

INSIDE THE NEW STEALTH ARSENAL

A top secret class of autonomous drones is changing the way war is waged.

By Eric Adams



On May 2, 2011, an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)—locked in a steady, predawn orbit above a residential compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan—transmitted live video of an unfolding military raid to a laptop in the White House Situation Room. There, President Barack Obama and his national security advisers watched as a team of Navy SEALs infiltrated the walled compound and killed its chief resident, Osama bin Laden.

By almost any account, the mission was a tremendous success, but an elemental part of the victory has gone all but unnoticed. The operation might never have happened were it not for a new aircraft, the Lockheed Martin RQ-170 Sentinel, which had been monitoring the location for months.

The aircraft's mere presence over Pakistan was notable. Abbottabad is home to the country's

The British made Taranis from BAE Systems is already operational.