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Washington Finally Feeling Drone War Backlash

Noah Shachtman

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Back in early 2009, when guys like David Kilcullen and Andrew Exum warned that the American drone war in Pakistan could create more terrorists than they kill, they were pilloried by the national security establishment for their views. Since the failed Times Square bombing — a terror attack allegedly in response to the drone strikes — Kilcullen and Exum's take is quickly becoming conventional wisdom in Washington.

"Have the stepped-up attacks in Pakistan — notably the Predator drone strikes — actually made Americans less safe?" asks David Sanger in the *New York Times*. "Are they inspiring more attacks on America than they prevent?"

"If you go into Pakistan and talk to college kids, which is what we did, these drone attacks are feeding this narrative: this is what we [Americans] are aiming to do. We're aiming to kill Muslims," Leslie Stahl said today on MSNBC's Morning Joe.

"Let's say China was launching drone attacks on Idaho, we would be pretty angry too. We are launching attacking against a people were not at war with, officially," Joe Scarborough responded. "I would rather us go after the terrorists — individual terrorists — drag 'em out, interrogate 'em, get information — instead of dropping bombs that kill four year-old little girls. That dismember grandmoms that happen to be in the family compound. That seems immoral."

The decision to [dramatically escalate the drone war](#) was done behind closed doors, with no public debate about whether the strikes were the best way to smash the jihadist networks based in Pakistan's tribal wildlands. Perhaps now, we'll have that discussion.