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From: OpsNewsTicker
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Subject: Pakistan troops battle Taliban for US drone debris (AP)

DERA ISMAIL KHAN, Pakistan - (AP) Pakistani soldiers battled Taliban fighters in an attempt to seize precious debris from a suspected U.S. drone that crashed in a rugged tribal area near the Afghan border, Pakistani intelligence officials and militants said Sunday.

The Taliban said they shot down the unmanned aircraft, which crashed Saturday night near Jangara village in the South Waziristan tribal area.

Pakistani intelligence officials said they were not certain whether Taliban fire or technical problems brought down the drone. Drone crashes have happened before in Pakistan, but they are rare.

Pakistan first learned of the crash by intercepting Taliban radio communications, said the intelligence officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media.

The debris was first seized by the Taliban. Several hours later, the Pakistani army sent soldiers in to wrest it out of militant hands, sparking a fight with the Taliban in which three militants were killed, said the officials. Three militants and two soldiers were also wounded in the clash, they said.

The intelligence officials said the troops were successful in seizing the debris, but Pakistani Taliban commander Azmatullah Diwana claimed his fighters repelled the soldiers. The army then sent helicopter gunships into the area where the militants were holding the debris, Diwana told The Associated Press by telephone from an undisclosed location.

Nawab Khan, a government official in South Waziristan, confirmed the drone crash and the subsequent clash between militants and army troops. But he did not know whether the soldiers were successful in seizing the debris.

Neither the Pakistani army nor the U.S. Embassy responded to request for comment.

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