

New Ed Snowden Leaks Reveal Mystery Behind NSA's UK Base



Moscow, September 7 (RHC)-- Newly leaked documents show that a U.S. spying agency has used a British military base to carry out "capture-kill operations" across the Middle East. Former U.S. intelligence contractor and whistle-blower Edward Snowden made the revelation on Tuesday, as cited in a report by online publication The Intercept that America's National Security Agency (NSA) is using a UK base to conduct missions.

"The files reveal for the first time how the NSA has used the British base to aid a significant number of capture-kill operations across the Middle East and North Africa, fueled by powerful eavesdropping technology," the report said, referring to the heavily guarded military facility at Menwith Hill in Yorkshire, northern England.

"The [NSA] programs, with names such as GHOSTHUNTER and GHOSTWOLF, have provided support for conventional British and American military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan," it added. "But they have also aided covert missions in countries where the US has not declared war."

The latest leaked documents have drawn criticism from human rights groups, while the British defense ministry has refused to comment on the release and the UK's complicity in deadly US drone strikes and killings.

Kat Craig, a top lawyer of the human rights group Reprieve, said the revelation was “yet another example of the unacceptable level of secrecy that surrounds UK involvement in the US targeted killing program.” And Craig added: “It is now imperative that [British] prime minister [Theresa May] come clean about UK involvement in targeted killing to ensure that British personnel and resources are not implicated in illegal and immoral activities.”

The U.S. spy agency, the CIA, has used hundreds of unmanned aircraft to conduct surveillance flights and airstrikes since the US and its allies invaded Afghanistan in 2001. The CIA regularly uses drones for airstrikes and spying missions in Afghanistan as well as Pakistan’s northwestern tribal belt near the Afghan border. Washington has also been conducting targeted killings through remotely-controlled armed drones in several countries.

The U.S. claims the airstrikes target members of al-Qaeda and other militants, but according to local officials and witnesses, civilians have been victims in most cases. The airstrikes, initiated by former US President George W. Bush, have escalated since Barack Obama took office in 2009.

Snowden began leaking classified intelligence documents in June 2013, revealing the extent of the NSA’s spying activities. The U.S. government has filed espionage charges against Snowden, who has been granted asylum by the Russian government.

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