“Make World Less Violent, New UA Graduates Told.” *(ADG 12-16-12).* If any subject links these newsletters, it is **violence**, its complexity, and how to reduce it.

My blog: War Department/Peace Department

http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/

My Newsletters:

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

Index:

http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/

Peace, Justice, Ecology Birthdays  
Visit OMNI’s Library.

“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.
DRONE WATCH: MuckRock.com, a free, online data-base.

Nos. 5 & 6 at end

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Obama Assassination President

Public Discussion of Drones; Stanford/NYU report

ACLU Sues CIA

Terrorizing Civilian Population

Rules for Drone Warfare

Restricting Protest

US Police Use Drones, Citizens Protest

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Bailey, Assassination Drones

Sprusansky, Demand Truths of Drone War

Glaser, Drones, My Lai, Prosecution

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Kucinich Holds Congressional Briefing
Backlash against new US medal for drone pilots

 Reuters | 12 hours ago
WASHINGTON: Should US drone pilots or cyber warriors thousands of miles from the battlefield be eligible for a more prestigious combat medal than soldiers wounded or killed in action?

The Pentagon concluded this week the answer is “yes” — at least in extraordinary circumstances, and announced the creation of the Distinguished Warfare Medal, outranking even the Bronze Star.

While supporters cheered America’s nod to the changing nature of warfare, it has triggered an angry backlash with some veterans and active-duty troops upset over the most substantial shakeup in the hierarchy of military medals since World War Two.

Opponents say the new medal’s rank is too high and sends a signal — inadvertently, perhaps — that the Pentagon does not sufficiently value the sacrifices of front-line troops.

For Brian Jopek, whose 20-year-old son, Ryan, earned a Bronze Star when he was killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq in 2006, the debate is intensely personal.

“To me it’s just a slap in the face, not only for my son, me, other members of my family,” Jopek, who also served in Iraq and is now a journalist in Wisconsin, told Reuters.

“But for anyone who’s ever received (the Bronze Star) for actions in combat.”

Jopek said he has written to President Barack Obama and to his congressman, hoping the policy can be reversed.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars, which describes itself as America’s largest combat veterans’ organisation, strongly objected to the decision. . . .
Peter Singer, an expert on the new technologies in warfare at the Brookings Institution think tank, said it was an inevitability, noting there are now 20,000 unmanned systems, or drones, in the air or on the ground.

“The US Air Force now trains more unmanned systems operators than it does manned fighter plane and bomber plane pilots combined,” he said.

Juliet Beyler, the acting director of officer and enlisted personnel management in the Pentagon, said candidates for the medal could include a service member involved in a cyber attack on a specific military target.

“This is for direct impacts,” she told the Pentagon’s American Forces Press Service on Friday, adding the award was retroactive to Sept 11, 2001.

No valour required

To put it in context, the Distinguished Warfare Medal is the ninth highest medal awarded by the Pentagon, higher than the Purple Heart for troops wounded in battle.

Valour, as defined by the military, involves extraordinary acts of heroism “while engaged in direct combat with an enemy with exposure to enemy hostilities and personal risk”.

The new medal is higher than the Bronze Star with a “V” for valour. Only 2.5 per cent of the more than 160,000 Bronze Stars awarded by the Army since Sept 11, 2001, have been for valour, according to Pentagon data.

Medal of Honour recipient and Vietnam veteran Paul Bucha told Reuters the decision could affect morale, and noted the significance of the Bronze Star in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

“Are you saying that guy in the Pentagon did something I could not have done, even though I was running around in the desert? Where people could shoot at me?,” Bucha said, summing up the views of many veterans.

“People are going to be outraged.”

FULL ARTICLE: 

http://dawn.com/2013/02/16/backlash-against-new-us-medal-for-drone-pilots/
DRONE KILLINGS IN YEMEN

MOYERS AND CO. FEB. 10, 2013. Very briefly recounts a NYT story of a drone attack that killed several al-Qaeda members in Yemen and their opponents meeting to negotiate their conflict. Bill Moyers expresses his belief that Obama should never have received the Nobel Prize for Peace.

MOYERS AND CO, PBS,. FEBRUARY 3, 2013

Full Episode: Are Drones Destroying our Democracy?

In the fight against terrorism, the American military's escalating drone program has become the face of our foreign policy in Pakistan, Yemen and parts of Africa. And while the use of unmanned drones indeed protects American soldiers, the growing number of casualties -- which include civilians as well as suspected terrorists -- has prompted a United Nations investigation into both the legality and the deadly toll of these strikes.

Bill explores the moral and legal implications of using drones to target our enemies -- both foreign and American -- as well as other intelligence issues with Vicki Divoll, a former general counsel to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and former deputy legal adviser to the C.I.A.'s Counterterrorism Center, and Vincent Warren, Executive Director of the Center for Constitutional Rights.

[Also on the show, Rolling Stone's Matt Taibbi on the shocking lack of accountability for big bankers who continue to act unethically, and in some cases, illegally. Whether or not it was intentional, I see the two programs as closely related: two lawless, unaccountable US powers.—Dick]
WASHINGTON POST BIASED IN REPORTING AND POLLING ABOUT DRONES

From: Just Foreign Policy <info@justforeignpolicy.org>
To: gladystiffany@yahoo.com
Sent: Wednesday, January 30, 2013 4:16 PM
Subject: WaPo: Ask the Public an Unbiased Question on Drone Strikes

Dear Gladys,

Tell the Washington Post to conduct a new poll asking an unbiased question on US drone strike policy.

Take Action

A key reason many in Congress haven't spoken up against the drone strike policy is that many believe the public overwhelmingly supports the policy. A key reason many believe the public overwhelmingly supports the drone strike policy is that the Washington Post said so in February 2012.

But the question the Washington Post asked in its February 2012 poll, and the way the Post reported it, were highly misleading. And in the last year, a lot of criticism of the drone strike policy has appeared in mainstream press that hadn't appeared before.

As the Senate considers the nomination of John Brennan to head the CIA, where he will oversee CIA drone strikes, urge the Washington Post to ask the public an unbiased question on drone strikes.

http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=zBKtJb9NbnerMzyz5Gs3GnxILQ5eKvoQZ

In February 2012, under the headline, "Poll finds broad support for Obama's counterterrorism policies," the Washington Post reported that "The Post-ABC News poll found that 83 percent of Americans approve of Obama’s drone policy." [1] This Post report had the effect of convincing many people that the drone strike policy was overwhelmingly popular. But here is the question that was actually asked: [2]
"... thinking about the following decisions of the Obama administration, please tell me whether you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove ... c. The use of unmanned, "drone" aircraft against terrorist suspects overseas"

The Post assumed there was no meaningful distinction between current policy and targeting "terrorist suspects." That was the "official story" the Administration had just put out.

On January 30, 2012, just before the Washington Post poll was conducted, in an unprecedented and widely reported public discussion of the policy, President Obama described the policy as "pinpoint strike on al Qaeda operatives." [3] But as the New York Times reported a few months later, [4]

In Pakistan, Mr. Obama had approved not only "personality" strikes aimed at named, high-value terrorists, but "signature" strikes that targeted training camps and suspicious compounds in areas controlled by militants.

But some State Department officials have complained to the White House that the criteria used by the C.I.A. for identifying a terrorist "signature" were too lax. The joke was that when the C.I.A. sees "three guys doing jumping jacks," the agency thinks it is a terrorist training camp, said one senior official. Men loading a truck with fertilizer could be bombmakers — but they might also be farmers, skeptics argued.

If those State Department officials were right, then describing the policy as targeted on "terrorist suspects" was misleading, and the Washington Post poll question and report were biased.

Urge the Washington Post to ask a poll question on drone strikes that takes account of the State Department officials' criticism that drone strikes have not been targeted on "terrorist suspects," as most people would understand that phrase.

http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/act/wapo-drones-poll

Robert Naiman, Chelsea Mozen, Sarah Burns and Megan Iorio
Just Foreign Policy

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http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&e=k%2BI6llnjK4L7fZOp808uxXlQ5cKvoQZ

References:
1. "Poll finds broad support for Obama’s counterterrorism policies," Scott Wilson and Jon Cohen, Washington Post, February 8, 2012 http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&e=rBuHXiQt8E93%2Bo0Q7fVtM8K1qGgdD8n3

From FAIR (fair@fair.org)
PBS Drone Coverage Brought to You by Drone Makers
Lockheed's Nova sponsorship violates underwriting rules

1/28/13

The PBS Nova broadcast "Rise of the Drones" was sponsored by drone manufacturer Lockheed Martin—a clear violation of PBS's underwriting guidelines.

As Kevin Gosztola reported (FireDogLake, 1/24/13), the January 23 broadcast was a mostly upbeat look at surveillance and weaponized drones. "Discover the cutting edge technologies that are propelling us toward a new chapter in aviation history," PBS urged, promising to reveal "the amazing technologies that make drones so powerful."

Some of that technology, unbeknownst to viewers, was created by the company described as giving Nova "additional funding" at the beginning of the broadcast. Lockheed Martin, a major military contractor with $46 billion in 2011 sales, is the manufacturer of drones used in warfare and intelligence, including the Desert Hawk, the Falcon, the Stalker and the Tracer. In December 2012, Lockheed bought AME Unmanned Air Systems, maker of the Fury drone (New Times, 12/19/12).

Nova's history of unmanned flight technology included comments from Abe Karem, dubbed the "father of the Predator" drone. His current company, FireDogLake's Gosztola noted, has a business relationship with Lockheed Martin.

The show did not entirely skirt the controversies over drones. A section of the broadcast dealt with drone pilots firing on targets in countries like Afghanistan or Pakistan. Viewers, though, are told that drone pilots have distinct advantage over conventional pilots. One drone operator talks about how, after a strike, a drone can "stick around for another few hours to watch what happens afterwards." A more critical look at drone wars might have mentioned these are the same circumstances under which U.S. drones have attacked rescue workers and funeral processions (Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 6/4/12).

The show does not ignore the question of civilian deaths—though it says "the facts are hard to come by" and that "there are not fully reliable counts of civilian deaths. "Nova does mention that some estimates are that 30 percent of those killed are civilians, and talks about one attack that killed 23 civilians in Pakistan.

But, in keeping with the generally upbeat tone, Nova tells viewers that technology will help turn things around. "Drones can strike with pinpoint precision," the programs explains, "but their visual sensors are limited in ways that can lead pilots to make mistakes." Not to worry, though; "engineers are working to create new sensors that can see more in greater detail than ever before."


The program's sponsorship tie to the drone industry were never mentioned—though there were opportunities to disclose that relationship. In addition to Lockheed Martin's connection to one of the interview
subjects, the show discussed a U.S. drone that was captured by Iran—without mentioning that it was manufactured by Nova's underwriter. And when Nova discusses the drones of the future, it's talking about the kind of miniature drones Lockheed Martin is developing to provide "constant surveillance capabilities" (TPM IdeaLab, 7/4/12).

Though the broadcast included an underwriting announcement at the beginning ("Additional funding from Lockheed Martin: Inspiring tomorrow's engineers and technologists"), that credit was removed from the webcast, and the company is not credited on the Nova website for the episode.

So can a corporation really provide "additional funding" for public TV journalism that discusses its own interests? PBS rules would seem to say no. The network has three tests that "are applied to every proposed funding arrangement in order to determine its acceptability":

* Editorial Control Test: Has the underwriter exercised editorial control? Could it?
* Perception Test: Might the public perceive that the underwriter has exercised editorial control?
* Commercialism Test: Might the public conclude the program is on PBS principally because it promotes the underwriter’s products, services or other business interests?

On the perception test, PBS explains:

When there exists a clear and direct connection between the interests or products or services of a proposed funder and the subject matter of the program, the proposed funding will be deemed unacceptable regardless of the funder's actual compliance with the editorial control provisions of this policy.

On commercialism:

The policy is intended to prohibit any funding arrangement where the primary emphasis of the program is on products or services that are identical or similar to those of the underwriter.

It is difficult to see how PBS could argue that the Nova special does not violate these rules. And PBS wants you to believe they take such matters seriously:

Should a significant number of reasonable viewers conclude that PBS has sold its professionalism and independence to its program funders, whether or not their conclusions are justified, then the entire program service of public television will be suspect and the goal of serving the public will be unachievable.

If PBS really believe these words, why did they allow the Lockheed-funded "Rise of the Drones" to air?

**ACTION:**
Ask PBS ombud Michael Getler to investigate whether Nova's "Rise of the Drones" violates PBS underwriting guidelines.
CONTACT:
PBS Ombud
Michael Getler
ombudsman@pbs.org
Phone: 703 739 5290

DICK’S LETTER TO PBS OMBUDSMAN

Dear Mr. Getler:

I have read FAIR’s critique of “Rise of the Drones” with full support, for I wondered about the propriety of Lockheed sponsorship when I was viewing the film.  FAIR doesn't examine my greatest concern about drones.  At least twice a speaker emphasized the infancy of today’s drone technology, similar to the bi-plane at the beginning of WWI, I recall someone saying.  If the drone can spy and kill so widely and efficiently with bi-plane tech, what will be the condition of the privacy and safety of the people in the world a few decades from now?  I wish the film-makers had spent more time considering future drone dangers.

WASHINGTON POST

National Security
CIA drone strikes will get pass in counterterrorism ‘playbook,’ officials say By Greg Miller, Ellen Nakashima and Karen DeYoung, January 19, 2013

A counterterrorism manual designed to establish rules for targeted drone… (EUROPEAN PRESSPHOTO AGENCY )

The Obama administration is nearing completion of a detailed counterterrorism manual that is designed to establish clear rules for targeted-killing operations but leaves open a major exemption for the CIA’s campaign of drone strikes in Pakistan, U.S. officials said.

The carve-out would allow the CIA to continue pounding al-Qaeda and Taliban targets for a year or more before the agency is forced to comply with more stringent rules spelled out in a classified document that officials have described as a counterterrorism “playbook.”
The document, which is expected to be submitted to President Obama for final approval within weeks, marks the culmination of a year-long effort by the White House to codify its counterterrorism policies and create a guide for lethal operations through Obama’s second term.

A senior U.S. official involved in drafting the document said that a few issues remain unresolved but described them as minor. The senior U.S. official said the playbook “will be done shortly.”

The adoption of a formal guide to targeted killing marks a significant — and to some uncomfortable — milestone: the institutionalization of a practice that would have seemed anathema to many before the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Among the subjects covered in the playbook are the process for adding names to kill lists, the legal principles that govern when U.S. citizens can be targeted overseas and the sequence of approvals required when the CIA or U.S. military conducts drone strikes outside war zones.

U.S. officials said the effort to draft the playbook was nearly derailed late last year by disagreements among the State Department, the CIA and the Pentagon on the criteria for lethal strikes and other issues. Granting the CIA a temporary exemption for its Pakistan operations was described as a compromise that allowed officials to move forward with other parts of the playbook.

The decision to allow the CIA strikes to continue was driven in part by concern that the window for weakening al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Pakistan is beginning to close, with plans to pull most U.S. troops out of neighboring Afghanistan over the next two years. CIA drones are flown out of bases in Afghanistan.

“There’s a sense that you put the pedal to the metal now, especially given the impending” withdrawal, said a former U.S. official involved in discussions of the playbook. The CIA exception is expected to be in effect for “less than two years but more than one,” the former official said, although he noted that any decision to close the carve-out “will undoubtedly be predicated on facts on the ground.”

The former official and other current and former officials interviewed for this article spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were talking about ongoing sensitive matters.

Obama’s national security team agreed to the CIA compromise late last month during a meeting of the “principals committee,” comprising top national security officials, that was led by White House counterterrorism adviser John O. Brennan, who has since been nominated to serve as CIA director.
White House officials said the committee will review the document again before it is presented to the president. They stressed that it will not be in force until Obama has signed off on it. The CIA declined requests for comment.

[This is the first, uncritical three-quarters of the article. Six more paragraphs were printed in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette (1-20-13), two of which examine the Manual as institutionalizing “the CIA’s paramilitary killing program” over the objections of the ACLU, and “permanent war.” -- Dick]

Even a dead fish can go with the flow. -- Jim Hightower

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The drone-industrial complex wants 30,000 eyes in the sky spying on us Americans by 2020

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February's Lowdown

February 2013, Volume 15, Number 2

Governments, corps, cops, and crims want them--privacy lovers left and right don't

The drone-industrial complex wants 30,000 eyes in the sky spying on us Americans by 2020

- EMAIL TO A FRIEND
- PRINT THIS!
If you drive west from Marfa, Texas toward El Paso, you'll cross some 200 miles of uniquely beautiful desert valleys and mountains that run astride the Mexican border. It's a serene ride. On a sunny morning last spring, however, as I traversed this stretch, my tranquility was interrupted by something odd that appeared on the far horizon, about 20 miles distant. Coming closer to the object, curiosity turned to chill, for it gradually dawned on me that I was seeing a dark harbinger of our society's future. Hovering in the sky was a technological presence that the Powers That Be are eager to make ubiquitous throughout our country: A drone.

Officially called "Unmanned Aerial Vehicles" (UAV's), some are very large, some tiny, some can fly sideways and backwards, some can operate from eight miles up, some can hang motionless in the sky ("hover and stare" is the industry's spooky term for this capability)--and all can silently surveill whatever is occurring beneath them for miles around. The particular pilotless aircraft that I saw belonged to the Customs and Border Protection agency, a Homeland Security division that presently has nine clones of this drone technology "watching" for drug smugglers and immigrants crossing illegally into our country from any spot along the 2,000-mile border the US shares with Mexico. CBP agents, sitting at terminals in windowless buildings as far away as North Dakota, direct the pan-optic sweep of these unblinking, computerized eyes in the sky.

http://www.hightowerlowdown.org/node/3239#.URks7B1EHzg

END DRONE NEWSLETTER #9

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Dick Bennett
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