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CIA using Afghan bases for drone raids

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The US is pressing ahead with its unsanctioned drone bombing of Pakistan by using an Afghan airbase, as CIA claims the aerial operation originally launched from a Pakistani airbase have stopped over the past three months, according to a Saturday report by *The Washington Post*.

The report states that the US stopped drone strikes from the Shamsi airbase in Balochistan in April after a diplomatic row over a CIA operative, Raymond Davis, who killed two Pakistani nationals in Lahore on January 27.

The newspaper added that since then the CIA has carried out its drone attacks on the Pakistani soil from an airbase in Afghanistan.

"US personnel and Predator drones remain at the facility, in the southwestern province of Baluchistan," said the Post article, quoting Pakistani and US officials.

Meanwhile, other reports say that CIA is primarily using two airstrips - one at Jalalabad Air Base and the other at Bagaram Air Base in Afghanistan to carry out its drone operations.

Earlier, Pakistan's defense ministry ordered the United States to leave the remote desert airbase in the country's southwestern Balochistan province.

The Pakistani military had reportedly allowed the US to use Shamsi, Jacobabad, and two other bases - Pasni and Dalbadin - in its 2001 invasion of Afghanistan.

The then military government in Islamabad, led by Pervez Musharraf, claimed that the Americans had left the bases in 2006.

The US often carries out such attacks on Pakistan's tribal regions, claiming to target anti-US militants.

But locals say civilians have been the main victims of the non-UN-sanctioned aerial strikes.

The issue of civilian casualties has strained relations between Islamabad and Washington with the Pakistani government repeatedly objecting to the bombing campaign.

The aerial attacks, initiated by former US president George W. Bush, have been escalated under President Barack Obama.

Islamabad has repeatedly condemned the attacks, saying they violate Pakistan's sovereignty.

The United Nations says the US-operated drone strikes in Pakistan pose a growing challenge to the international rule of law.

Philip Alston, UN special envoy on extrajudicial killings, said in a report in October of 2010 that the attacks were undermining the rules designed to protect the right of life.

According to a report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, some 957 Pakistani individuals fell victim to US drone strikes in 2010.