Beat: Local

Pakistan unveils its own military drones for surveillance

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USPA News - Pakistan`s military on Monday unveiled its first domestically-produced surveillance drones, with officials hailing it as a "landmark and historic" event despite growing protests over U.S. drone strikes in the region. The new drones will not be armed.

The Burraq and Shahpar Strategic Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) will be used by Pakistan`s army and air force for surveillance operations inside the country. "In the future these UAVs could also be gainfully employed in various socio-economic development projects," said army spokesman Major Muhammad Shafiq Malik. There has been no word on whether Pakistan intends to launch similar drones that have the capability to launch missiles. "[The induction] is a landmark and historic event, wherein a very effective force multiplier has been added to the inventory of the Armed Forces," the spokesman added. Monday`s launch event was attended by a number of senior military officials, including Army Chief of Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani who expressed his appreciation for the work of the scientists and engineers who worked on the drones. Air Force Chief Marshal Tahir Rafique Butt was also present. "[Kayani] highlighted that induction of indigenously developed surveillance capable UAVs in Pakistan Armed Forces is a force multiplier, and will substantially enhance their target acquisition capabilities in real time," Malik added. A photo released by the army showed officials holding a replica of one of the drones during Monday`s event. Drone strikes are a controversial subject in Pakistan, where the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is regularly using unmanned aircraft to target suspected militants, their hideouts, and training facilities. The Pakistani 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. However, the U.S. has used drones as an important tool in their fight against terrorism. Hakimullah Mehsud, the leader of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which is better known as the Pakistani Taliban, was killed earlier this month when an unmanned U.S. drone carried out a missile strike in Pakistan`s North Waziristan tribal area.

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