each keep records, the reporter added.

The Bureau's attempts to contact local government departments and the Interior Ministry highlighted the importance of having speakers of Dari and Pashto on the research team - while in Pakistan, we have found that officials tend to speak excellent English, this is not the case in Afghanistan.

The National Directorate of Security sometimes confirms drone strikes in which alleged militants were targeted, Ahmadshah Ghanizada said, but it is unclear whether the department maintains comprehensive records of past events.

Provincial officials are the most commonly cited sources in the reports found in the cuttings search, and Ghanizada said: 'We find them reliable most of the time.' However, these accounts sometimes differ from Taliban reports of civilian casualties.

Intelligence agencies also sometimes provide information. But these officials are unlikely to keep records of past incidents, reporters and human rights researchers agreed. The general standard of record-keeping in Afghanistan is poor.

A researcher described visiting the central morgue of a provincial capital and asking who had died. He summarised the manager's response as: 'Most people who are killed are just buried really quickly by their relatives or their comrades, and hardly any of them end up in the morgue. Why would we care about keeping a detailed list?'

While casualty recording is often better in areas that have had extensive exposure to NGOs and other international organisations, such improvements are likely to have limited penetration into the rural areas, where many of the drone strikes have occurred.

We were also told that even if some officials choose to keep records, the fact that large areas are off-limits to the government means that they are unlikely to have comprehensive access to information about the dead.

Distinguishing drone strikes from other violence

Drones are not the only form of aerial attack that occurs in Afghanistan: helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft also carry out strikes. There are also ground-based attacks such as shelling by Afghan, international and insurgent forces. It is often unclear from the available reporting whether a particular attack was carried out by a drone.

'The problem is that when something goes bang here, it's a very confused place, so sometimes it's not even clear if something was dropped from the sky or if it's an IED,' an analyst said.

The Times's Jeremy Kelly describes talking to victims of air strikes by phone and struggling to establish

whether the missiles had been launched from a drone. Sometimes a drone could be in the air at the same time as a fighter jet, and local residents would not know which one had fired.

‘If it’s a helicopter they’ll know - it’s noisy, close to the ground and has a big rotor. [But distinguishing] drones versus A-10s can be difficult.’

But it seems clear that in many circumstances, local residents can distinguish between a drone and a jet, and there are incidents where they can more conclusively put an attack down to a drone. Kelly described an incident where all the residents he had spoken to had described a strike as a drone strike. A fighter jet would not be capable of following a target on a motorbike, for example, but a drone could loiter. Residents understood that drones were smaller than jets and recognised their distinctive high-pitched sound, like a lawnmower or a bee.

‘People absolutely know,’ said Horia Mosadiq. ‘They can tell the difference between drones and air strikes by the noise... with drones, it’s like ... deafening mosquitoes, but with jets or helicopters it’s a very different sound. They even know the type of helicopters - they can say, “It was a Cobra helicopter, with a machine gun on it,” or, “It was an Apache helicopter with rockets”.’

There are specific contexts when drones are less commonly used, Kelly added: in battle situations, helicopters or A-10 aircraft are usually used, while drones tend to be used for pursuit of individuals.

The Bureau faces comparable challenges tracking drone strikes in Yemen, where both the CIA and military unit JSOC operate drone strikes, alongside fixed-wing air strikes operated by the US, Yemen’s own decrepit air force and, according to some reports, the Saudi air force. It is not clear whether ‘drone’ has become a colloquialism for aerial attacks of all kinds. But it is important to attempt to establish which weapons system was used, since this goes some way towards establishing who was responsible for the attack - only the US operates armed drones in Yemen.

In our work tracking strikes in Yemen the Bureau categorises drone strikes as either ‘confirmed’ or ‘possible’. Where a US government source or named senior Yemeni source acknowledges that an attack was carried out by drone, we will class this as confirmed. Where three different types of other source - such as anonymous Yemeni officials, tribal sources, or eyewitnesses - all report a strike as being carried out by a drone, we also regard this as confirmed. All other strikes are recorded as possible drone strikes.

Even if the Bureau establishes that an attack was carried out by drone in Yemen, this does not fully reveal who is responsible for the attack, since two separate forces operate drones in the country - the CIA and JSOC. On occasion US officials, speaking to the press on condition of anonymity, have indicated which force is responsible, but such leaks are occasional and highly selective.

In Afghanistan, both the UK and US operate armed drones, so establishing whether a strike was carried out by drone does not reveal conclusively who carried out the attack. To complicate matters further, US drone strikes could be carried out by the Air Force on behalf of conventional forces, Special Forces or the CIA. While details about the location, context and purported target of a strike might enable us to make an educated guess about who carried out a particular strike, without routine official disclosure of data on drone strikes it is impossible to say conclusively which force carried out which attack.

September 2013: An exercise in casualty recording

Sample month: methodology

To establish the scope of difficulties that might arise in gathering strike-by-strike data on drone strikes in Afghanistan, we decided to focus on gathering data relating to a single month. This seemed an interval that was long enough to give us an idea of the challenges that could arise, while short enough to be manageable in the time available for the scoping study.

The intention was to learn about the various issues which might be encountered in a longer retrospective survey of drone strikes in Afghanistan; the sample month is not supposed to be taken as indicative of drone activity during a wider time period.

The month of September 2013 was selected partly because the month includes a high-profile drone strike in which civilians were killed. This enables us to compare the reporting of a rare high-profile incident with other attacks.

Wherever possible, we gathered information from official sources and other casualty-counting organisations. We also conducted a survey of all available media sources, using techniques developed through our previous casualty recording experience.

Because of the difficulties in reliably distinguishing air strikes from drone strikes, we have recorded all air strikes in the data and have provided as much information as we can gather on the possible weapons system used.

The full data is presented in **Appendix 1**.

Casualty counting organisations

Below is a summary of the main national and international organisations that record drone strikes and casualties, and the work they principally carry out.

Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)

AIHRC is a national human rights institution mandated

by Article 58 of the country's constitution.¹⁶ Through a network of 14 regional and provincial offices, it investigates reports of civilian casualties including air strikes. Its database of civilian casualties does not specifically count those killed in drone strikes, but does provide overall numbers for those killed in air strikes.

The AIHRC provided the Bureau with statistics for September 2013 for use in our sample month of data. It recorded 15 civilians killed by air strikes and 0 injured.

Mohammed Shafiq Noori, the Special Investigation Team Leader, said the figures were 'not final or concrete' and that some incidents may have been missed as a result of the poor security situation preventing officers from reaching rural areas.

ISAF (CIVCAS database)

NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) tracks civilian casualties internally through a unit named the Civilian Casualty Tracking Cell. Military units report incidents that may have caused civilian casualties, and these are further investigated through local officials, medical personnel and other sources.¹⁷

US Central Command has occasionally released the results of these investigations pertaining to US-piloted drones, with redactions, for a handful of incidents in which high civilian casualties are alleged. Where these have been published, they are highly detailed records of the events that provide a valuable insight into the incidents.¹⁸ However, in order to negotiate the declassification and release of the relevant files, researchers must know that strikes took place - and due to the current limitations of the reporting this is far from guaranteed. Looking at these reports alone would also yield a partial picture of the use of drones in the conflict.

ISAF does not routinely publish its data on casualties. However, in 2010 a reporter for Science spent a significant amount of time directly embedded with ISAF, and was provided with ISAF's CIVCAS database, showing monthly totals of civilians killed and injured, broken down by region, month and incident type. In this data release, which was published in full, casualties are not disaggregated by the type of air attack.¹⁹

The overall ISAF casualty data finds a significantly lower civilian casualty toll than independent recording

¹⁶ AIHRC 2010-2013 Strategic Plan, <http://www.aihrc.org.af/home/strategic/359>

¹⁷ The Center for Civilians in Conflict explains the process in detail in its report *Civilian Harm Tracking: Analysis of ISAF efforts in Afghanistan, May 2014* <http://civiliansinconflict.org/resources/pub/ISAF-civilian-harm-tracking>

¹⁸ See, for example, David S Cloud, *Los Angeles Times, Anatomy of an Afghan war tragedy, April 10 2011* <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/apr/10/world/la-fg-afghanistan-drone-20110410>

¹⁹ J Bohannon, *Science, Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan: Data and Documents* <https://www.sciencemag.org/content/331/6022/1256/suppl/DC1>

by UNAMA and others, and this gap is particularly pronounced for air strikes. UNAMA found 529 civilian deaths in air strikes in 2009 and 2010, while ISAF identified 136. A British officer speaking on behalf of ISAF acknowledged that ISAF's data was limited as it did not have ground access in all provinces, and post-strike assessments were often conducted from the air.²⁰

We have approached ISAF for the casualty data relating to September 2013, our sample month, which after several weeks has yet to be released, although ISAF has not officially declined to provide it.

Although ISAF did not release casualty data, it did release figures to the Bureau (see Appendix 2) showing that 232 missiles were released by all ISAF aircraft during the month, although it declined to separate these into drone strikes and manned aircraft.

The Bureau has obtained ISAF's data pertaining to September 2013 from a separate source. This reveals that ISAF records one close air support engagement that killed civilians, taking place within Regional Command East. It records three civilians killed and three wounded. This appears to refer to the strike that hit Watapur in Kunar province on September 7. UNAMA found that 11 civilians were killed in this incident. This indicates that the under-counting identified by Science may persist.

Royal Air Force

The British Royal Air Force (RAF) has in the past published details of selected Reaper engagements, alongside other incidents, on its website as part of weekly Operational Updates. Until September 2012, outline details of attacks were published several times a month, according to research by Drone Wars UK.²¹ These frequently described engagements without specifying how many people were killed.

An MoD spokesman told the Bureau in summer 2013: 'The RAF website's Operational Update section is not and never has been a complete record of all RAF activity, rather it is a weekly part-summary of operations which endeavours to give a snapshot of current operations.'

The Operational Update section appears to have stopped routinely publishing details of Reaper engagements after September 2012. No Reaper incidents for September 2013 are listed in the updates.

UNAMA

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) investigates reports of civilian casualties arising from all kinds of conflict-related incidents,

²⁰ J Bohannon, *Science, Counting the Dead in Afghanistan, March 11 2011* <https://www.sciencemag.org/content/331/6022/1256.full>

²¹ Drone Wars UK, *UK Drone Strikes* <http://dronewars.net/uk-drone-strike-list/>

including actions by pro- and anti-government forces. These often involve on-site investigations, as well as discussions with local officials, military sources and medical staff.

UNAMA does not publish detailed reports of every incident. Its annual and mid-year reports provide statistics on the numbers of civilian casualties in various categories of incidents, and narratives on selected incidents.²² These include air strikes and, since 2012, some incidents which UNAMA has identified as drone strikes. UNAMA's reports point out that it is often unclear whether attacks were caused by drone or by manned aircraft. It also only counts civilian deaths that have been confirmed by three separate types of source, so it is likely to underreport civilian deaths. UNAMA does not count insurgent deaths.

In its annual report, UNAMA identified 45 civilians killed in 19 drone strikes in 2013. It notes that the true number may be higher as 'UNAMA is not always able to confirm which type of platform was used during an aerial operation (fixed-wing, rotary or remotely-controlled) that resulted in civilian casualties.' It documented a further 54 civilian casualties in 2013 from air strikes in which it could not confirm the type of platform used.

UNAMA has released data to the Bureau showing that in the first half of 2014, eight civilians were reported killed in drone strikes in Afghanistan - a significant decline from 2013, but comparable to 2012, when the agency identified 16 non-combatant deaths in the full year.

During September 2013, the sample month, UNAMA reports 11 civilians killed, and two further civilian deaths - both children - that may have been caused by a drone.

Open sources

We conducted a thorough search of reporting by credible media organisations, research groups, social media and other public-domain information. These are the principal resources used for assembling our data on drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen.

Search strategy

We carried out initial searches on Google News for '**afghanistan strike**' or '**afghanistan air strike**', narrowed to the date range of the sample month. This yielded no results. Searching the BBC News website for stories mentioning '**afghanistan**' in the sample month yielded a number of reports, none which covered air strikes of any kind.

Wider Google web searches for '**afghanistan drone**' or '**afghanistan air strike**' without the constraint of the sample month were used to discover possible sources. A combination of Google and site search engines were

used to find reports from the sample month from the sites including the following:

Sites searched

Afghan Islamic Press
Afghanistan Analysts Network
Al Bawaba
Ariana News
Associated Press
BBC News
Central Asia Online
Drone Wars UK
Defense Video & Imagery Distribution System (DVIDS)
The Frontier Post
Hewad News
Kabul Press
Khaama Press
Kuwait News Agency (KUNA)
Long War Journal
Ministry of Defence, Afghanistan
The News (Pakistan)
Pajhwok
Press TV
Royal Air Force
Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)
Shahamat English
TOLO News
Wadsam
Wakht News Agency
War News Today (blog)
Xinhua

Sites were searched using both Google, using '**site:**' searches, and the site's own search facility where available. The Google searches were date-constrained, either using Google's own date search feature, or by specifying 'September 2013' as a search term, adjusting the format as necessary to match the date format used on the site.

Search terms

'**Air strike**', '**airstrike**' and '**air-strike**' were commonly observed spellings. The terms '**drone**', '**UAV**' and '**unmanned**' were observed less frequently but were highly likely to return relevant articles. While other terms such as 'aerial bombardment' or 'aerial bombing' could have been used as well, in the Bureau's experience of tracking media reports from other theatres, such terms are almost always used in conjunction with one or more of the above terms.

²² <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=13941&language=en-US>

Pashto & Dari

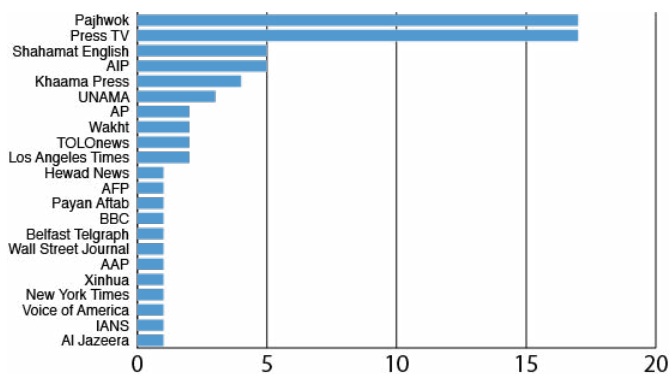
Several of the English-language outlets also published in Pashto and Dari. Pajhwok’s English language reports are translated from the Pashto originals. Searching Pajhwok for **بې پیلوټه** (be-pilota - Pashto for ‘without pilot’) did not yield any reports which had not been picked up in the English search, suggesting that Pajhwok’s English-language output is comprehensive. Although Pashto and Dari reports were beyond the scope of this investigation, Google searches for **بې پیلوټه** yielded a much smaller number of results than searches for **drone** in English, suggesting there may only be a small number of reports on the web not available in English.

Findings of the search

From the search, we identified reports describing 34 incidents of air strikes or drone strikes occurring in Afghanistan in September 2013. Ten of these incidents were specifically described as drone strikes.

The chart below shows which publications reported on air strikes, including drone strikes most frequently:

Figure 1: Air strikes (including drone strikes) reported per publication/agency



Pajhwok, a private news agency based in Kabul, and Press TV, an Iranian news station, report air strikes more frequently than any of the other outlets. The Bureau has frequently used Pajhwok’s reporting in its research on drone strikes in Pakistan, and has found it a reliable source that often corroborates reporting by other outlets while adding details.

However, the Bureau has previously identified dozens of Press TV reports relating to drone strikes in Somalia that have not been corroborated by any other source, and so regards its reports as potentially unreliable.²³ Press TV’s reports on drone strikes in Afghanistan should therefore be treated with caution, and further investigation is required to establish their value. In the Bureau’s survey, it was the only source for five incidents.

²³ Emma Slater and Chris Woods, *Guardian*, Iranian TV station accused of faking reports of Somalia drone strikes, December 2 2011 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/02/iranian-tv-fake-drone-somalia>

Half of all strikes - 17 - were reported by a single outlet. In at least three further cases, reports by Press TV appear to replicate information and quotes presented in news reports by other sources, meaning these strikes, too, are effectively single-sourced.²⁴ This means that 59% of all strikes - almost three-fifths - are effectively reported by a single source.

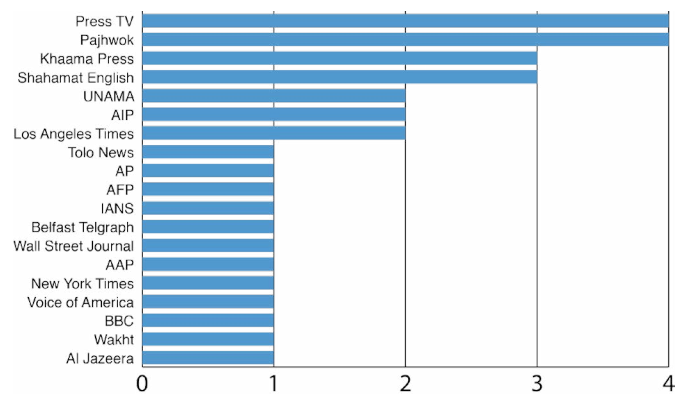
The table below shows how frequently strikes in the sample month were reported by multiple sources:

Figure 2: Number of outlets reporting air strikes, including drone strikes

Number of reports	Number of strikes
1	17
2	10
3	4
4+	3

Reports specifically describing drone strikes were quite rare, with 10 incidents described as such. The chart below illustrates how frequently news outlets reported drone strikes.

Figure 3: Outlets reporting drone strikes



Along with Pajhwok, Press TV was the most likely to report incidents as drone strikes than other outlets. Given the concerns relating to the Press TV’s reporting outlined above, this finding should be regarded with caution, particularly where Press TV is a sole source.

Afghanistan-based news outlet Shahamat English was among the most likely to report incidents described as drone strikes. Shahamat identifies itself as a Jihadi website affiliated to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the name of the Afghan state until the fall of the Taliban in 2001. Both Press TV and Shahamat may have an interest in reporting attacks as drone strikes for

²⁴ In a small number of further incidents, reports by Press TV do include details that are not reported elsewhere.

propaganda purposes.

Shahamat's reports are attributed to unnamed fighters, and as such would be more difficult to verify than those of other sources. It is also the sole source for four of the five attacks it records. As with Press TV, we are including Shahamat in our sample data with the proviso that it should be treated with caution; further investigation to establish the reliability of its reports is necessary.

The lack of corroboration for most strikes means that it is often impossible to say with confidence which weapons platform carried out the strike.²⁵ There are a number of factors in the news reports that may contribute to whether incidents are reported as drone strikes.

All three drone strikes reported by Khaama Press are attributed to Afghan government officials in Kunar province. Kunar is on the border with Pakistan and is almost entirely under Taliban control, so it would not be surprising to find drones used here quite frequently. This might explain the preponderance of drone strike reports attributed to the same source.

However, the disparity could also be a consequence of differences in local officials' awareness of - and willingness to report - drone strikes; and of variations in reporters' access to local officials. Alternatively, it is possible that some officials - or reporters - are more prone to describing air strikes as drone strikes than others, whether there is specific evidence of this or not. These issues are discussed in more detail later.

Incident and casualty data

We found reports of 10 drone strikes taking place during September 2013. These included one incident that was reported by more than a dozen sources: the Kunar province strike of September 7, which reportedly killed at least 10 people, including at least eight reported civilians. A further 24 incidents were reported as air strikes.

Five drone strikes were reported in Kunar; two in Helmand and one each in Uruzgan, Paktia, and Ghazni provinces.

Based on the available reporting, it appears that drone strikes are significantly more likely to kill civilians. However the single-sourced and uncorroborated nature of most reports means that these figures cannot be considered comprehensive or conclusive.

²⁵ In Yemen, where drones also operate alongside fixed-wing aircraft, the Bureau uses the following criteria for establishing whether an incident can be considered a confirmed drone strike. It must be reported as such by a single US source or named senior Yemeni source, or by three different types of local source, such as eyewitness, tribal source, or government or military source. All other reported drone strikes are considered 'possible' drone strikes pending further confirmation.

According to the available reporting, 54-71 people were killed in incidents described as drone strikes, of whom 11-33 were described as civilians. Air strikes killed a further 82-96 people, of whom 4-10 were reportedly civilians. Six of the 10 reported drone strikes reportedly killed civilians (60%), while five of the 24 air strikes were reported to have killed civilians (21%).

While some of the reports specified that air strikes were carried out by drones, none gave any other details of the type of aircraft or missile used.

Future work - what is feasible?

Tracking past strikes

The exercise revealed that media reporting is so limited that it would not be possible to build a comprehensive record of drone strikes in Afghanistan using such reports as a primary research resource. Other open-source material is also very limited.

The enduringly poor security situation means that this problem is unlikely to be confined only to the month we selected for the sample. We believe that examining a different or broader time frame is not likely to yield more comprehensive or detailed results.

Given the lack of official reporting of incidents by Afghan authorities, conducting primary investigation of past incidents is likely to be difficult and costly, and to present significant safety risks for both witnesses and researchers. Such investigation would likely be heavily reliant on witnesses' recollections of the events and it may be difficult to corroborate these with such records as are available from archives of media reports.

These challenges make it doubly important that parties to the conflict - including international forces - are encouraged to declassify and publish casualty data. While all casualty data has value, releasing data on aerial engagements would allow the first in-depth public comparison of drones, a new weapons platform, with more traditional air power. As full-scale operations wind down, the operational need to keep such data secret will recede and it is possible that the authorities may be more open to releasing it.

A further avenue for research would be to hire local reporters or a Pashto and Dari speaker - who would not have to be based in Afghanistan - to contact local sources such as police, provincial governorates and hospitals to see what, if any, records are being kept. This was an approach recommended by several researchers and journalists we spoke to, although this came with the caveat that results were likely to be patchy.

One final factor relating to tracking past drone strikes in Afghanistan is the length and intensity of the drone campaign. An attempt to log all strikes reported to have taken place in the country - which the Bureau has achieved in Pakistan and Yemen - would mean

attempting to find details on over 1,000 strikes, which may prove a prohibitively large task.

A possible approach would be to limit the time frame, and examine only strikes occurring before or after particular dates. The Bureau believes it would be particularly interesting to examine strikes from July 2011 - when General John Allen took command in Afghanistan - onwards. This would enable us to compare how drone strikes under Allen compared to those under his successor, General Joseph Dunford. It would also enable comparison of drone strikes before and after drawdown - a critical period, during which the experts we interviewed expect to see a rising reliance on unmanned aircraft.

Tracking future strikes

Given the poor outlook for security in Afghanistan, it is very unlikely that access for reporters to areas targeted by drones will improve over the coming year. This means it is probable that many strikes will continue to go unreported.

As with tracking past strikes, it is unlikely to be possible to use media reports and other open sources to comprehensively monitor drone strikes as they occur, while having any degree of confidence in the robustness of the data.

However there are avenues for research. Developing a network of local journalists and researchers in the provincial capitals who are able to alert us of incidents as they occur was a measure suggested by several sources. These local sources could be commissioned to investigate strikes where budgets and the security situation allowed.

ISAF-led forces are certainly keeping records of drone strikes, and the project would continue to encourage these agencies to improve the transparency of their operations. A return to monthly reporting of the number of air strikes launched from drones would be a valuable first step.

A research project of this scale does not have to be carried out by journalists: there is scope for partnering with academics or research organisations. This could improve access to official records including those kept by international forces. It would also offer additional expertise and local presence.

Conclusion

Recording of drone strikes in Afghanistan is crucially important if we are to develop the fullest possible understanding of how armed drones are being used internationally at this early phase in their evolution. It will allow for detailed comparison with the other theatres in which drones are being deployed and shed light on a weapons system that evokes controversy, but on which there is a dearth of official data.

Greater understanding of how drones are used in different contexts can also allow for public scrutiny of particular tactics and strategies. For example, data assembled by the Bureau on the targets of drone strikes in Pakistan recently revealed that domestic buildings were the most common targets in every year of the campaign, from 2004 to 2013. Yet in Afghanistan, leaked targeting directives show that attacks on buildings have been banned in all but the most urgent circumstances since 2008, as part of efforts to reduce civilian casualties. This raises the question of why similar measures to protect civilian lives are not in place just over the border in Pakistan.

The strike-by-strike monitoring of drone operations allows us to understand improvements, as well as failings, in how the technologies are used. In Pakistan, there has been a significant decline in reported civilian deaths in the past three years, with reports all but disappearing by 2013. But this has not been matched by similar improvements in Yemen. There, non-combatant deaths continue to be a regular occurrence.

In Afghanistan there is an additional dimension for possible comparison: drone strikes can be compared to other forms of air power. Although it is evident from the existence of the study by the Center for Naval Analyses that the military already conducts some research along these lines, this remains classified, and independent estimates may yield contrasting - or corroborating - results. In order for such an approach to be meaningful, this would need to include analysis of the types of missions each platform is used for, which would require cooperation from the relevant military forces.

As this report highlights, tracking strikes in Afghanistan faces significant challenges that are unique to the theatre. A research strategy that relies primarily on media reports and other open-source information, such as that employed by the Bureau in Pakistan and Yemen, would yield an incomplete and unsatisfactory picture.

In order to track drone strikes in Afghanistan more comprehensively, a more complex research strategy is necessary. This would include researchers on the ground who are able to report incidents to the central office as they happen, and who can use their existing contacts within the local administration to access any casualty recording that is taking place at that level.

In addition, any casualty recording effort would require a sustained interaction with the relevant military forces

- ISAF, AFCENT and the MoD - to encourage them to increase the transparency of their operations, including sharing such casualty data as is operationally feasible.

The US military has in the past acknowledged the need for such transparency, particularly around civilian casualties. In August 2010 guidelines on counterinsurgency²⁶ issued to ISAF troops, then-commander of US and ISAF forces General David Petraeus advised troops to 'Be first with the truth... Preempt rumors. Get accurate information to the chain of command, to the Afghan people, and to the press as soon as possible.'

He continued: 'Acknowledge setbacks and failures, including civilian casualties, and then state how we'll respond and what we've learned.'

Four years on from these orders, the lack of official transparency contributes to a vacuum of comprehensive and transparent casualty recording, which must be addressed if we are to understand a key frontier of drone warfare.

²⁶ General David Petraeus, COMISAF's Counterinsurgency Guidance, August 1 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/hp/ssi/wpc/afhanguidance.pdf> (linked to from NATO's website)

Appendix 1: Sample month data

We have assigned each strike a code, and recorded the date, location, type of strike, and reported casualties. Where there is lack of consensus over the casualties, this is recorded in a range, from lowest to highest. The sources of each report are recorded in the References section, and we have also recorded where the source of the report is identified by name.

AFS1

02 September 2013

Named source? yes

- ◆ 5 reported killed
- ◆ 0-5 civilians reported killed

Five alleged militants were killed in a pre-dawn NATO air strike, according to the deputy provincial police chief. Press TV reported Afghan officials said all five dead were Taliban members but unnamed locals said they were civilians. The provincial police chief also reported four policemen wounded in a roadside bomb. It is not clear which incident occurred first.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Wazi Zadran, Paktia province
References: Pajhwok, Press TV

AFS2

03 September 2013

Named source? UNAMA investigation

- ◆ 1 reported killed
- ◆ 1 civilian reported killed
- ◆ Two civilians reported injured.

A drone strike against a group of men alleged to be anti-government elements killed one civilian and injured two. The men were guards at a construction company, according to UNAMA.

Type of strike: Drone strike
Location: Ghazni city, Ghazni province
References: UNAMA

AFS3

04 September 2013

Named source? yes

- ◆ 12 reported killed
- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Twelve insurgents were killed in a NATO air strike, according to a statement by an Afghan army unit. The air strike coincided with a joint Afghan-ISAF operation which killed a further 29 fighters in neighbouring Ghazni province, according to the statement.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Baraki Barak, Logar province
References: Pajhwok, Press TV

AFS4

04 September 2013

Named source? yes

- ◆ 1-2 reported killed
- ◆ 0-1 civilians reported killed

One or two armed rebels were killed in a coalition forces air strike, according to unnamed officials or the provincial governor's office.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Syedabad, Wardak province
References: Wakht, Press TV

AFS5

05 September 2013

Named source? yes

- ◆ 2-12 reported killed
- ◆ 0-12 civilians reported killed

Up to twelve people were killed according to security officials and local residents, who claimed all the dead were civilians. However a provincial police chief said five alleged militants were killed in a NATO drone strike on their compound, according to the provincial police chief. A "dreaded Taliban commander" named Qari Mohammad Rahman was killed, along with Mohammad Turab (aka Trabi) and three others, according to the police chief. A Taliban spokesman said the strike killed Mohammad Turab and one other fighter. Rahman had been accused of a high profile murder in the district, while Turabi was said to be leading a group of masked rebels, Wakht reported. AIP described the attack as a drone strike, citing the police chief, while the other sources used the word 'air strike'.

Type of strike: Reported as drone strike
Location: Watapur, Kunar province
References: Pajhwok, Afghan Islamic Press (£), Wakht, Press TV

AFS6

06 September 2013

Named source? yes

- ◆ 4 reported killed
- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Four alleged militants were killed in a NATO air strike, according to a NATO spokesman. The strike took place on a Friday afternoon.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Wardoj, Badakhshan province
References: Associated Press

AFS7

06 September 2013

Named source? yes

- ◆ 3 reported killed
- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Three alleged militants were killed in a NATO air strike on a vehicle being laden with explosives, according to the provincial governor's spokesman. The strike coincided with Afghan army operations in the province in which insurgents were killed and Afghan soldiers injured, according to the spokesman. A second air strike took place nearby – see AFS8.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Syedabad, Wardak province
References: Pajhwok, Press TV

AFS8

06 September 2013
Named source? yes

- ◆ 1 reported killed
- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

An alleged Taliban fighter on a motorbike was hit by an air strike, according to the provincial governor's spokesman. The strike coincided with Afghan army operations in the province in which insurgents were killed and Afghan soldiers injured, according to the spokesman. A second air strike took place nearby – see AFS7.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Syedabad, Wardak province
References: Pajhwok, Press TV

AFS9

07 September 2013
Named source? yes

- ◆ 10-16 reported killed
- ◆ 8-16 civilians reported killed

Multiple sources reported varying death tolls in this strike. Several reports cited a statement by Kunar police chief Abdul Habib Sayed Khalid who said four women, four children and a civilian driver was killed along with three Arab and three Afghan fighters who boarded their vehicle. UNAMA reported 10 civilians and six alleged insurgents were killed, and one 4-year-old girl seriously injured. Shortly after the strike, local officials said there had been civilian casualties and the incident became widely reported, including by international media. ISAF initially denied any civilian casualties. ISAF said the strike had been an offensive engagement rather than a defensive operation, UNAMA reported.

Type of strike: Drone strike
Location: Watapur, Kunar province
References: Associated Press, Agence France Presse, UNAMA, IANS, Al Jazeera, BBC, Belfast Telegraph, Wall Street Journal, Australian Associated Press, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Voice of America, Khaama Press

AFS10

07 September 2013
Named source? yes

- ◆ 2-4 reported killed

- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

An Afghan army spokesman said an unspecified number of alleged Taliban fighters were killed and wounded in an air strike. The strike was targeted at a 40-strong Taliban group, the spokesman said.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Wardoj, Badakhshan province
References: Pajhwok

AFS11

10 September 2013
Named source? no

- ◆ 0 reported killed
- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed
- ◆ Child injured.

A child was injured in a foreign forces air strike – unsourced report.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Nangarhar province
References: Pajhwok

AFS12

10 September 2013
Named source? yes

- ◆ 3 reported killed
- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Three alleged Taliban group leaders were killed in what is described as an “Afghan and ISAF combined force” air strike, according to a provincial police spokesman. The Taliban fighters killed were Mullah Rajab, Syed Hashim and Hamidulla, according to the police spokesman.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Mardian, Jawzjan province
References: Afghan Islamic Press

AFS13

10 September 2013
Named source? yes

- ◆ 6-7 reported killed
- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Six or seven alleged Taliban fighters were killed by a NATO air strike late at night, according to an Afghan army spokesman. The insurgents were targeted as they assembled for a meeting, according to the spokesman.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Andar, Ghazni province
References: Pajhwok, Press TV, Payan Aftab

AFS14

11 September 2013
Named source? no

- ◆ 1 reported killed

- ◆ 1 civilian reported killed
- ◆ Three civilians reported injured

A single source reported that a 'US led' air strike killed a young girl and injured three other civilians in the Nejrab district of Kapisa province. Press TV claimed the US confirmed the attack though did not cite a source.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Nejrab, Kapisa province
References: Press TV.

AFS15

12 September 2013
Named source? yes

- ◆ 5 reported killed
- ◆ 0-2 civilians reported killed

Five suspected Taliban fighters were killed in a drone strike, according to unnamed Taliban sources. The district administrative head confirmed insurgents were killed in an air strike. The Taliban source gave the time of the drone strike as 11pm. A Taliban spokesman was also reported as saying an air strike killed civilians, but the local politician denied this. The strike came after insurgents killed three policemen in an attack which led to a fierce gun battles, according to the district police chief. In a separate incident in the provincial capital, the provincial governor's spokesman said a civilian was killed and children injured in a landmine explosion.

Type of strike: Reported as drone strike
Location: Charchino, Uruzgan province
References: Pajhwok, Shahamat English (warning: Taliban website)

AFS16

13 September 2013
Named source? no

- ◆ 1 reported killed
- ◆ 1 civilians reported killed

A civilian was killed by a drone strike after loading petrol for a water pump onto his motorbike, according to an unnamed Taliban source. The strike reportedly took place at 5pm.

Type of strike: Reported as drone strike
Location: Marjah, Helmand province
References: Shahamat English (warning: Taliban website)

AFS17

13 September 2013
Named source? yes

- ◆ 1-2 reported killed
- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

An alleged Taliban district chief and his deputy were killed in an overnight ISAF air strike, according to the provincial governor's spokesman. The spokesman

named the casualties as Mullah Mohammad Khan and Niamatullah. Pajhwok cited an anonymous local as saying the Taliban leader had previously joined the peace process, but later returned to the insurgency because of improper behaviour on the part of government officials

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Marjah, Helmand province
References: Pajhwok, Hewad News, Press TV

AFS18

14 September 2013
Named source? yes

- ◆ 22 reported killed
- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

22 Taliban fighters, including four commanders, were killed in a coalition forces drone strike, according to an Afghan army spokesman. The commanders were named as Shin Gul, Qadir, Sarhadi and Pirai. Afghan Islamic Press cited unnamed provincial officials as saying they the Taliban had been on the brink of taking over the district, after they surrounded the district headquarters.

Type of strike: Reported as drone strike
Location: Chapa Dara, Kunar province
References: Pajhwok, Afghan Islamic Press (£), Press TV

AFS19

14 September 2013
Named source? no

- ◆ 1 reported killed
- ◆ 1 civilians reported killed
- ◆ Two civilians reported injured

An air strike on a civilian compound killed one woman and injured a second woman and an elderly man, according to an unnamed Taliban source. The strike occurred amid heavy fighting after Afghan and foreign forces entered the area, according to the Taliban source.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Gerishk, Helmand province
References: Shahamat English (warning: Taliban website)

AFS20

16 September 2013
Named source? yes

- ◆ 3-4 reported killed
- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Three or four militants, including a Taliban commander, were killed by an ISAF air strike on a hideout, according to the provincial administration. The Taliban commander, named as Mullah Fazal Rahman, had been equipping two suicide bombers at the time of the

air strike, according to the provincial official.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Sangin, Helmand province
References: Pajhwok, Afghan Islamic Press (£)

AFS21

16 September 2013
Named source? no
◆ 0 reported killed
◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Insurgent hideouts were targeted by air strikes, according to unnamed Afghan security force officials.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Wardoj, Badakhshan province
References: Tolo News

AFS22

17 September 2013
Named source? yes
◆ 5-6 reported killed
◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Two reports gave conflicting accounts of this attack. Khaama Press reported six suspected Taliban militants were killed in a US drone strike, according to the provincial police chief. The strike took place in the evening and targeted a group who were planning to attack Afghan security forces checkpoints, according to the police chief. Tolo News reported five people were killed, four Taliban and one Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) soldier, when the ANSF called in a Nato air strike to support a convoy that had been ambushed.

Type of strike: Reported as drone strike
Location: Chapa Dara, Kunar province
References: Khaama Press, Tolo News

AFS23

20 September 2013
Named source? yes
◆ 7-10 reported killed
◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Either seven or 10 fighters were killed in an air strike and other operations around Maidan Shahr, according to a statement from the provincial governor's office. Commander Mahzat, aka Zanzir, was reportedly among the dead.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Maidan Shahr, Wardak province
References: Pajhwok, Press TV

AFS24

20 September 2013
Named source? yes
◆ 4 reported killed
◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Four alleged Taliban militants, including a district chief, were killed in a drone strike, according to the provincial police chief. The suspected Taliban chief was named as Juma Khan, and the strike took place overnight, according to the police chief.

Type of strike: Reported as drone strike
Location: Ghaziabad, Kunar province
References: Pajhwok, Khaama Press, Press TV

AFS25

22 September 2013
Named source? no
◆ 1 reported killed
◆ 1 civilian reported killed

One civilian was killed by a drone strike while driving a tractor at night, according to unnamed Taliban sources.

Type of strike: Reported as drone strike
Location: Kajaki, Helmand province
References: Shahamat English (warning: Taliban website)

AFS26

23 September 2013
Named source? yes
◆ 3 reported killed
◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Three suspected Haqqani Network militants were killed, including a commander named Talwar, according to the provincial governor's spokesman.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Nirkh, Wardak province
References: Pajhwok

AFS27

25 September 2013
Named source? yes
◆ 3 reported killed
◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Three alleged Haqqani network militants were killed in an overnight NATO air strike, according to the provincial governor's spokesman.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Baraki Barak, Logar province
References: Pajhwok

AFS28

25 September 2013
Named source? UNAMA investigation
◆ 2 reported killed
◆ 2 civilians reported killed
◆ Unspecified number of insurgents also killed.

Two boys aged 12 and 14 were killed by an

international forces air strike, according to a UNAMA investigation. The boys had been in the mountains collecting wood and peanuts and were approached by insurgents for food and tea, UNAMA reported.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Paktia province
References: UNAMA

AFS29

26 September 2013
Named source? Yes

- ◆ 5 reported killed
- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Five people reportedly killed in Wardak province, according to provincial spokesman Attaullah Khogyani. He said all the victims were Taliban fighters, including “two Arab nationals”.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Wardak province
References: Press TV

AFS30

27 September 2013
Named source? yes

- ◆ 7-14 reported killed
- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

At least seven suspected Taliban militants were killed by a NATO air strike, according to the provincial governor’s spokesman. A commander named Dil Agha was among the dead. The militants had frequently targeted Afghan and coalition security forces in the province, according to the spokesman.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Jalriz, Wardak province
References: Khaama Press, Pajhwok, Afghan Islamic Press, Press TV

AFS31

27 September 2013
Named source? Yes

- ◆ 2 reported killed
- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Two people were reportedly killed in a US strike in Kandahar. Press TV claimed the US confirmed the deaths though did not quote a spokesman or cite a statement.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Kandahar
References: Press TV

AFS32

27 September 2013
Named source? Yes

- ◆ 3 reported killed

- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Three people were reportedly killed in a US drone strike in Paktia.

Type of strike: Reported as drone strike
Location: Paktia
References: Press TV

AFS33

29 September 2013
Named source? no

- ◆ 0 reported killed
- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

The district came under “heavy air strikes”, but there were no casualties, according to an unnamed Taliban source.

Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Syedabad, Wardak province
References: Shahamat English (warning: Taliban website)

AFS34

30 September 2013
Named source? yes

- ◆ 10 reported killed
- ◆ 0 civilians reported killed

Ten suspected militants were killed in a coalition forces air strike called in by Afghan army officials, according to a regional Afghan army spokesman. He said a local Taliban commander named Shah Mohammad was among the dead.

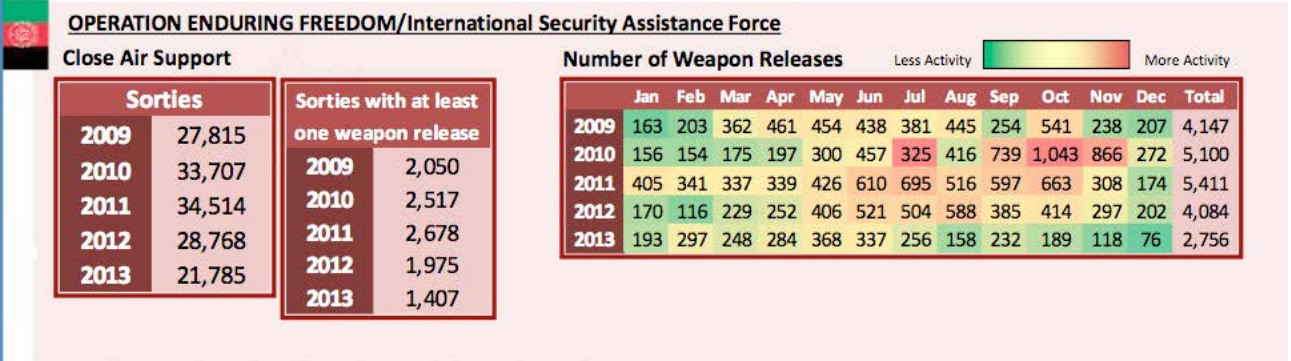
Type of strike: Reported as air strike
Location: Muqur, Ghazni province province
References: Xinhua, Press TV

Appendix 2: US Air Force strike data

This document, provided by the US Department of Defense, shows weapons releases from all types of aircraft.

Combined Forces Air Component Commander 2008-2013 Airpower Statistics

As of 31Dec 2013



- Some figures may have changed due to data re-calculation and re-verification

United States Air Forces Central Command
Combined Air and Space Operations Center

Combined Data

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Intel, Surveillance and Recon Sorties	16,193	18,898	28,747	38,198	34,937	31,049
Airlift Sorties	51,000	50,000	63,000	57,000	39,000	32,000
Airlift Cargo (Short Tons)	251,000	262,000	295,000	241,000	265,000	201,000
Airlift Passengers	1,269,000	1,285,000	1,368,000	1,233,000	749,000	506,000
OEF Supplies Airdropped (Pounds)	16,576,000	28,349,000	60,461,000	80,199,000	41,952,000	10,883,000
Tanker Sorties	18,361	17,465	17,296	19,469	16,007	12,319
Fuel Offloaded (Millions of Pounds)	1,106	1,076	1,050	1,095	980	723
Aircraft Refuelings	86,288	82,095	82,603	90,476	67,020	53,266
Casualty Evacuation Sorties	-	-	3,712	2,959	2,171	576
Saves	-	-	1,888	1,611	1,187	219
Assists	-	-	2,964	2,121	1,646	477

- Data not available

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