

Drone Strike Casualty Data by the Numbers

For the first time, the U.S. has released its assessment of the civilian death toll caused by U.S. airstrikes, including by drone, outside of “areas of active hostilities.”¹ There is a large discrepancy between the numbers reported by the U.S. government and figures reported by independent monitoring bodies. Below are the administration’s numbers compared with similar statistics compiled by independent sources for strikes from January 20, 2009 to December 31, 2015.

Obama Administration Numbers²

- Total number of strikes: 473
- Combatant Deaths: 2,372-2,581
- Non-Combatant Deaths: 64-116

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (Yemen, Pakistan, and Somalia)³

- Total number of strikes: 496-520 (an additional 80-96 possible U.S. strikes)
- Total number of people killed: 2,611-4,248 (an additional 334-486 killed in possible U.S. strikes)
- Total number of civilians killed: 321-741 (an additional 26-61 killed in possible U.S. strikes)

The Long War Journal (Yemen and Pakistan only)⁴

- Total number of strikes: 472
- Total number of “enemies” and “leaders and operatives from Taliban, Al Qaeda, and allied extremist groups” killed: 2,944
- Total number of civilians killed: 212

New America (Yemen, Pakistan, and Somalia)⁵

- Total number of strikes: 515
- Total number of “militants” killed: 2,493-3,768
- Total number of civilians killed: 216-254
- Total number of “unknown” killed: 160-271

¹ <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/06-30-2016-0547-DNI-Release-on-CT-Strikes-Outside-Areas-of-Active-Hostil.pdf>; for more information on the administration’s casualty assessment see http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/Targeted_Killing_Casualties_FAQ.pdf; for more information on the meaning of “areas of active hostilities” see <https://www.lawfareblog.com/will-obamas-targeted-killing-policy-say-what-areas-active-hostilities-means>.

² <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/06-30-2016-0547-DNI-Release-on-CT-Strikes-Outside-Areas-of-Active-Hostil.pdf>.

³ <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/category/projects/drones/drones-graphs/>.

⁴ <http://www.longwarjournal.org/yemen-strikes/>, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/pakistan-strikes>.

⁵ <http://securitydata.newamerica.net/drones/yemen-analysis.html>, <http://securitydata.newamerica.net/drones/pakistan-analysis.html>, <http://securitydata.newamerica.net/drones/somalia-analysis.html>.