

“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

Contents of #7 Dec. 20, 2012

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

Contents #8 Jan. 22, 2013

NOVA, “Rise of the Drones”

Greenwald, Stanford/NYU on Terrorized Civilians, Living Under Drones

Cavallaro, Living Under Drones

Bailey, Assassination Drones

Sprusansky, Demand Truths of Drone War

Glaser, Drones, My Lai, Prosecution

Stauffer, UN to Investigate Drone Killings

Kucinich Holds Congressional Briefing
New Medal for Drone Pilots

Yemen: Drone Kills al-Qaeda and Innocents

Moyers and Co.: Drones vs. Democracy

Moyers and Co.: Innocents Murdered, Obama’s Nobel Peace Prize a Mistake

*Washington Post*’s Biased Reporting and Polling

PBS *NOVA* Drone Report Underwritten by Lockheed Martin, Maker of Drones (see #8)

Dick’s Letter to PBS Ombudsman

Obama Creates Manual or “Playbook:” for the Killing Process

30,000 Drones Over US by 2020

**Contents #10, May 11, 2013**

PAKISTAN

Drone Strikes Illegal

Abbot, Strikes in Pakistan Violate International Law

Amnesty International Petition: Drones Not Above Law

VFP April Black Tuesdays Project , Take Action

Goodman: Drone, Obama, CIA Assassinations—from *In These Times*

Stop Drone Strikes in US, Take Action

Disclose Records of Drone Strikes (*ADG from NYT*)
Sirota, Language of Drone War

Court Opens Secrecy, a Little

Rassbach, Germans Against Combat Drones

Contents #11

Robert Greenwald Film Needs Our Help

Extra-Judicial Killing, UN Rapporteur

Medea Benjamin Challenges President Obama

Sprusansky on Muslimi and Obama Admin. Preference for Killing

BOOKS ON DRONES (in reverse chronological order)

   Scahill, Dirty Wars

   Benjamin, Drone Warfare

   Engelhart and Turse, Terminator Planet

   Cavallaro, Living Under Drones (a long report)

Keep the Obama Drone Momentum Going!
Dear Dick --

On Thursday President Obama spoke before the American people giving a powerful and eloquent speech on the use of drones. Unfortunately the speech leaves many of the basic assumptions of a policy based on trying to kill our way to safety still in place. Help us change that.

Last year, I traveled to Pakistan and saw firsthand the damage that these drones are doing to families, businesses and the safety of our own country. Were the innocent men, women and children considered ‘a significant threat’ or did the drones malfunction? The program is still shrouded in secrecy, so all we know for sure is that countless of innocent Pakistanis are dead and the families they left behind are grieving and angry. We have some important and unique interviews but we can't finish the film without your help.

*Koch Brothers Exposed, Iraq for Sale* and *War on Whistleblowers* were all finished because you chipped in to make it happen! Donate $25 now to become a Producer on our film and see it for free when it is completed.

Thanks as always for your support.

Best,

Robert

---

**UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions**

[Extrajudicial executions are banned by Articles 6, 14, and 15 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. –Dick]
Introduction

The subject of summary or arbitrary executions had been discussed in the framework of a wider discussion on human rights. The Sub-Commission of Minorities had for a long time reported on this subject under the item "executions". Over the years, the Sub-Commission's reports revealed increasing instances of alleged summary executions. The Commission on Human Rights, in its resolution 20 (XXXV), established the mandate on summary and arbitrary executions. The creation of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.
The Commission on Human Rights, by its resolution 1982/29 of 11 March 1982, recommended that the Economic and Social Council request the Chairman of the Commission to appoint an individual of recognized international standing as special rapporteur to submit a comprehensive report to the Commission at its thirty-ninth session on the occurrence and extent of the practice of summary or arbitrary executions, together with his conclusions and recommendations. This resolution was subsequently adopted by the Economic and Social Council as resolution 1982/35 and established the mandate of the Special Rapporteur.

The mandate has been renewed several times. The Commission on Human Rights, in its resolution 1992/72, renewed the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and widened the title of the mandate to include "extrajudicial" as well as "summary or arbitrary" executions. This change indicates that the members of the Commission have adopted a broader approach to the mandate on executions to include all violations of the right to life as guaranteed by a large number of international human rights instruments.

The mandate of the Special Rapporteur covers all countries, irrespective of whether a State has ratified relevant international Conventions.

The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 8/3, requested the Special Rapporteur to:

(a) To continue to examine situations of extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions in all circumstances and for whatever reason, and to submit his or her findings on an annual basis, together with conclusions and recommendations, to the Council and the General Assembly, and to draw the attention of the Council to serious situations of extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions that warrant immediate attention or where early action might prevent further deterioration;

(b) To continue to draw the attention of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to serious situations of extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions that warrant immediate attention or where early action might prevent further deterioration;

(c) To respond effectively to information which comes before him or her, in particular when an extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution is imminent or threatened or when such an execution has occurred;

(d) To enhance further his or her dialogue with Governments, as well as to follow up on recommendations made in reports after visits to particular countries;

(e) To continue monitoring the implementation of existing international standards relating to the imposition of capital punishment, bearing in mind the comments made by the Human Rights Committee in its interpretation of article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Second Optional Protocol thereto;

(f) To apply a gender perspective in his or her work.

In carrying out his/her mandate, the Special Rapporteur:

a) Transmits urgent appeals to States in cases that evince a fear of imminent extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions to concerned Governments in the form of case summaries;

b) Undertakes fact-finding country visits;
c) Submits annual reports on activities the mandate and methods of work to the Commission and the General Assembly.

**Special Rapporteurs:**

- Mr. Christof Heyns (South Africa), since 1st August 2010
- **Mr. Philip Alston** (Australia), August 2004 – July 2010
- Ms. Asma Jahangir (Pakistan), 1998-July 2004
- Mr. Bacre Waly Ndiaye (Senegal), 1992-1998
- Mr. S. Amos Wako (Kenya), 1982-1992
CodePink co-founder Medea Benjamin is at it again.

On Thursday, she repeatedly interrupted and even got into a back-and-forth exchange with President Obama, during his speech at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C.

Benjamin, a veteran antiwar activist who is about five feet tall, has made a career of disrupting high ranking officials and forcing them to confront uncomfortable truths.

The author of *Drone Warfare, Killing by Remote Control*, Benjamin is particularly concerned about of the U.S. use of unmanned aerial vehicles for “targeted killings.”

Because drone warfare is so secretive it’s difficult to tally the casualties.

In February Senator Lindsay Graham estimated that there have been 4,700 fatalities.

According to the London-based Bureau for Investigative Journalism up to 1,727 people have been injured and up to 4,379 people have been killed by U.S. drone strikes between 2002 and 2013 in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. (These numbers don’t include the injured and dead in Afghanistan and Iraq.)

Of the dead, up to 209 have been children.
I caught up with Medea Benjamin on April 10 after she spoke at an Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace luncheon in Holman United Methodist Church in Los Angeles.

As Obama said when Benjamin repeatedly interrupted him: “The voice of that woman is worth paying attention to.”

Q: Tell us about the drone policy.

MEDEA BENJAMIN: There were between 46 and 52 drone strikes under the Bush administration. And now there are over 400 – that's not counting Afghanistan. So this has been tremendously increased under the Obama administration. If you look at Afghanistan the numbers are even more astounding -- the last year where have figures for is 2012, and that's 506 drone strikes, whereas there were very few drone strikes under Bush… The CIA runs the drone program in Pakistan solely, not with the military. Then there's a joint CIA-military program in Yemen, then the CIA is involved in a lot of use of spy drones around the world and in the proliferation of bases.
Q: How are the subjects of the targeted killings selected?

Benjamin: They’re supposed to be high-level Al Qaeda operatives that pose an imminent threat to the U.S. and American personnel and citizens. There’s supposed to be no way to capture them. We have not been told how they try to capture them or what constitutes a “high level Al Qaeda operative”… The “kill list” is calculated in the “terror Tuesdays” at the White House every week, where the President and his advisors -- including CIA -- “nominate” people to be on the kill list. Ultimately, the President has to sign off on the kill list. From what we know it looks like there are two separate but overlapping kill lists: One is the CIA kill list, the other is the military kill list. It’s speculated that [having two lists] makes it more difficult to have Congressional oversight and the executive is not thrilled about having that.

Q: How much does drone warfare cost?

Benjamin: There are hidden costs, such as hellfire missiles costing $75,000 each and the requisite personnel, the expenditure is up to $20 million per drone and maybe 800 drones have been bought… It’s not as “cheap” as it’s put out to be. One predator drone in one day of activity supposedly needs 168 people… to carry out the day’s operations… They crash a lot. So when you calculate their costs, consider that the Air Force has said about a third of their drones have crashed.

Q: On February 7 CodePink disrupted the Senate hearings considering Obama’s nominee to become the CIA Director. Why?

Benjamin: John Brennan has been the mastermind of the drone program. He’s the one who’d convene the terror Tuesday meetings at the White House… He was high up in the CIA during the Bush years, the chief of staff in the CIA to George Tenet during the years when torture, extraordinary rendition and indefinite detention were used… I thought it was quite astounding that he’d even be nominated and I was flabbergasted when so many Democrats got on board behind him.

Q: While Brennan’s confirmation process was going on, during the live Academy Awards ceremony Mrs. Obama announced that *Argo*, a movie glorifying the CIA, won the Best Picture Oscar. What did you think about that?

Benjamin: There is a real attempt to sanitize the CIA killings and to glorify the CIA and to give it a new face. That’s what happened with *Zero Dark Thirty*, that’s what happened with Michelle Obama… When she appeared my jaw dropped; I couldn’t believe it… These were really disgusting propaganda films, glorifying the role of the CIA… The fact that this was happening while the CIA is in one of its darkest periods ever in the history of this country -- there have been several times in our history when the CIA has gone rogue, and this is one of them… The CIA is absolutely out of control. The CIA has been on a killing spree… The CIA has become a death squad and to see these films get so much acclaim at the time
when the CIA is in its rogue killing phase is very disturbing.

Q: What do you think about the fact that the Senate Intelligence Committee’s report on torture remains classified?

Benjamin: It’s horrible. That information, those 6,000 pages, should be released to the public. It’s our right as U.S. citizens to know what our government has done in our name just as I think that these memos about the U.S. of drones should be released to the public.
Medea Benjamin with CodePink co-founder Jodie Evans. Photo by Ed Rampell

Ed Rampell is an L.A.-based journalist who writes regularly for The Progressive and is the author of "Progressive Hollywood, A People’s Film History of the United States."
DALE SPRUSANSKY, “FROM TWITTER TO CAPITOL HILL, YEMENI ACTIVIST EXPOSES REALITY OF U.S. DRONE WAR.” The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs (June/July 2013). Refutes John Brennan’s claim that “U.S. strongly prefers to capture suspected al-Qaeda militants.” Yemeni youth activist Farea al-Muslimi testified at April 23 Senate hearing that killing is “the administration’s modus operandi.” Sprusansky cites NYT report that some “3,000 people have been killed in drone strikes in Yemen, Pakistan and Somalia since President Obama took office in 2009,” while “only a handful of suspected militants have been captured.” Excellent article with much more detail.—Dick


BOOKS ON DRONES (in reverse chronological order)

Jeremy Scahill, Dirty Wars (2013)

US drone strikes: 'deadly and dirty' warns new book
• Big increase in drone strikes after Obama embraced hawks
• Strikes could backfire, says author
• Potential implications for Britain

• Share172
•
Not long after he was elected president, Barack Obama arranged what senior US officials called "Terror Tuesdays".

1. **Dirty Wars: The world is a battlefield**

2. by Jeremy Scahill

3. [Buy the book](http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2013/may/09/drone-warfare-medea-benjamin-review)

On the agenda were "kill lists" — names of individuals whose perceived threat to America’s security made them targets for assassination by unmanned drone attacks in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia.

The kill lists, scrutinised personally by Obama at the weekly meetings, were soon expanded to become what US journalist Jeremy Scahill, author of Dirty Wars, calls a form of "pre-crime" justice where individuals are considered fair game if they met certain life patterns of suspected terrorists.

Unidentified individuals, described as "military aged-males", would be targeted if they were at a certain place at certain times.

These are considered legitimate targets in "signature strikes".
How Obama embraced the hawks and the unaccountable and secretive Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) left behind by the Bush administration is powerfully documented in Dirty Wars, published in Britain by Serpent's Tail this week.

"One of the enduring legacies of Obama's presidency is how he has normalised assassination as a central component of what is called America's national security policy", Scahill told me.

It has been easier for a Nobel Peace prize winning liberal Democrat to get away with drone strikes, prosecuting and persecuting whistleblowers, keeping Congress in the dark, than a Republican hawk, Scahill suggests.

Congress has not been able, or not wanted, to question the drone strikes, and polls show a majority in support of them.

"They are seen as a smarter, new way of cleaning up war", said Scarhill. That encouraged him to call the book, Dirty Wars.

He added: "I believe we are creating more new enemies than we are killing terrorists...And revenge is as powerful force".

Republicans, meanwhile, have chided Obama calling the drone strikes as an alternative to transporting and interrogating terror suspects at Guantánamo Bay.

Over the past decade, the US has ordered at least 300 drone strikes in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq and Mali, taking out some high level al-Qaida targets, but also killing some 2,000 civilians, according to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

In his eight years in office, Bush ordered about 50 drone strikes aimed at alleged terrorists. Obama is believed to have ordered nearly 300 in his first term as president.

The belated stirrings of a debate in the US will not be welcomed by the British government which has already tried to distance itself from the opposition drone strikes have provoked in Pakistan, Yemen, and elsewhere.

Britain's SAS has taken part in US special operations in what Scahill calls the CIA's "black-site archipelago" and British officials are likely to be in the loop, and even helping, US security and intelligence agencies in drone strikes ordered by Washington. Lawyers acting for the British government have already warned that any UK involvement will remain secret.

Drones are here to stay. They are likely to be used more and more against targets in north, east, and west Africa, and elsewhere. Scahill subtitles his book, The World is a Battlefield.

Dirty Wars also chronicles in detail the life and death of Anwar al-Awlaki, an American killed by a drone strike in Yemen in September 2011 on the grounds that he was an influential al-Qaida supporter and operative.

His son, Abdulrahman al-Awlaki, a 16-year-old American boy, was killed in a drone strike a month later.
ABOUT JEREMY SCAHILL

"SCAHILL IS A ONE-MAN TRUTH SQUAD."

BILL MOYERS


Scahill has reported from Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Nigeria, Yemen, the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere across the globe. Scahill is a frequent guest on a wide array of programs, appearing regularly on *The Rachel Maddow Show, Real Time with Bill Maher*, and *Democracy Now!*. He has also appeared on ABC World News, CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, BBC, al Jazeera, CNN, *The NewsHour*, and *Bill Moyers Journal*. Scahill's work has sparked several Congressional investigations and won some of journalism's highest honors. He was twice awarded the prestigious George Polk Award, in 1998 for foreign reporting and in 2008 for his book *Blackwater*. In 2013, Scahill was named one of nine recipients of the Donald Windham-Sandy M. Campbell Literature Prizes at Yale University. Scahill is a member of the Writers Guild of America, East.
MEDEA BENJAMIN, DRONE WARFARE

Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control by Medea Benjamin – review
A well-researched, angry book that is also a call to arms

•

•

•

•

Steven Rose
The Guardian, Thursday 9 May 2013 05.01 EDT

Jump to comments (7)

War at arms' length … A Reaper unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) prepares for takeoff. Photograph: Steve Bain/PA

Throughout history, some forms of war and weaponry have been viewed with greater horror than others. Even ancient civilisations tried to codify the rules of war – *jus in bello*. Homer's Greeks disapproved of archery; real men fought hand-to-hand, not at a distance. Shakespeare's Henry V roared with anger when, at Agincourt, the French cavalry killed his camp followers. At the beginning of the last century, dum-dum bullets, a British invention, were outlawed following an appeal by Germany. Revulsion against the widespread use of gas in the first world war led in the 1920s to an international convention prohibiting the use of chemical and biological weapons – not that the ban stopped the British using chemicals in Iraq, or the Italians in Ethiopia in the 1930s. A landmine convention was agreed in 1997, though not signed by the US, China or Russia. Today, China, India, and perhaps surprisingly North Korea are among nuclear-armed states that have pledged no first use, though Nato, Israel and the US have not.

1. Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control
Other, equally horrific weapons go unchallenged. Napalm (invented on the playing fields of Harvard University), incendiaries, "daisy cutters", depleted uranium, defoliants … the list goes on and on. And the nature of war has changed. Warfare has become asymmetric; hi-tech states fight not each other, but shadowy insurgents, terrorists and freedom fighters. Where once the ratio of soldier to civilian war deaths was 9:1, now it has reversed. Today's hi-tech warfighters are at less risk than the civilians in whose territories they fight. The lives of each of these warfighters is precious: the US and UK mourn each of their few dead in Iraq or Afghanistan almost more intensely than they did the tens of thousands who died in 1939-45. To minimise such deaths, and to exploit developing computer and information technologies, the Vietnam war ushered in something called "the automated battlefield".

Enter the drones. As Medea Benjamin's well-researched book points out, speculation about the potential of autonomous flying vehicles long predates their actual construction. But in the modern era we have to thank above all Abraham Karem, chief designer for the Israeli airforce, who migrated to California and by the 1980s was building drones in his garage with the enthusiastic support of the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency and, later, the CIA. From then on, powered by huge advances in information and computer technology, drones have become irresistibly attractive to military and police forces across the industrialised world, providing a financial bonanza for the – mainly US and Israeli – companies that build them.

Today, drones range from the tiny humming-bird sized surveillance devices to the plane-sized Predators and Reapers carrying Hellfire missiles. "Gorgon Stare" drones can spy on an entire small city. Miniaturisation promises solar-powered insect-sized drones capable of staying aloft indefinitely or being steered into buildings to spy or kill. Drones have spun off from the military and are now used commercially in various ways, from delivering packages to spraying pesticides. You can buy your own smartphone-controlled drone from Amazon for as little as $300. There's no technical reason why they shouldn't in future replace pilots on passenger planes. And as always, there's an enthusiastic community of DIYers building and flying their own.

But it is their military use that is the focus of Benjamin's book. Initially, they were used
primarily for surveillance; by 2003, US drones were logging 1500 hours a month in Iraq; and by 2010, 20 Predator flights were providing some 500 hours of video surveillance a day in Afghanistan. They were limited in their use during the George W Bush presidency, but Barack Obama initiated a step-change by approving their use for "targeted killing", not just in Afghanistan but also Pakistan, an escalation already pioneered by the Israelis in Gaza. The drones track and kill identified militants – or individuals whose behaviour, as observed from the drone, fits a pattern thought to typify militancy. Despite numerous direct reports of civilian deaths, the Obama administration insists that so-called collateral damage is slight. However, as it also persists with the view that any prime-age male killed by a drone is by definition a militant, the claim lacks elementary credibility. Even the anger over the deliberate targeting by the CIA of a US citizen in Yemen in 2011, or the accidental killing of 20 Pakistani soldiers in Waziristan has not limited their use. A recent British poll found 54% were in favour of such targeted killing.

That such extra-judicial killing is illegal is not in doubt – as has recently been reconfirmed by the UN special rapporteur Ben Emmerson. Obama's justification is similar to Bush's – that those killed are actively threatening the security of the US. But the crucial issue is an ethical one: the pilot of a drone tracking the movements of a Waziri villager and making a life-or-death decision to fire a missile may be sitting in a control room in a US air base in the Nevada desert. That's when many will agree with Benjamin, a founder of the women's anti-war movement CODEPINK, that a moral line has been crossed.

Is firing a missile from a drone morally worse than dropping a 500lb bomb from 10,000ft? Or pressing the button that launches a cruise missile? Perhaps what is repugnant is the unique combination of deliberately firing at a specific individual, combined with distance and the knowledge that you yourself are invulnerable to retaliation. Time to reprise the ancient Greeks with their contempt for archers. Despite some loose editing and repetition, Drone Warfare is both a justifiably angry sourcebook and a call to action for the growing worldwide citizen opposition to the drones.

Steven Rose is the co-author, with Hilary Rose, of Genes, Cells and Brains. •

MORE ABOUT BENJAMIN

GOOGLE SEARCH MAY 30, 2013 PAGE ONE

1.
2.

3.

Medea Benjamin Surprised Obama Drones Speech Protest Worked
Huffington Post-May 23, 2013

Benjamin, 60, was escorted out of the hall after she repeatedly interrupted Obama's address, pressing the president on the use of drone ...

Show more

4.

5.

The ethics and efficacy of Obama's drones
Financial Times-May 12, 2013

“Drone strikes are the face of America to many Yemenis,” Mr al-Muslimi told the senators. Medea Benjamin is an anti-war activist who helped ...

6.

7.

Beyond the drones
DAWN.com-11 hours ago

Medea Benjamin raises the level of the debate on drones to the more fundamental issues of the rules of war and the drone threat to ...

Show more

8.

9.
I rather liked the questions that Benjamin shouted out before and as compensation to the families of innocent victims killed in drone strikes.

Op-Ed: Medea Benjamin on Obama's speech on security and drones

Washington - During Obama's recent speech on security and in defense of drones, his speech was interrupted not once but three times by...

Medea Benjamin describes secret weapon
Politico-19 hours ago

So just how does Medea Benjamin find her way into so many events so... Benjamin told Current that the United States's drone policy is “totally...

Posted on August 10, 2012 by understandingempire


For readers of the popular website TomDispatch.com, editors Tom Engelhardt and Nick Turse need little introduction. The weekly ‘Tomgrams’ (or articles) they write and oversee are a ‘regular antidote to the mainstream media’, and contain opinion and information on issues ranging from the ‘war on terror’ to the scoured landscapes of neoliberalism and climate change. Terminator Planet is the first book from the pair, and each chapter is composed of entries previously penned on their website, united by an analysis of the rise of remotely piloted planes, or drones, and how these technologies are re-wiring the ‘American way of war’. Often written in pithy, polemical, if not downright scathing language, the book’s primary accomplishment is its engaging and sobering set of critiques of our brave new Droneworld. For example, a common trope throughout the book is a comparison of U.S. drone warfare to
the Terminator films starring the future Californian Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger. The movie’s memorable ‘Hunter-Killer’ robots that searched for human survivors across a ravaged, skull-encrusted landscape, is a fictional dystopia that Engelhardt finds irresistible for political satire. The future is now, and with it comes a new chapter in the history of assassination.

Unfortunately the book has no real structure to it, other than the chronological order the articles were published. This becomes a real problem, especially when the book’s unavoidable redundancy starts to creep in. Nonetheless, Turse and Engelhardt cover the main issues well. While over 50 nations are developing aircraft that can be operated from thousands of miles away by ‘pilots’ sat in air-conditioned trailers, the U.S. has pioneered the extrajudicial assassinations that generate so much controversy today. At over 300, the Obama administration has authorized far more strikes than Bush ever did against people in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia; firmly entrenching the drone program as Washington’s favoured counter-terrorist strategy. As of October 2011, the MQ-1 Predator, part of an armada of over 7,500 drones, had flown more than a million hours in the sky and dropped 703 ‘Hellfire’ missiles. The geographic reach of this Droneworld is staggering: six countries have felt the full force of Predators and Reapers in strikes often spearheaded by the CIA: Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, and Libya. Despite U.S. officials, such as John Brenan, insisting that such attacks are ‘wise, ‘surgical, and ‘ethical’, civilian casualties have trailed in the wake of these shadowy assassinations. For Engelhardt, the U.S. is performing its age-old ‘inalienable’ right to act as judge, jury, and executioner on a planetary scale, attracting a storm of legal challenge and international condemnation.

The global scale of drone strikes is matched by an equally expansive ‘galaxy of drone bases’. In one of the stand-out chapters of the entire book (Chapter 6, ‘America’s Secret Empire of Drone Bases’) Turse—using original research—lists the 60 or so drone bases that are integral to U.S. military and CIA drone operations. Outside of the many training facilities within the continental U.S., the area of focus for these bases, which are often no more than small, stripped-down airfields called ‘lily pads’, is concentrated in and around the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, with bases recently constructed on the island nation of the Seychelles, as well as others in Ethiopia, Djibouti, and another ‘probably’ in Saudi Arabia. From these locations the CIA and Special Forces strike against al-Qaeda affiliates in Somalia and Yemen. Lesser known sites include bases in Italy, Turkey, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan. Additionally, in two related chapters, Turse reports on the widespread crashes of Predator drones, which for him, present a much-needed corrective to the ‘awe’ some journalists describe drones with. Due to human error, climate, and technology failures, there have been over 70 ‘catastrophic’ Air Force drone mishaps since 2000 (13 in 2011 alone), each
of which cost over $2 million.

Engelhardt hits his stride in Chapters 9 (‘Offshore Everywhere’) and 11 (‘Remotely Piloted War’). The first reports on changing U.S. military strategy with an emphasis on smaller, mobile, technologically advanced units positioned outside of the Middle East. The combination of U.S. Special Forces—which number 60,000 in some 120 nations—with Predator and Reaper drones is indicative of a new geopolitical strategy to eliminate ‘whoever’ ‘wherever’, with a small ‘footprint’; as the raid that killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan illustrated. ‘From lily pads to aircraft carriers, advanced drones to special operations teams, it’s offshore and into the shadows for U.S. military policy’ (p.120). In Chapter 11, Engelhardt argues that drone warfare represents the apex of an increased alienation, or detachment, between U.S. foreign violence, and a concerned domestic citizenry—which dates back to the 1973 ending of the draft by President Nixon. For Engelhardt, drone warfare is therefore both literally and figuratively remote.

Two final themes round out the book. The first is the precedence given to the ‘future’. Modern drones are still quite basic technologies, and need significant human involvement. But the future hints towards increased autonomy, intelligence, high-definition surveillance, and cooperation between drones, as they work together in ‘swarms’ that resemble groups of angry insects. Future scenarios for drone use imagined by the military, lifted from the Unmanned Systems Integrated Roadmap, FY 2011-2036, are used to illustrate the creative brains and possible futures that might be hatched by DARPA and for-profit companies such as General Atomics. But as Engelhardt reminds us, futuristic military technologies are never utopian solutions: from the ‘electronic battlefield’ of Vietnam, to Reagan’s ‘Star Wars’ defense initiative, to Rumsfeld’s ‘netcentric’ warfare, technology has been a perennial false prophet, and what’s more, a source of blowback. ‘Since we are incapable of thinking of ourselves [the U.S.] as either predators or Predators, no less emotionless Terminators, it becomes impossible for us that our air ‘war’ on terror is, in reality, a machine for creating what we call “terrorists”’ (p.69).

The book is not without its problems. As already mentioned, because Engelhardt and Turse have left the chapters almost untouched from the online articles, there is an unavoidable redundancy across the manuscript. Depending on how you look at it, you’ll either find this repetition a necessary commitment to the original ink, or a failed opportunity to add detail to their polemics. What makes the book a success then can also hold it back: Engelhart’s clever barbs are eminently engaging, but ultimately beg for more analysis, especially in a book with a title that claims to be the first (modern) history of drone warfare. At its best though, Terminator Planet, and the website and authors behind it, remain go-to places for
critical commentary on the science-fiction present we have woken up in.

CAVALLARO, KNUCKEY, SONNENBERG, *LIVING UNDER DRONES*, 2012

What the U.S. Won’t Discuss

James Cavallaro of Stanford Law School and Sarah Knuckey of New York University School of Law are co-authors, with Stephan Sonnenberg of Stanford, of the report “Living Under Drones.”

UPDATED SEPTEMBER 26, 2012, 10:26 AM  NEW YORK TIMES

In the United States, the dominant narrative about the use of drones in Pakistan is of a “surgically precise” and effective tool that makes the U.S. safer by enabling “targeted killings” of terrorists, with minimal downsides or collateral damage. This narrative is false.

After nine months of research, two investigations in Pakistan, and more than 130 interviews with victims, witnesses, journalists, humanitarian workers and medical doctors, we found significant evidence of harmful civilian impacts of drone policies.

*It is almost impossible to have an informed debate, because the government tries to shield its program from democratic accountability.*

First, there are civilian deaths and injuries; 474 to 881 civilians have been killed by drones in Pakistan since 2004, according to the most reliable available estimates.

Second, U.S. drone strikes cause considerable harm to the daily lives of ordinary civilians. Civilians face the constant worry that a strike may be fired at any moment – at someone’s home or car, or at a school, mosque or market. Civilians and even humanitarian workers are afraid to assist victims for fear they may be killed in a second strike.
Third, publicly available evidence that the strikes have made the U.S. safer is ambiguous at best: they have certainly killed alleged combatants, but the number of “high-level” targets killed is estimated at just 2 percent, and there is evidence that strikes have motivated further attacks.

Fourth, U.S. practices undermine respect for the rule of law and international legal protections, and may set dangerous precedents for other governments. Do we want a world in which governments are permitted to track down their enemies in any other nation, and target and kill them, with no real oversight or accountability? Even a brief thought experiment along those lines becomes very frightening, very quickly.

What should be done? The U.S. should conduct a fundamental re-evaluation of current targeted killings practices, taking into account all available evidence, the concerns of all relevant stakeholders, and the short- and long-term costs and benefits. These stakeholders must include the Pakistani civilians directly affected by drones.

Today, it is almost impossible to have an informed public debate about U.S. policies on drone warfare – primarily because of efforts by the government to shield its targeted killings program from democratic accountability. The U.S. should release Department of Justice memorandums outlining the legal basis for targeted killings, make public critical information about U.S. policies, ensure independent investigations into drone strike deaths (with prosecutions, as appropriate) and establish compensation programs for affected civilians.

GOOGLE SEARCH FOR MORE MAY 29, 2013

HERE IS THE STUDY

1. Living Under Drones: Death, Injury and Trauma to Civilians from US ... www.livingunderdrones.org/report/

Cavallaro, Knuckey, and Sonnenberg supervised and directed the preparation .... Those living under drones have to face the constant worry that a deadly strike ...
2. "Living Under Drones" Interview with James Cavallaro on The Michael Slate Show. April 11, 2013 | Revolution Newspaper | revcom.us. Listen to audio of ...

3. Press Release | Living Under Drones

The report, called “Living Under Drones,” describes the conditions of daily life in ... or had been injured themselves,” said Professor James Cavallaro, Director of ...

4. SLS News | “Living Under Drones”– New Report Issued by the ...

Sep 25, 2012 – tagged: drone strikes, drones, International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic, James Cavallaro, Living Under Drones, Pakistan ...

5. Living Under Drones: Death, Injury and Trauma to Civilians from US ...

Sep 25, 2012 – Bibliography: James Cavallaro, Stephan Sonnenberg, Living Under Drones: Death, Injury and Trauma to Civilians from US Drone Practices in ...

6. Study Finds U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan Miss Militant Targets and ...

Sep 26, 2012

In "Living Under Drones," researchers conclude the drone strikes "terrorize ... We’re joined by report ...

7. More videos for Cavallaro, Living Under »

END DRONE ASSASSINATION NEWSLETTER #11

--
Dick Bennett
My blog:
War Department/Peace Department
http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/
Newsletters
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/
Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/
National/International Days
See Newsletters
Peace, Justice, Ecology Birthdays
See INMOtion
jbennet@uark.edu
(479) 442-4600
2582 Jimmie Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72703