
Here is the link to all of OMNI’s topical newsletters: http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

The newsletters cover the fields of pje. KNOWLEDGE THEN ACTION

Contents of #3
Sifton, History of Drones
Obama Chief of Assassinations
Turse, US Empire of Drones
Civilian Victims
Killing Children
Arrest CIA Lawyer
Ex-DNI Head Criticizes Drones
Anger Against Obama’s Drone War Intensifying
Hart, Yemen Drone Base
Drone Development
Cindy Sheehan’s Soapbox

Contents of #4
Petition: Drones Killing Innocents
Pakistani Experience
Drone Summit
Flanders, Opposition to Drones
ACLU: Speech, Privacy, and Technology
Medea Benjamin’s New Book

*Democracy Now* Interviews Benjamin and SHAHZAD AKBAR

**Contents of #5**

CIA Push for Drones

Kucinich/Conyers

Killing Militants Creates Militants

Colbert Report

Amnesty on Civilian Casualties

US Selling Drones
"CIA's Push for Drone War Driven by Internal Needs"
Analysis by Gareth Porter*

WASHINGTON, Sep 5, 2011 (IPS) - When David Petraeus walks into the Central Intelligence Agency Tuesday, he will be taking over an organisation whose mission has changed in recent years from gathering and analysing intelligence to waging military campaigns through drone strikes in Pakistan, as well as in Yemen and Somalia.

But the transformation of the CIA did not simply follow the expansion of the drone war in Pakistan to its present level. CIA Director Michael Hayden lobbied hard for that expansion at a time when drone strikes seemed like a failed experiment.

The reason Hayden pushed for a much bigger drone war, it now appears, is that it had already created a whole bureaucracy in the anticipation of such a war.

During 2010, the CIA "drone war" in Pakistan killed as many as 1,000 people a year, compared with the roughly 2,000 a year officially estimated to have been killed by the SOF "night raids" in Afghanistan, according to a report in the Sep. 1 Washington Post.

A CIA official was quoted by the Post as saying that the CIA had become "one hell of a killing machine", before quickly revising the phrase to "one hell of an operational tool".

The shift in the CIA mission's has been reflected in the spectacular growth of its Counter-terrorism Center (CTC) from 300 employees in September 2001 to about 2,000 people today – 10 percent of the agency's entire workforce, according to the Post report.

The agency's analytical branch, which had been previously devoted entirely to providing intelligence assessments for policymakers, has been profoundly affected.

More than one-third of the personnel in the agency's analytical branch are now engaged wholly or primarily in providing support to CIA operations, according to senior agency officials cited by the Post. And nearly two-thirds of those are analysing data used by the CTC drone war staff to make decisions on targeting.

Some of that shift of internal staffing to support of the drone has followed the rise in the number of drone strikes in Pakistan since mid-2008, but the CIA began to lay the institutional basis for a bigger drone campaign well before that.

Crucial to understanding the role of internal dynamics in CIA decisions on the issue is the fact that the drone campaign in Pakistan started off very badly. During the four years from 2004 through 2007, the CIA carried out a total of only 12 drone strikes in Pakistan, all supposedly aimed at identifiable high-value targets of Al-Qaeda and its affiliates.

The George W. Bush administration's policy on use of drones was cautious in large part because the President of Pakistan, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, was considered such a reliable ally that the administration was reluctant to take actions that would risk destabilising his regime.
Thus relatively tight constraints were imposed on the CIA in choosing targets for drone strikes. They were only to be used against known "high-value" officials of Al-Qaeda and their affiliates in Pakistan, and the CIA had to have evidence that no civilians would be killed as a result of the strike.

Those first 12 strikes killed only three identifiable Al-Qaeda or Pakistani Taliban figures, but despite the prohibition against strikes that would incur "collateral damage", the same strikes killed a total of 121 civilians, as revealed by a thorough analysis of news media reports.

A single strike against a madrassa on Oct. 26, 2006 that killed 80 local students accounted for two-thirds of the total of civilian casualties.

Despite that disastrous start, however, the CIA had quickly become deeply committed internally to building a major programme around the drone war. In 2005, the agency had created a career track in targeting for the drone programme for analysts in the intelligence directorate, the Sep. 2 Post article revealed.

That decision meant that analysts who chose to specialise in targeting for CIA drone operations were promised that they could stay within that specialty and get promotions throughout their careers. Thus the agency had made far-reaching commitments to its own staff in the expectation that the drone war would grow far beyond the three strikes a year and that it would continue indefinitely.

By 2007, the agency realised that, in order to keep those commitments, it had to get the White House to change the rules by relaxing existing restrictions on drone strikes.

That's when Hayden began lobbying President George W. Bush to dispense with the constraints limiting the targeting for drone attacks, according to the account in New York Times reporter David Sanger's book "The Inheritance". Hayden asked for permission to carry out strikes against houses or cars merely on the basis of behaviour that matched a "pattern of life" associated with Al-Qaeda or other groups.

In January 2008, Bush took an unidentified first step toward the loosening of the requirements that Hayden sought, but most of the restrictions on drone strikes remained in place. In the first six months of 2008, only four strikes were carried out.

In mid-2008, however, Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell returned from a May 2008 trip to Pakistan determined to prove that the Pakistani military was covertly supporting Taliban insurgents - especially the Haqqani network - who were gaining momentum in Afghanistan.

A formal assessment by McConnell's staff making that case was produced in June and sent to the White House and other top officials, according to Sanger. That forced Bush, who had been praising Musharraf as an ally against the Taliban, to do something to show that he was being tough on the Pakistani military as well as on the Afghan insurgents who enjoyed safe havens in northwest Pakistan.

Bush wanted the drone strikes to focus primarily on the Afghan Taliban targets rather than Al-Qaeda and its Pakistani Taliban allies. And according to Sanger's account, Bush quickly
removed all of the previous requirements for accurate intelligence on specific high-value targets and for assurances against civilian casualties.

Released from the original constraints on the drone programme, the CIA immediately increased the level of drone strikes in the second half of 2008 to between four and five per month on average.

As Bob Woodward's account in "Obama Wars" of internal discussions in the early weeks of the Barack Obama White House shows, there were serious doubts from the beginning that it could actually defeat Al-Qaeda.

But Leon Panetta, Obama's new CIA director, was firmly committed to the drone war. He continued to present it to the public as a strategy to destroy Al-Qaeda, even though he knew the CIA was now striking mainly Afghan Taliban and their allies, not Al-Qaeda.

In his first press conference on Feb. 25, 2009, Panetta, in an indirect but obvious reference to the drone strikes, said that the effort to destabilise Al-Qaeda and destroy its leadership "have been successful".

Under Panetta, the rate of drone strikes continued throughout 2009 at the same accelerated pace as in the second half of 2008. And in 2010 the number of strikes more than doubled from 53 in 2009 to 118.

The CIA finally had the major drone campaign it had originally anticipated.

Two years ago, Petraeus appeared to take a somewhat skeptical view of drone strikes in Pakistan. In a secret assessment as CENTCOM commander on May 27, 2009, which was leaked to the Washington Post, Petraeus warned that drone strikes were fueling anti-U.S. sentiments in Pakistan.

Now, however, Petraeus's personal view of the drone war may no longer be relevant. The CIA's institutional interests in continuing the drone war may have become so commanding that no director could afford to override those interests on the basis of his own analysis of how the drone strikes affect U.S. interests.


**Kucinich/Conyers amendment to NDAA: Prohibit conduct of drone strikes on unidentified targets**
The offices of Rep. Kucinich and Rep. Conyers are offering an amendment on the National Defense Authorization Act that would block the military from conducting drone strikes to attack a target whose identity is unknown or is based solely on patterns of behavior of such target. (That is, it bars the military from conducting "signature strikes.")

http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/node/1223

Kucinich/Conyers: Ensure Transparency and Accountability In The U.S. Combat Drone Program

The office of Representative Dennis Kucinich is circulating a letter to President Obama asking that Congress be provided with information on the CIA and JSOCs use of "signature" drone strikes (strikes which do not have a known target, but are based on intelligence matching a "profile" of a suspected terrorist.) The office of Rep. John Conyers has signed on. Urge your Rep. to sign: 202-225-3121.

http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/node/1219

Fifteen Members of Congress are pressing the Administration to come clean with Congress and the American people about civilian deaths resulting from drone strikes and so-called "signature strikes" that target unknown people. Urge your Representative to join them.

http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/act/kucinich-conyers-drone-letter

NYT: Drone Strikes 'Combat Militancy' by Increasing Militants  Posted on 06/06/2012 by Peter Hart for FAIR  http://www.fair.org/blog/2012/06/06/nyt-drone-strikes-combat-militancy-by-increasing-militants/

In today’s New York Times article (6/6/12) about the apparent drone killing of Al-Qaeda "deputy leader" Abu Yahya al-Libi, Declan Walsh and Eric Schmitt write:
If his death is borne out this time, it would be a milestone in a covert eight-year airstrike campaign that has infuriated Pakistani officials but that has remained one of the United States' most effective tools in combating militancy.

That's revealing. It's inarguable that the drones kill people the U.S. government wants to kill, and some it doesn't intend to kill. But does this really qualify as "combating militancy"? In Yemen, the increase in drone attacks has resulted in a doubling of the ranks of the local branch on Al-Qaeda. Some would-be attackers reportedly cite the drone attacks on civilians as motivation to attack the United States. And former CIA Pakistan station chief Richard Grenier tells the Guardian (6/5/12):

We have gone a long way down the road of creating a situation where we are creating more enemies than we are removing from the battlefield. We are already there with regards to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

And for another view—that of the Pakistani living with the threat of drones—consider these accounts in the new issue of Harpers, from families of victims of a single attack in North Waziristan:

The first time I saw a drone in the sky was about eight years ago, when I was 13. I have counted six or seven drone strikes in my village since the beginning of 2012. There were 60 or 70 primary schools in and around my village, but only a few remain today. Few children attend school because they fear for their lives walking to and from their homes. I am mostly illiterate. I stopped going to school because we were all very afraid that we would be killed. I am 21 years old. My time has passed. I cannot learn how to read or write so that I can better my life. But I very much wish my children to grow up without these killer drones hovering above, so that they may get the education and life I was denied.

The men who died in this strike were our leaders; the ones we turned to for all forms of support. We always knew that drone strikes were wrong, that they encroached on Pakistan's sovereign territory. We knew that innocent civilians had been killed. However, we did not realize how callous and cruel it could be. The community is now plagued with fear. The tribal elders are afraid to gather together in jirgas, as had been our custom for more than a century. The mothers and wives plead with the men not to congregate together. They do not want to lose any more of their husbands, sons, brothers and nephews. People in the same family now sleep apart because they do not want their togetherness to be viewed suspiciously through the
eye of the drone. They do not want to become the next target
Video: Stephen Colbert mocks "military age male" = "combatant"

"The administration has developed a brilliant system of ensuring that those building engulfing explosions don't kill non-combatants: they just count all military age males in a strike zone as combatants...This isn't just the president executing innocent people around the world by fiat, there is an appeals process. The men are considered terrorists unless 'there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent,' in which case, I assume, there is a legal process that un-kills them."


CIVIC, Amnesty International Challenge Admin on Signature Drone Strikes and Civilian Casualties

The Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict has initiated a letter to the Administration challenging it to be more transparent about its drone strike policy, particularly regarding "signature strikes" and civilian casualties. The letter has been joined by Amnesty International and others. The issue has been given more urgency this week by the New York Times' report that the Administration is counting "military age males" as "combatants" for the purpose of saying that few civilians are being killed by drone strikes.

http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/node/1242

US Selling Drones to Iraq

Jim Michaels, USA Today
Intro: To protect oil platforms, the U.S. has agreed to sell unarmed surveillance drones to the Iraqi navy.

Questions: Who makes the drones? This sale is for that company? Military Keynesianism? Corruption? Legal? Authorized by Congress?