

Beat: Miscellaneous

UN to investigate killing in U.S. drone strikes

-, 25.01.2013, 02:06 Time

USPA News - The United Nations (UN) will be opening an investigation into the killings in the United States` drone strikes carried out in a number of countries in armed conflicts, an official said Thursday. British lawyer and a UN special rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights Ben Emmerson, who is leading the investigation, spoke in London where he stated that drone technology is "here to stay," adding that their use in armed conflict is a "reality with which the world must contend."

Emmerson continued by underlining the importance and urgency of establishing legal and operational structures in order to regulate the use of such drones under international law. The probe will include attacks in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, as well as Palestinian regions, and will also include investigation into the deaths and injuries of civilians during the drone strikes. Among the countries requesting the probe were Pakistan, Russia, and China. U.S. drone strikes have not been uncommon during President Barack Obama's tenure in which the unmanned aircraft have targeted suspected militants, their hideouts, and training facilities. However, the number of civilians also killed during such attacks has remained uncertain. The total number of deaths caused by drone strikes in 2012 stood well over 300, according to the Washington-based think tank New America Foundation, and as many as 3,239 individuals have been killed as a result of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan alone between 2004 and January 2013. In 2012, the outlet said 349 were killed, with the most number of deaths occurring in 2010 with 1,028. Around one year ago, in January 2012, President Obama, for the first time during his presidency, publicly acknowledged that U.S. drones regularly strike suspected militants along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. He confirmed that many of these strikes are carried out in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, targeting al-Qaeda and Taliban suspects in tough terrain. Pakistan's government has been public in its stance against the drone strikes, as local residents and officials have blamed them for killing innocent civilians and motivating young men to join the Taliban. Details about the alleged militants are usually not provided, and the U.S. government does not comment on the strikes. However, the U.S. has used them as an important part of their fight against terrorism. In June 2012, al-Qaeda deputy leader Abu Yahya al-Libi was killed when an unmanned U.S. drone fired at least two missiles at a compound and a nearby pickup truck in the village of Hesokhel, located in the Mir Ali district just east of Miranshah. It was the most serious blow to al-Qaeda since U.S. Navy SEALs killed Osama bin Laden during a secret military operation in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad in May 2011.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-454/un-to-investigate-killing-in-us-drone-strikes.html>

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619