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“Act in such a way that the principle according to which the action is performed can be accepted as a universal law.” Immanuel Kant’s Categorical Imperative.

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Elizabeth Sanders. “Executor-in-Chief: Drone Attacks and the Pathology of Presidential Power.” In These Times (January 2013), 27-29. “No issue cuts more deeply into the American soul than the Obama administration’s enthusiastic embrace of ‘targeted’ extrajudicial killing of suspect ‘terrorists’ or ‘militants’”. This small article packed with facts of the history of drone assassinations rebukes Obama resoundingly.

Action: Push the big TV talks shows to talk about specifics of the drone strike policy. Bob Schieffer responded to our call and asked a question about drone strikes in the presidential debate. Now let's press the big TV talks shows to get into the details of the drone strike policy - like attacks on rescuers. Urge the big TV shows to have the authors of the Stanford/NYU report on as guests.

http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/act/drones-debate-question-follow-up
ACLU Takes CIA to Court Over Drones
By Paul Harris, Guardian UK 19 September 12

Despite references by president and defence secretary, CIA has refused FOIA request on grounds it cannot confirm drone use.

The American Civil Liberties Union will go to court on Thursday in an attempt to get the CIA to hand over documents related to President Barack Obama's controversial "targeted killing" programme that uses unmanned drones to strike suspected Islamic militants.

The programme has been repeatedly referenced in public by numerous senior officials, including by Obama himself and defence secretary Leon Panetta, but the spy agency has refused to comply with a Freedom of Information Act request from the civil liberties group because it says it will not confirm the secretive use of drones.

As a result the ACLU has gone to court to argue that the CIA cannot deny the existence of a programme that has been so widely reported, including in great detail in off-the-record briefings by administration and agency officials. Jameel Jaffer, the deputy legal director of the ACLU, said: "It is preposterous. The assertion that this programme is a secret is nothing short of absurd.

"For more than two years, senior officials have been making claims about the programme both on the record and off. They've claimed that the programme is effective, lawful and closely supervised. If they can make these claims, there is no reason why they should not be required to respond to [FOIA] requests."

The so-called targeted killing programme has become one of the most controversial aspects of Obama's national security policy. It has been used in countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen and Somalia to strike at suspected terrorists and their supporters. Proponents of the programme say attacks can be highly accurate and come at little risk to American forces as there is no need for ground forces. Critics point out that there often civilian casualties and little is known about how targets are identified and targeted.

The London-based Bureau of Investigative Journalism tracks the strikes and has calculated that there have been 344 CIA drone hits in Pakistan alone since 2002, killing up to 3,325 people, including 881 civilians. Another area of concern is the use of drones to kill American citizens, such as radical American cleric Anwar al-Awlaki and his 16-year-old Colorado-born son. Both died in drone strikes in Yemen and relatives have sued top Pentagon and CIA officials for damages.

The ACLU’s demand for details of the programme - including documents related to its legal justification drawn up by the department of justice - is aimed at prompting a national debate on the scope of the drone programme and how it is used. Its legality is a particular issue. The memorandum justifying the legal basis for the targeted killing has now been requested by at least 10 members of Congress and three different lawsuits but it remains so secret that that acknowledging its existence is a classified matter. "The public has a right to decide for itself whether or not the programme is lawful or moral," Jaffer said.

Some legal and security experts agree and believe that the current boom in drone warfare is only like to increase the demand for greater openness about how and why the weapons are used. Professor Amos
Guiora, a national security and legal expert at the University of Utah, said: "Given that the drones are the warfare of the future you need a public debate about what's being done in the public's name."

Living with death by drone, October 04, 2012, By Jennifer Gibson
Los Angeles Times. Op-Ed

U.S. drones hover over villages in Pakistan, with the residents never knowing when they will strike.

A Pakistani villager holds a wreckage of a suspected surveillance drone... (Shah Khalid / Associated...)

Last week, Stanford University and New York University released a major study about the use of drones in the ever-evolving but never-ending war on terror. Unfortunately, many commentators missed the report’s key message: Drones are terrorizing an entire civilian population.

I was one of the researchers for the study, and spent weeks in Pakistan interviewing more than 60 people from North Waziristan. Many were survivors of strikes. Others had lost loved ones and family members. All of them live under the constant threat of annihilation.

What my colleagues and I learned from these unnamed and unknown victims of America's drone warfare gave the report its title: "Living Under Drones."

People in the United States imagine that drones fly to a target, launch their deadly missiles with surgical precision and return to a U.S. base hundreds or thousands of miles away. But drones are a constant presence in the skies above the North Waziristan tribal area in Pakistan, with as many as six hovering over villages at any one time. People hear them day and night. They are an inescapable presence, the looming specter of death from above.

And that presence is steadily destroying a community twice the size of Rhode Island. Parents are afraid to send their children to school. Women are afraid to meet in markets. Families are afraid to gather at funerals for people wrongly killed in earlier strikes. Drivers are afraid to
deliver food from other parts of the country.

The routines of daily life have been ripped to shreds. Indisputably innocent people cower in their homes, afraid to assemble on the streets. "Double taps," or secondary strikes on the same target, have stopped residents from aiding those who have been injured. A leading humanitarian agency now delays assistance by an astonishing six hours.

What makes this situation even worse is that no one can tell people in these communities what they can do to make themselves safe. No one knows who is on the American kill list, no one knows how they got there and no one knows what they can do to get themselves off. It's all terrifyingly random. Suddenly, and without warning, a missile launches and obliterates everyone within a 16-yard radius.

Naturally, the Obama administration claims it strikes only militants. But if we have learned anything since 9/11, it is that we must all read the fine print. What people do not appreciate is that the administration defines militants as all military-age males, typically those between 18 and 65. In addition, because the U.S. generally does not release the names of people who have been killed, we cannot know whether the victims were actually militants or were deemed militants simply because Washington says they were.

Indeed, the entire process is riddled with the same sort of flaws that beset the detention regime at the military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In Afghanistan, the Bush administration paid enormous bounties in an effort to get information on the ground. In areas rife with tribal and familial rivalries, the result was predictable: Hundreds of innocent people were wrongly fingered as Taliban or Al Qaeda, many of whom spent years at Guantanamo or other American prisons overseas.

Now the United States is offering similar incentives to people in North Waziristan who promise to identify militants. The alleged militants' homes are tagged by GPS trackers and later, when the informant is at a safe distance, blown to smithereens. And because no one knows who the informants are, people are reluctant to invite neighbors into their homes. The entire community withdraws from the public square, afraid to venture out but equally afraid to bring the outside in.

This is what it means to live under drones. It has turned North Waziristan into the world's largest prison, a massive occupied zone. A humanitarian worker who was in New York on 9/11 and is now working in North Waziristan told us that the atmosphere in the two places feels very much the same. The constant sense of terror is a feeling that knows no boundaries.

Of course, we should ask whether drones are legal under international law; my view is that they are not. Of course, we should ask whether drones are counterproductive; my view is that they are.

But no discussion of the issue is remotely complete unless we come to grips with what it means to be living under drones.

Jennifer Gibson is a staff attorney with Reprieve, a London-based legal charity that represents dozens of Pakistani drone victims. She was part of the Stanford research team that visited Pakistan and is a coauthor of "Living Under Drones."
US MILITARY SHOULD IDENTIFY ALL VICTIMS OF US BOMBINGS.

DRONE WARFARE SHOULD END.

Democracy Now Interviews Benjamin and SHAHZAD AKBAR

Fwd: [nodrones] "election spurred a move to codify u.s. drone policy"
Wed Nov 28, 2012 7:49 am (PST) . Posted by: "Shelly Rockett"

-------- Forwarded message --------
From: Ed Kinane <edkinane@verizon.net>
Date: Sun, Nov 25, 2012 at 8:31 AM
Subject: [nodrones] "election spurred a move to codify u.s. drone policy"

NYTimes on Drones
To: hancockdefendants@googlegroups.com, drones no <nodrones@lists.riseup.net>, upstatedroneaction@lists.riseup.net
November 24, 2012
Election Spurred a Move to Codify U.S. Drone Policy By SCOTT SHANE

WASHINGTON — Facing the possibility that President Obama might not win a second term, his administration accelerated work in the weeks before the election to develop explicit rules for the targeted killing of terrorists by unmanned drones, so that a new president would inherit clear standards and procedures, according to two administration officials.

The matter may have lost some urgency after Nov. 6. But with more than 300 drone strikes and some 2,500 people killed by the Central Intelligence Agency and
Since Mr. Obama first took office, the administration is still pushing to make the rules formal and resolve internal uncertainty and disagreement about exactly when lethal action is justified.

Mr. Obama and his advisers are still debating whether remote-control killing should be a measure of last resort against imminent threats to the United States, or a more flexible tool, available to help allied governments attack their enemies or to prevent militants from controlling territory.

Though publicly the administration presents a united front on the use of drones, behind the scenes there is longstanding tension. The Defense Department and the C.I.A. continue to press for greater latitude to carry out strikes; Justice Department and State Department officials, and the president’s counterterrorism adviser, John O. Brennan, have argued for restraint, officials involved in the discussions say.

More broadly, the administration’s legal reasoning has not persuaded many other countries that the strikes are acceptable under international law. For years before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the United States routinely condemned targeted killings of suspected terrorists by Israel, and most countries still object to such measures.

But since the first targeted killing by the United States in 2002, two administrations have taken the position that the United States is at war with Al Qaeda and its allies and can legally defend itself by striking its enemies wherever they are found.

Partly because United Nations officials know that the United States is setting a legal and ethical precedent for other countries developing armed drones, the U.N. plans to open a unit in Geneva early next year to investigate American drone strikes.

The attempt to write a formal rule book for targeted killing began last summer after news reports on the drone program, started under President George W. Bush and expanded by Mr. Obama, revealed some details of the president’s role in the shifting procedures for compiling “kill lists” and approving strikes. Though national security officials insist that the process is meticulous and lawful, the president and top aides believe it should be institutionalized, a course of action that seemed particularly urgent when it appeared that Mitt Romney might win the presidency.
“There was concern that the levers might no longer be in our hands,” said one official, speaking on condition of anonymity. With a continuing debate about the proper limits of drone strikes, Mr. Obama did not want to leave an “amorphous” program to his successor, the official said. The effort, which would have been rushed to completion by January had Mr. Romney won, will now be finished at a more leisurely pace, the official said.

Mr. Obama himself, in little-noticed remarks, has acknowledged that the legal governance of drone strikes is still a work in progress.

“One of the things we’ve got to do is put a legal architecture in place, and we need Congressional help in order to do that, to make sure that not only am I reined in but any president’s reined in terms of some of the decisions that we’re making,” Mr. Obama told Jon Stewart in an appearance on “The Daily Show” on Oct. 18.

In an interview with Mark Bowden for a new book on the killing of Osama bin Laden, “The Finish,” Mr. Obama said that “creating a legal structure, processes, with oversight checks on how we use unmanned weapons, is going to be a challenge for me and my successors for some time to come.”

The president expressed wariness of the powerful temptation drones pose to policy makers. “There’s a remoteness to it that makes it tempting to think that somehow we can, without any mess on our hands, solve vexing security problems,” he said.

Despite public remarks by Mr. Obama and his aides on the legal basis for targeted killing, the program remains officially classified. In court, fighting lawsuits filed by the American Civil Liberties Union and The New York Times seeking secret legal opinions on targeted killings, the government has refused even to acknowledge the existence of the drone program in Pakistan.

But by many accounts, there has been a significant shift in the nature of the targets. In the early years, most strikes were aimed at ranking leaders of Al Qaeda thought to be plotting to attack the United States. That is the purpose Mr. Obama has emphasized, saying in a CNN interview in September that drones were used to prevent “an operational plot against the United States” and counter “terrorist networks that target the United States.”
But for at least two years in Pakistan, partly because of the C.I.A.’s success in decimating Al Qaeda’s top ranks, most strikes have been directed at militants whose main battle is with the Pakistani authorities or who fight with the Taliban against American troops in Afghanistan.

In Yemen, some strikes apparently launched by the United States killed militants who were preparing to attack Yemeni military forces. Some of those killed were wearing suicide vests, according to Yemeni news reports.

“Unless they were about to get on a flight to New York to conduct an attack, they were not an imminent threat to the United States,” said Micah Zenko, a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations who is a critic of the strikes. “We don’t say that we’re the counterinsurgency air force of Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, but we are.”

Then there is the matter of strikes against people whose identities are unknown. In an online video chat in January, Mr. Obama spoke of the strikes in Pakistan as “a targeted, focused effort at people who are on a list of active terrorists.” But for several years, first in Pakistan and later in Yemen, in addition to “personality strikes” against named terrorists, the C.I.A. and the military have carried out “signature strikes” against groups of suspected, unknown militants.

Originally that term was used to suggest the specific “signature” of a known high-level terrorist, such as his vehicle parked at a meeting place. But the word evolved to mean the “signature” of militants in general — for instance, young men toting arms in an area controlled by extremist groups. Such strikes have prompted the greatest conflict inside the Obama administration, with some officials questioning whether killing unidentified fighters is legally justified or worth the local backlash.

Many people inside and outside the government have argued for far greater candor about all of the strikes, saying excessive secrecy has prevented public debate in Congress or a full explanation of their rationale. Experts say the strikes are deeply unpopular both in Pakistan and Yemen, in part because of allegations of large numbers of civilian casualties, which American officials say are exaggerated.

Gregory D. Johnsen, author of “The Last Refuge: Yemen, Al Qaeda and America’s War in
Arabia argues that the strike strategy is backfiring in Yemen. “In Yemen, Al Qaeda is actually expanding,” Mr. Johnsen said in a recent talk at the Brookings Institution, in part because of the backlash against the strikes.

Shuja Nawaz, a Pakistan-born analyst now at the Atlantic Council in Washington, said the United States should start making public a detailed account of the results of each strike, including any collateral deaths, in part to counter propaganda from jihadist groups. “This is a grand opportunity for the Obama administration to take the drones out of the shadows and to be open about their objectives,” he said.

But the administration appears to be a long way from embracing such openness. The draft rule book for drone strikes that has been passed among agencies over the last several months is so highly classified, officials said, that it is hand-carried from office to office rather than sent by e-mail.

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Anti-drone protesters knocked off course by broad restraining order

Tue Dec 4, 2012 8:14 am (PST) . Posted by:

"Global Network" brucekgag

http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/nov/28/drone-protesters-escalation-charges

Anti-drone protesters knocked off course by broad restraining order
Demonstrators who have gathered at New York air base for years say their constitutional right to protest has been compromised after colonel granted strict
Ever since the F16 fighters were replaced by Reaper drones at Hancock Air National Guard base in upstate New York three years ago, peace activists have engaged in regular anti-drone protests outside the facility. In that time they have learned what to expect: holding banners at a site across the road is tolerated; close proximity or blocking gates risks arrest for trespass or disorderly conduct, a fine, or at the most, a few uncomfortable nights in a cell.

But now, in what appears to be a significant escalation by base authorities, the activists have been subjected to what they describe as an "absurd" restraining order which they say breaches their constitutional right to protest.

The order was issued by a judge following the arrest of 17 protesters accused of blocking all three base entrances to traffic last month. It bans them specifically from approaching the home, school or workplace of Colonel Earl A Evans, a commander at the base. Failure to comply is a felony, punishable by up to seven years in jail.

Some of the activists are due to have the charges against them, including disorderly conduct and harassment, heard in Dewitt criminal court on Wednesday.

The arrested protesters, three of whom spoke to the Guardian, said they had never heard of Evans, had never met him and did not know what he looked like. He is the mission support group commander of the 174th fighter wing group, according to court documents.

Neither his home or school address is known to the defendants or detailed in the order, which names his place of work as 6001 East Molloy Road in Dewitt, New York - the military base. They are also banned from all forms of communication with Evans, including by email.

In a deposition to the court dated 25 October, Evans called for an order of protection and prosecution of the arrested protesters to the "fullest extent". He said the blocking of all three gates by the protesters was the "third time that protesters had done an unannounced protest" that resulted in a closure of the gate.

Written by hand, in block capitals, Evans wrote: "As an authorised representative of Hancock Field, I request that the court issue an order of protection on each and every defendant arrested such that they are to stay away from Hancock Field and I request prosecution to the fullest extent of the law."

The order has created confusion among the activists involved, as they say they no longer know where they can legitimately protest against the unmanned drones, which are operated from the base.

One of the 17 arrested, Elliott Adams, said: "This is a new tactic to deny us
our first amendment rights to freedom of speech and freedom of assembly and to petition our government."

Adams, a Vietnam veteran, past president of Veterans for Peace and former mayor of Sharon Springs, accused the military and local law enforcement of increasingly heavy-handed tactics against peaceful protests. In the last 18 months, more than 100 people have been arrested at the base, according to protesters, but in at least a third of the cases, the charges have been dropped.

Last year, Adams was among 33 protesters arrested after marching in single file on the side of the road, in what he described as "frivolous charges" which were later dropped. But the latest order is the worst so far, he said.

"We are committed to non-violence" said Adams. "It's absurd that this order is all about Evans' personal well being. He's the guy who has spent a lifetime training in delivering violence and killing people and I say that as a veteran myself. Those inside Hancock are the ones with the M16s and assault rifles, the MQ9 drones. We as individuals are obligated to stop our government committing war crimes - that's part of what came out of Nuremberg. This is a misuse of the law."

Adams said that he has repeatedly been arrested as he attempted to deliver a letter to the base commander, Colonel Greg Semmel, and others accusing the government of war crimes. . . . MORE
http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/nov/28/drone-protesters-escalation-charges

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http://space4peace.blogspot.com/ (blog)

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

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Drones Come Home, to U.S. Privacy Activists’ Dismay

are coming home to beef up local law enforcement. But people across the U.S. are pushing back, contending that domestic drones could invade personal privacy or chill free speech by monitoring political activities. “They want to use it for intelligence gathering – that’s spying,” Linda Lye of the Northern California American Civil Liberties Union told media at a hastily called press conference Dec. 4 outside the Alameda County administration building in downtown Oakland.

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END DRONE NEWSLETTER #7

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