Thank God men cannot fly, and lay waste the sky as well as the earth. ~Henry David Thoreau

January 3, 1861

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WASHINGTON -- Planning for an air war against Iran continues inside the Pentagon, and the U.S. Air Force could mount such intense strikes against Iranian targets that "you wouldn't want to be in the area," said Gen. Norton A. Schwartz, the Air Force chief of staff, on Wednesday.

Indeed, some senior military officers and air power specialists caution that putting a decisive end to Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions would require a massive, all-out war -- not only to demolish Iran's nuclear facilities but to destroy its governing regime.

President Barack Obama has said the United States is "determined to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, and I will take no options off the table to achieve that goal." The United States and others are now tightening financial and trade sanctions to force Tehran to abandon its nuclear weapons program. But the Obama administration has not spelled out precisely what "prevent" means, and administration officials have been careful not to set clear military objectives.

In a meeting with defense reporters Wednesday, Schwartz deflected a question by The Huffington Post about whether air power alone could "end" Iran's nuclear weapons program.

"It really depends," he said. "What is the objective? Is it to eliminate? Is it to delay? Is it to complicate? The larger question here is more one of policy" than of military capability, he said.

The Air Force, along with the other military services, has given the White House a series of options for attacking Iran, Schwartz said. Other government agencies have provided political, financial and additional options.

As far as the military options are concerned, Schwartz said that Marine Gen. James Mattis, the Mideast combat commander who would oversee a war with Iran, "is satisfied that we have been as forthcoming and imaginative as possible" in the planning.

"We and each of the other services each contribute, and we are prepared to do so," Schwartz added. He declined to provide specific details about the war planning.

Among the weapons that could be used against Iran is the 20-foot-long, 15-ton Massive Ordnance Penetrator (MOP), designed to be used against deep-buried targets such as the nuclear reprocessing plant shielded by 250 feet of granite in a mountain outside the holy city of Qom, according to a new report by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Although the MOP has encountered technical problems in its development, Schwartz said it is "operational."

But making effective use of such a weapon requires a broad, coordinated effort among hundreds of aircraft, retired Air Force Lt. Gen. David Deptula, an F-15 combat pilot who planned the complex 1991
air war against Iraq and other operations, told The Huffington Post. "Executing an air campaign is not just flying from A to B and dropping a bunch of bombs and coming home," he said.

In the event of an attack, missiles, bombers and strike fighters would be sent against Iran's air defenses, which Schwartz said have recently been strengthened. Other aircraft would be targeted on Iran's nuclear sites, accompanied by command-and-control aircraft, airborne electronic countermeasures and electronic warfare systems, all choreographed with aerial tankers "and put together in such a way that the timing is impeccable and each part of the overall mission reinforces other parts," Deptula explained.

"It would be a formidable air campaign, but it could be accomplished," Deptula said. And it would take the United States to do it. "The Israelis have one of the most excellent, innovative air forces in the world -- that's not at issue," he said. But with the distances to be covered to reach Iran and the limited number of refueling tankers that Israel can provide, "there is a capacity issue."

How effective could such a broad air campaign be? "You can set them back months to years," Deptula said. "But ultimately you are going to have to deal with the same problem again. One of the biggest challenges is you are dealing with a theocracy, a bunch of zealots, and that's the quandary."

"No one wants to talk about regime change. But if you want to put an end to this problem, I am afraid to say it will require a change of regime in Iran," he said.

Nonetheless, like other senior commanders, Deptula urged caution when talking about attacking Iran. "Everybody is talking about the kinetic [military] option," he said. "But first, a highly orchestrated symphony of diplomatic, economic and information pieces have to be assembled into a coherent whole to accomplish our end game, and that has to be done before we talk about military options."

That view parallels the thinking of retired Marine Gen. James "Hoss" Cartwright, who left last summer as vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He is a former fighter pilot and from 2004 to 2007 led the U.S. Strategic Command, which has responsibility for global nuclear and conventional strategic attack missions.

Iran's nuclear facilities are "not a pinpoint target," Cartwright warned during a panel discussion last week at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank. He said Iran has been "very clever" about siting its nuclear facilities, some in remote locations and some deep underground where "there are not weapons that can penetrate."

Asked about that assertion Wednesday, Schwartz acknowledged that deep underground targets are difficult to destroy. "Strike is about physics, and the deeper you go, the harder it gets," he said. But he said the MOP "is not an inconsequential capability."

Cartwright insisted last week that any air strike would fall short of the goal of ending Iran's nuclear ambitions.

"Really," he said, "to take care of this problem kinetically is going to require quite a few [U.S. military] people on the ground, which is not likely to happen. So you can do air strikes to cause havoc, and then what?"

If Iran has the will to push forward with development of a nuclear weapon, it has the intellectual capacity to accomplish that, Cartwright said, and it can continue to spread out nuclear weapons sites beyond the ability of the United States to find them all.

In short, he said, "a kinetic attack is a delaying tactic. A strategy that would deny Iran nuclear weapons probably requires an invasion and change of regime."

And no matter whether military action is effective or not, said Cartwright, the instability it will cause will be "significant, and not just in the oil markets."
Strategic Terror  
*The politics and ethics of aerial bombardment*  
*by Beau Grosscup*

As many Americans, I've tended until recently to put out of my mind the actual effects of aerial bombardment on, you know, people, especially when the bombs are dropped by the American military or its allies over there. It's just too easy to attend to other matters, to focus on our brave boys doing all the work, flying the planes, risking being shot down, and so on. How many times have the media shown the aftermath, on the ground, of an aerial bombing?

Once I became ready to face the harsh reality, it took a microsecond to grasp that being bombed from aircraft, in the city or the country, is probably the most horrific holy hell any living being can go through. Your screaming children writhing from shards of glass, people crushed or buried alive by falling concrete and steel, appendages torn off in an instant, then with the incendiaries like napalm—esp. napalm-B[1] coming along in the Vietnam Warcrime era—people's lives ending in a slow, excruciating fireball of goo. [Speaking of Vietnam and antipersonnel weapons, millions of the ingeniously sadistic CBU (cluster bomb unit) 24s were dropped from US aircraft (mostly via B-52s and B-57s from undetectable altitudes).[2][2]

**Background**

Professor Grosscup starts by giving us the early history of aerial bombing, at the point where the flying technology and bombardiering technology were coming together... essentially the WW1 era. The author notes four major theoreticians, whom he calls the Prophets: Giulio Drouhet (Italy), Hugh Trenchard and Sir Basil Liddell Hart (England), and William 'Billy' Mitchell (United States). As every other political figure or military mind, the Prophets were horrified by World War I, the so-called Great War; they saw the millions of men killed in trenches as a feminine, defensive war, where nothing was glorified and offensive attack was suicidal. Strategic bombing became the savior of the affirmative role of manly martial prowess in stoking the Western patriarchies.

The advocacy of strategic bombing began by explicitly acknowledging the need and/or the desirability of inflicting death and destruction (terror) on civilians. Early in the 20th century, conventions at the Hague announced strictures against harming noncombatants in war, so long as they were European noncombatants. The poor colonials were a different story, and all the major 'civilized' nations conducted vigorous bombing campaigns on people in their colonies between WW1 and WW2. The Brits were the worst:

In 1919, under the command of the future and controversial air power chief Arthur Harris, the British bombed the Afghanistan cities of Jalalabad and Kabul. In the same year, they employed Trenchard's RAF to quash the Egyptian demand for independence. In addition to the bombing of Somaliland, in 1920 British planes struck the Iranian town of Enzeli and civilian populations in Transjordan. Also in 1920, the British began using bombers in innovative ways to enforce their new imperial strategy of 'control without occupation' in Iraq. The practice of bombing entire areas was inaugurated for what were labeled 'pacification' purposes. [Nonstop] aerial attacks on entire villages were used to soften up civilians before the arrival of the tax collector... [the passage goes on to describe English aerial atrocities against the Hottentots of SW Africa in 1922, 1925, 1930, 1932 and massive bombing of 'rebellious' villages in Burma and northwest India in 1932. ] Spain, France, and Italy also bombarded colonial peoples in the interwar years. — Page 55

Today the air terrorists do not care whether their targets are colonials or other 'civilized' nationals. The wanton destruction of civilians by Western powers continues with moral sanction by the imperial Western governments.

**Question of Terror**

The author continues to describe how strategic bombing has dominated the thinking of Western militarists and empire junkies through all the armed conflicts into Iraq II. In the beginning they advocated it as terror:
"Wars could be won, they proposed, almost from the dawn of the age of aviation, provided air power was used for strategic 'terror' bombing of civilians. This advocacy of terrorism, which became the core of strategic bombing doctrine, was made without hesitation or apology. Since then, the moral and political climate has shifted...." — Page 12

Now terror is something done by 'the other.' And the Western powers are in an awkward position, because terror means harming innocent civilians.

"It is civilian innocence that provokes the moral issue, if not qualms, when noncombatants are targeted in war. In classical and contemporary terms, it is at the core of what is deemed to be the immorality of terrorism." — Page 48

The powers can't deny they're targeting civilians and therefore they cannot deny they are engaging in terrorism, just as the powers said they were doing back in the early part of the previous century. But it's all right, simply fly the F15s over the football stadium, sing the Star Spangled Banner, and march the Marines through the town square waving the Flag and flashing the Cross. The people won't call you on it. But once in a great while an American will come to terms. Here's Randy Floyd from the 1974 film on Vietnam, *Hearts and Minds*:

During the missions, after the missions, the result of what I was doing, the result of this game, and this exercise of my technical expertise, never really dawned on me. That reality of the screams or the people blown away, or their homeland being destroyed, just was not a part of what I thought about. We as Americans have never experienced that, we've never experienced any kind of devastation. When I was there, I never saw a child that got burned by napalm. I didn't drop napalm but I dropped things just as bad. I dropped CBUs, which can't destroy anything, it's meant for people, it's an anti-personnel weapon. We used to drop canister upon canister of these things with two hundred tumbling little balls in there about this big around with about 600 pellets in each ball that would blow out as soon as it hit the ground and shred people to pieces. They couldn't be gotten out in many cases. People would suffer; they would live, but they would suffer, often they would die afterwards. This would cause people to have to take care of them.... I look at my children now. And I don't know what would happen, what I would think about-if someone napalmed them.

Someday soon we can only hope consciousness will trump war. A great and informative book that will have you questioning government authority and searching your soul.

[1] Napalm-B was developed and manufactured by Dow Chemical 1965-1969 mainly for use in the Vietnam War crime. Faced with protests at the time, management decided "its first obligation was the government."

[2] "... called the Pineapple, *many thousands of tons of the CBU-24* cluster bombs [the book asserts 285 million bombs, but I can't find the cited reference]—each containing 665 'bomblets,' each bomblet containing thousands of pieces of shrapnel and flammable agents, designed to saturate an km-square area. These cluster munitions were designed to demoralize the enemy by maiming rather than killing their victims, thus overwhelming enemy health services.... Like landmines, many went undetected for years only to explode when disturbed. Three decades after the war, the bright yellow 'toys' are still terrorizing the children and parents of Indochina." — Page 89

[3] "Claiming to minimize civilian casualties, the US Air Force *box-bombed* rural Indochina. James Gibson, in *The Perfect War*, describes the basic carpet-bombing technique thus: 'They often first dropped explosive bombs in order to "open up the structures," then napalm to burn out the contents, and finally CBU-24s to kill the people who came running to help those who were burning.'" — Page 89

[Please refer to my review of *Hearts and Minds* and the comments of Randy Floyd to get the full impact of the monstrous inhumanity and the denial.]
NEW Book: Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control

By CODEPINK co-founder Medea Benjamin
- Coming mid-April!

Pre-order your book today!

Drone Warfare (OR Books, 2012) is a comprehensive look at the growing menace of drone warfare, with an extensive analysis of who is producing the drones, where they are being used, who are "piloting" these unmanned planes, who are the victims and what are the legal and moral implications. But this book is also a call to action, with a look at what activists, lawyers and scientists are doing to rein in the drones, and ways to move forward.

"Activist extraordinaire Medea Benjamin has documented how the U.S. government's use of
drones to murder hundreds of innocent civilians in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen has increased the danger to our national security. And Benjamin’s “Drone Warfare” is the first book that reveals the vocal international citizen opposition that challenges the legality and morality of America’s extrajudicial execution drones before they kill here at home.”

—Ann Wright, retired US Army Reserve Colonel and former US diplomat

- To bring author Medea Benjamin to your city or local book store for a book event please contact Alli at allij@codepink.org.
- This book will be featured at the first-ever International Drones Conference, to be held in Washington, DC, April 28, 2012.

**Foreward to Drone Warfare by Barbara Ehrenreich**

In many ways, drones present the same moral issues as any other action-at-a-distance weapon: They allow warriors to kill at a minimal risk to themselves, thus lowering the human cost of aggression. Thus the ancient contempt for archers, as recounted in The Iliad, where the Greek chieftains deride the Trojan prince Paris for his reliance on the bow and arrow. Real men are not afraid of hand-to-hand combat; only cowards attack from a distance, often hiding behind trees or rocks.

Drones are of course the ultimate action-at-a-distance weapon, allowing the aggressor to destroy targets in Pakistan or Afghanistan while “hiding” thousands of miles away in Nevada. But this alone does not make them uniquely pernicious: Missiles and aerial bombardment can also be launched from great distances, by individuals who need not see the extent of the violence they inflict. If we are to end war, we need to take aim at all the weaponry that makes it possible and even inviting – guns, artillery, fighter planes and bombs—and at the industries that manufacture them.

But in this remarkably cogent and carefully researched book, Medea Benjamin makes it clear that drones are not just another high-tech military trinket. In fact, it is hard to even claim that their primary use is “military” in any traditional sense. Drones have made possible a program of targeted assassinations that are justified by the U.S. “war on terror,” but otherwise in defiance of both international and U.S. law. As Benjamin documents, it is the CIA, not the Pentagon, that operates most drone strikes in Western Asia, with no accountability whatsoever. Designated targets, including American citizens, have been condemned without evidence or trial-- at the will, apparently, of the White House. And those who target the drones do so with complete impunity for the deaths of any civilians who end up as collateral damage.

One of Benjamin’s most disturbing revelations has to do with the explosive expansion of the drone industry in just the last few years, to the point where 50 nations now possess the devices. Drone Warfare sketches out the nightmare possibilities posed by this insane proliferation. We cannot only expect drones to fall into the hands of “rogue” nations or terrorist groups; we should brace ourselves, too, for the domestic use of surveillance drones and even armed drones at the Mexican border and possibly against American civilian protestors.

In anyone else’s hands, this could be a deeply depressing book. Fortunately though, Medea
Benjamin is not just an ace reporter; she’s one of the world’s leading anti-war activists. Drone Warfare ends with the story of the global anti-drone movement, in which she has played a central role. At the end of this book, you’ll be inspired – and you’ll know exactly how to get involved!

“The Civilian Victims of the CIA's Drone War,” Clive Stafford Smith, Guardian UK

August 12, 2011
Clive Stafford Smith reports: "This week, a new report from the Bureau of Investigative Journalism gives us the best picture yet of the impact of the CIA's drone war in Pakistan. The CIA claims that there has been not one 'non-combatant' killed in the past year. This claim always seemed to be biased advocacy rather than honest fact."


Transforming Terror
Remembering the Soul of the World
Karin Lofthus Carrington (Editor), Susan Griffin (Editor)

AN EXCERPT
★ Read an Excerpt (PDF)

This inspired collection offers a new paradigm for moving the world beyond violence as the first, and often only, response to violence. Through essays and poetry, prayers and meditations, Transforming Terror powerfully demonstrates that terrorist violence—defined here as any attack on unarmed civilians—can never be stopped by a return to the thinking that created it. A diverse array of contributors—writers, healers, spiritual and political leaders, scientists, and activists, including Desmond Tutu, Huston Smith, Riane Eisler, Daniel Ellsberg, Amos Oz, Fatema Mernissi, Fritjof Capra, George Lakoff, Mahmoud Darwish, Terry Tempest Williams, and Jack Kornfield—considers how we might transform the conditions that produce terrorist acts and bring true healing to the victims of these acts. Broadly encompassing both the Islamic and Western worlds, the book explores the nature of consciousness and offers a blueprint for change that makes peace possible. From unforgettable firsthand accounts of terrorism, the book draws us into awareness of our ecological and economic interdependence, the need for connectedness, and the innate human capacity for compassion.
Putting the Air War in Pakistan in Perspective
Anthony H. Cordesman  [A pro-US, pro-war perspective.  D]

It is scarcely a secret that the US is fighting an air war in Pakistan at at least four different levels. It is using unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) to support US forces in “hot pursuit” in the border area. It is using them to attack Taliban and other insurgent forces near the border to Afghanistan at limit their capability to operate in Afghanistan. It is striking insurgent and terrorist leaders and training camps inside the tribal areas in Waziristan, and it sometimes support Pakistani forces in strikes against the Pakistani Taliban. The New York Times, Washington Post, Wired, and the Long War Journal have all published articles on the details of these supposedly secret operations. What has been far less clear, however, is the context. Some reporting makes this look like a massive bombing campaign, and one producing large numbers of unnecessary civilian casualties. Other reporting somehow makes it seem illegitimate or talks about a Pashtun honor code as if US forces can only fight insurgents face to face with their weapons on their terms.