OMNI DRONE/ASSASSINATION NEWSLETTER #10.

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

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](http://muckrock.com), a free, online data-base.

Nos. 5 & 6 at end

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Terrorizing Civilian Population

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- Restricting Protest
- US Police Use Drones, Citizens Protest

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**PAKISTAN**

**PAKISTAN COURT JUDGMENT: US DRONE STRIKES ILLEGAL, VIOLATES PAKISTAN SOVEREIGNTY**

Forwarded by Sonny San Juan

Date: Friday, May 10, 2013, 6:40 PM

http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article34883.htm

**Sebastian Abbot. (AP). U.N.: “Drone Strikes in Pakistan Violate Sovereignty.” ** *ADG* (3-16-2013). The Pakistan government told the U.N. special rapporteur on human rights and counterterrorism that the attacks did not have its consent. Under Obama the strikes have increased. According to the U.N. rapporteur, US drones had caused “at least 400 civilian deaths. US denies and complains. The rapporteur called for the world community to support Pakistan in preventing the attacks. Abbot, Strikes in Pakistan Violate International Law. [The repeated attacks are in gross violation of international law, and reveal an arrogance and lawlessness familiar to the world.—Dick]
Are drones above the law? Depends on whom you ask.

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: Zeke at Amnesty International USA <alerts@takeaction.amnestyusa.org>
Date: Tue, Apr 23, 2013 at 1:39 PM
Subject: Are drones above the law? Depends on whom you ask.
To: Samuel Totten <samstertotten@gmail.com>

"[Do you] really want to tell humankind that we...are not as human as you are?"
--Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Dear Samuel,

Can the U.S. government ignore human rights when it sees fit?

According to the law, no.
According to some members of Congress and the Obama administration, yes.

Set the record straight -- take action now to prevent unlawful drone killings!

Proponents of the "global war" theory see the entire world as a battlefield to which human rights do not apply. Today a Senate committee is, rightly, holding a hearing on one of the most disturbing results of that theory: the U.S. government's secretive killer drone program, a program that has inflicted grave damage to the U.S. government's human rights credibility.

Human rights activists like you helped convince the Senate to hold today's hearing. But the fight has just begun.

Senator Lindsey Graham is part of a group of lawmakers that want to double down on the centerpiece of the global battlefield theory -- the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force -- and keep us in a state of vaguely defined drone "war" against armed groups forever.

Bad idea.

Tell officials to pull back, turn around, and ensure security with human rights. Sign on to Amnesty's letter urging lawmakers to reject the global battlefield theory and rein in drone killings.

The thing is, we don't need another law to guide the use of lethal force. The law governing any state's use of lethal force -- whether with a drone or a gun or most other weapons -- already exists.
Here's what the law requires:

- Lethal force outside of specific recognized zones of armed conflict can only be used when it is strictly unavoidable to prevent a truly imminent threat to life.

- If there is any doubt as to whether a person is a civilian, then treat the person like a civilian anyways.

- All people have human rights and a shared right to life. In other words, no citizen -- whether from the U.S. or any other country -- is above any other.

Sounds good, right?

Yes, I will speak up and tell the U.S. government to follow existing law and protect human

VFP April Actions Against Drones

VFP urges you to select one or more of the days in April to organize actions in your chapter or community to focus on the institutions which are part of the massive army of drones in the U.S. war on the world.

- Look on VFP’s website for a list of VFP actions by state next week
- Sign the Petition AGainst Drones: VFP endorsed petition calling to Ban Weaponized Drones From the World.
- Take Action Tuesdays: As President Obama reviews his kill list weekly on Tuesdays, phone the White House and ask to be put on it as long as it exists. Call: 202-456-1111
On January 8, demonstrators shout anti-U.S. slogans during a protest in Multan against the drone attacks in Pakistan tribal areas.
Drone Justice is Blind

There’s no way President Obama can fairly review each drone strike.

BY LEONARD C. GOODMAN

To whom did each targeted person pose a threat? Were they a threat to U.S. military bases or CIA installations located within their country? Were they a threat to corporate interests located within their country? Were they a threat to the regime that governs their country and allows us to fly the drones?

For the first time in history, the United States government has proclaimed its legal right to assassinate any person, anywhere on the globe, as long as our chief executive believes that person to be a terrorist. President Barack Obama has said that most of the people we are incinerating are “al-Qaeda suspects who are up in very tough terrain along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.”

Precise numbers are hard to come by, due to the secrecy under which the drone program operates. But the various groups that track drone strikes agree that since Obama took office, more than 350 strikes in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia have killed at least 2,400 people. This means, outside of Afghanistan, U.S. drones are killing on average at least 47 people a month. If you include drone strikes in Afghanistan, the numbers are much larger.

The administration’s claim as to the legality of these strikes relies on the fiction that a rigorous review of evidence takes place before a “terrorist” is targeted. However, no matter how smart and reasonable Obama might be, he is not personally reviewing the evidence against most of the people we are killing. In fact, according to CNN, at least half of drone strike deaths have been the result of “signature strikes,” in which drone operators decide, based on visual evidence of suspicious behavior, to fire on people whose identities they don’t even know. As one government official told the New York Times, to the CIA, “three guys doing jumping jacks” looks suspiciously like a terrorist training camp.

We are told that drone killings neutralize imminent threats to America, but we need only consider the numbers to know we are being lied to. There cannot be 50 people every month who were on the verge of launching an attack on the U.S. until they were “neutralized” by a drone. We therefore must ask: To whom did each targeted person pose a threat? Were they a threat to U.S. military bases or CIA installations located within their country? Were they a threat to corporate interests located within their country? Were they a threat to the regime that governs their country and allows us to fly the drones?

As new details emerge about the drone program in Pakistan, the administration’s official explanations begin to unravel. We now know, as Mark Mazzetti reported in the April 6 New York Times, that the first strike occurred in June 2004, when the
United States used a Predator drone to assassinate Nek Muhammad, a Pashtun tribesman, at the request of Pakistan. The drone also killed two boys, ages 10 and 16. In return for this killing, Pakistan allowed the CIA to deploy Predator drones in its airspace.

And as reported by the McClatchy newspapers based on a review of classified intelligence reports, under President Obama, the drone program has continued to target and kill not just senior al-Qaeda leaders, but also “hundreds of suspected lower-level Afghan, Pakistani and unidentified ‘other’ militants in scores of strikes in Pakistan’s rugged tribal area.”

In the rare cases in which Obama does personally review evidence and approve a drone strike, he is hearing only one side of the story. Just as criminal suspects always seem guilty after a briefing by law enforcement, Muslim men living in remote and lawless regions of Pakistan or Yemen will always seem like terrorists to Obama after a CIA briefing. Moreover, much of the information used for drone targeting comes from informants, who are notoriously unreliable. For example, agent “Curveball” composed elaborate drawings of Saddam’s mobile weapons labs that existed only in Curveball’s head, but were nevertheless used to justify the Iraq War.

Our founding fathers valued an adversarial system of justice because they understood that government officials, even smart and well-meaning ones, are not always right.

Law enforcement agents and prosecutors might find it convenient never to have anyone oppose or even question their evidence, but the good ones also recognize the inherent danger of such an unbalanced system.

I recently defended a murder case in Charleston, Ill. If you spoke only to the prosecutors and detectives, you would have heard how three witnesses observed my client, Chris Oliver, kicking and stomping a developmentally disabled man to death, and you would have been easily convinced that Oliver is a killer.

But because Oliver had a defense lawyer and an investigator on his side, we were able to show the jury that two of the prosecution’s witnesses were severely mentally ill, had given numerous conflicting stories and had been pressured by the police to implicate Oliver, and that the third witness had himself been implicated in the beating and named Oliver only after cutting a deal with the state. We also introduced time sheets and cell phone records overlooked by the police, which showed that Oliver was not even present for the attack but was called to the scene after the beating to care for the victim. After hearing both sides of the story, the jury in Charleston quickly acquitted Oliver of murder.

Sadly, all we will ever know about the thousands of humans incinerated by our drones is that the CIA believed them to be terrorists.

ABOUT THIS AUTHOR

Leonard Goodman is a Chicago criminal defense lawyer and Adjunct Professor of Law at DePaul University.
Wednesday, March 13, 2013 1:00 PM

Dear Dick,

Tell your Senators to support S. 505, a bill that would prohibit drone strikes in the United States.

Take Action

You have to start somewhere.

Senators Ted Cruz and Rand Paul have introduced a bill that would prohibit drone strikes in the United States. If this bill is passed into law, it would mark the first time that Congress has acted to limit the “war without borders” created by the Authorization for the Use of Military Force in 2001 after the 9/11 attacks. At long last, the "global war on terror" would have a boundary. Passage of the bill would create a precedent: Congress can act to limit the endless war.

Urge your Senators and Representative to support legislation to limit the drone war:

http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/act/s505

Last week, Senators Ted Cruz and Rand Paul introduced S. 505, legislation to prohibit drone killings of U.S. citizens on U.S. soil if they do not represent an imminent threat. [1] Cruz and Paul have said they plan to try to attach the language of the bill as an amendment to the continuing resolution which would fund federal agencies through Sept. 30. [2]

Introduction of the bill followed Senator Paul's filibuster of John Brennan's nomination to head the CIA. Paul said the purpose of his filibuster was to force the Administration to disclose more information about its claimed legal authority to conduct drone strikes. The filibuster—and Senator
Cruz' questioning of Attorney General Eric Holder in a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing—drew public attention to the fact that the Administration is claiming legal authority to target people in other countries with drone strikes, far away from any battlefield, **even when they are not an imminent threat**, as the term "imminent" is ordinarily understood. That's a clear violation of international law. [3]

New York University law professor Ryan Goodman noted in the New York Times that the Administration's "extraordinary secrecy" makes it difficult to know who the Administration thinks it can target. [4] Attorney General Holder has written that the President does not have the authority to "use a weaponized drone to kill an American not engaged in combat on American soil." Goodman asked: what, exactly, does the Obama administration mean by "engaged in combat"? The public record suggests that the Administration believes it can declare "drug traffickers" and "terrorist financiers" to be "enemy combatants" who can be targeted with drone strikes, even if they are not engaged in any fighting. Goodman notes that this "stretches the laws of war beyond recognition."

Congress has been asleep at the switch on oversight of the drone strike policy since 2004. At long last, some Members of Congress are showing interest in holding the Administration to account. Help us use the Cruz-Rand bill as a tool to pressure other Members of Congress into speaking up. **Urge your Senators and Representative to support the Cruz-Rand bill.**


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

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References:

Drone-war cheerleaders ... are trying to change the linguistic foundation of the discourse from one rooted in fact to one rooted in a sophistry that narrows the public's perception of available choices.
* In a country whose culture so often (wrongly) portrays bloodshed as the most effective problem solver, many Americans hear this now-ubiquitous drone-war argument and reflexively agree with its suppositions.
* Clean Cut Kid

David Sirota, Tahoe (NV) Daily Tribune

In my years reporting on the intentional narrowing of political vernacular to guarantee specific outcomes, I have encountered no better example of Orwellian newspeak than that which now dominates the conversation about America's drone war. Given that, it's worth reviewing the situation because it is so illustrative of how militarist propaganda operates in the 21st century.

As you know if you've paid attention to recent news, drone war proponents are currently facing inconvenient truths. This month, for instance, they are facing a new United Nations report showing that President Obama's escalation of the Afghanistan War, which is defined, in part, by an escalation in drone airstrikes, is killing hundreds of children due notably to reported lack of precautionary measures and indiscriminate use of force. They are also facing news that the rise in drone strikes is accompanying a rise in al-Qaida recruits, proving that, in predictable blowback fashion,
the attacks may be creating more terrorists than they are neutralizing.

Full story...
http://evergreenedigest.org/david-sirota-blind-theology-militarism

Related:
Clean Cut Kid, Gary G. Kohls, Duty to Warn / Evergreen Digest
http://evergreenedigest.org/clean-cut-kid
(and They Made a Killer Out of Him is What They Did)

“Court Overturns CIA Drone Ruling.” (NYT). ADG (3-16-13).

Federal appeals court ruled CIA must disclose to a judge a “description of its records on drone strikes,” in response to a FOI lawsuit by the ACLU. The judge resisted Obama administration effort to keep all records of killing terrorism suspects secret, but “it does not necessarily mean the contents of any of those records will ever be made public.” [What does this mean ?!. Transparency was one of Obama’s promises during his 2008 campaign. --Dick]
Leading national and local peace and justice organizations in Germany have launched a major campaign to oppose the German government's recently revealed plan to acquire combat drones (weaponized drones).

The organizations met together in Hannover earlier this month to begin the joint campaign. As a first step, they drafted an appeal—"No Combat Drones"—which was made public this past Sunday. Close to one hundred German organizations and hundreds of individuals have already endorsed the Appeal, signaling a very strong interest in this issue.

The Appeal will be circulated throughout Germany during the annual Easter weekend peace marches. The German activists plan to continue the campaign until the German government and military agree to abandon the plan to make use of combat drones.

Among the NATO member countries, so far only the U.K. and Italy have weaponized drones, in both cases acquired from the U.S. The drones in use by the German military up to now have been unarmed, for example, the Heron I that Germany leases from Israel for reconnaissance in Afghanistan. The German military has turned to the U.S. forces to request occasional drone strikes in Afghanistan. Some time ago the German government announced plans to work together with France to produce a European combat drone that is to be ready by 2020 -- but that seemed a long while off.

But in August 2012, Defense Minister Thomas de Maizière, a member of Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), told several leading German newspapers that he would like to obtain an Israeli or U.S. combat drone for the German military (Bundeswehr) almost immediately. "The new weapons have a huge advantage: They are more targeted," he told
the German daily Die Welt. "And the better one can target, the less damage there will be."

The announcement by de Mazière that the Bundeswehr wanted to obtain combat drones was met by hefty criticism in leading German media. For example, in October the prestigious German daily Süddeutsche published an article with the title "Drones are Terror" by a renowned German specialist in international criminal law, Professor Kai Ambos.

Then in January, in answer to an official inquiry by the Left Party of the German Parliament, Merkel's government admitted that the planning for combat drones had advanced well beyond just being a wish of the Defense Minister. Indeed, her government had already made the decision to acquire them in the near future.

Many parliamentarians were outraged. Both the Left Party and the Green Party submitted formal motions against the German government's plan to obtain combat drones. The motions have not yet been scheduled for parliamentary debate.

Even members of the SPD and the FDP expressed strong reservations. For example, the senior SPD parliamentarian Thomas Opperman told Spiegel Online: "I'm opposed to a hasty decision because this brings a new quality to warfare. We need a broad societal and parliamentary debate about the ethical and legal boundaries of the deployment of combat drones and not some backroom decision. It is entirely inappropriate that the public and parliament have learned of these plans more or less by accident."

The German media has been following the recent debates in the U.S. on targeted killings and has even reported on some of the U.S. anti-drone actions, such as the visit of 32 U.S. and U.K. activists to Pakistan last October and the disturbance of the confirmation hearing of John Brennan as CIA director.

Defense Minister Mazière has tried to reassure the opposition and the public by saying that -- unlike in the U.S. -- the German constitution would not allow the German military to use drone strikes against people in countries against which war has not been declared.

But most Germans are not convinced. According to a survey of 20 countries conducted by Pew Research Center in February 2013, 59% in Germany disapprove of drone strikes (whereas in the U.S. 62% approve of them). And a recent by ARD television in Germany shows even higher numbers of Germans opposed.
To Germans it is clear that the combat drones would in any case be used by the Bundeswehr in foreign countries, and since the end of World War II, a majority of Germans have opposed German military intervention in other countries. Nor do most Germans find credible the claim that using weaponized drones is a more "humanitarian" form of warfare. (After all, even Hitler said “I ordered the German Air Force to conduct humanitarian warfare” in his speech in Gdansk/Danzig just after the brutal Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939 that launched World War II, a war in which more than 60 million people were killed.)

With a broad social movement gathering, with the churches also against combat drones, and with political opposition in the German Parliament growing, Merkel's government last week seemed to back off of the plan to purchase combat zones this year. The German newspaper Handelsblatt reported that the German decision on whether to acquire combat drones will be postponed until 2014 -- i.e. until after the parliamentary elections in September 2013. “This issue could trip us up in the election,” said one CDU Member of Parliament, because the discussions about the human rights issues surrounding combat drones are "much too emotional at the moment."

The German government may have postponed, but clearly has not abandoned, its plans to soon acquire and later produce combat drones. Could a loud NEIN! ("No!") from the German people slow the pace of international proliferation of combat drones and help lead to a much-needed international treaty?

Elsa Rassbach is US citizen, filmmaker and journalist, who often lives and works in Berlin, Germany. She heads the “GIs & US Bases” working group in DFG-VK (the German affiliate of War Resisters International, WRI) and is active in Code Pink, No to NATO, and the anti-drone campaign in Germany. Her film short “We Were Soldiers in the 'War on Terror’” has just been released in the U.S., and “The Killing Floor,” her award-winning film set in the Chicago Stockyards, will be re-released next year.
Comments

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END DRONE NEWSLETTER #10

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