

CODEPINK

Drones: Made Locally, Killing Globally!



Ground The Drones Now!

Drones (unmanned aerial vehicles) are the hot new weapons of the 21st century. While drones have been around for decades, a convergence of technology and sophistication has taken them to the forefront of the arms race. There are dozens of different types of drones, but basically they fall into two categories: **surveillance** and **strikes**.

What can be done?

Make the call: Call your Member of Congress (be polite, passionate and articulate) Explain to the aide who answers the phone that you are concerned about the number of innocent civilians killed by drone attacks, that the money going to build and man drones could be better used at home toward life-affirming policies like education and healthcare, and finally, how much you care about their leadership and participation on this issue.

Organize a film showing: For free you can watch the incredible collection of Rethink Afghanistan, which provides an excellent introduction to the U.S. presence in Afghanistan.

Host a house party: Eating is one of the easiest ways to bring people together (especially with busy schedules). Host a dinner or potluck with food from the Middle East or Central/South Asia. Set aside a few minutes before or after the meal to explain the latest on the use of unmanned aerial vehicles.

Letter writing: Write a Letter to the Editor at your local newspaper about the use of drones, civilian casualties and tax payer money going to war.

Where No Soldier Has Gone Before!

Drones enhance the capacity to carry out extra-judicial assassinations. Drones can go where no soldier has gone before. They can operate unseen, unheard and often unidentified. Drones have revolutionized targeted killings/assassinations.

Israel has used drones to assassinate Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, the United States has used them in Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan and Pakistan; and Turkey has used them in Northern Iraq.

Inhumane Cost of Drones

Although it may never be known how many civilians have died as a result of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, there are estimates of hundreds of innocent bystanders who have perished in the attacks. Pakistani authorities released statistics indicating that in 2009, U.S. Predator and Reaper drone strikes killed over 700 innocent civilians. January 2010 proved to be a deadly month with 123 innocent civilians killed. Latest figures show that U.S. military drone missiles killed nearly 400 people in 2010 so far. The figures show an increase in the Pentagon attacks over the past few months. Washington claims its airstrikes target militant hideouts, but most of the attacks have killed civilians.

During the Marja assault in Afghanistan, 23 civilians were killed by the fault of Predator drone operators at Creech Air Force Base in Indian Springs, Nevada. The four American officers who sit behind a video screen with a joystick in one hand a throttle in the other were just given a reprimand.

As far back as 1982 Israel used drones against Syria. In the early nineties Israeli drones were used in the Kosovo campaign. The Israeli Air Force invades the skies over Lebanon and patrols occupied West Bank and besieged Gaza with drones. Twenty-nine civilians, including eight children, were killed in what appeared to be six missiles by drones in Gaza. In Beirut, Lebanon an Israeli drone fired and killed at least 6 civilians and wounding 16. Israel refuses to confirm whether it is using armed drones over Gaza.



A boy stands at the site of suspected U.S. drone strikes in the Janikhel tribal area in Bannu district of North West Frontier Province.

Who Profits?



Israel ranks second after the United States in the development and possession of drones, according to those in the industry. As the drones get bigger and more advanced, the more expensive they become. Small drones cost tens of thousands of dollars. Big drones are hugely expensive. Some costs as much as \$60 million in Israel. Elbit Systems Ltd. and Israel Aerospace Industries Ltd are the two manufacturers making the deadly drones --Heron TP/Eitan and Hermes 450. Between 2009-2018 the U.S. is scheduled to give Israel 30 billion dollars in military aid. The Israeli Air Force since at least 2005 have been training many operators and maintainers.

Who Profits?

According to The San Diego Union-Tribune, the Predator and Reaper drones generally cost \$4 million to \$12 million each. The upcoming U.S. Defense Appropriations FY2011 includes: \$2.2 billion for Predator drones and doubling of the Reaper fleet over the next few years. Predator and Reaper strike drones are built by San Diego-based war profiteer General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. The drone factory is located about 25 miles northeast from the main headquarters in Poway, CA. The demand for drone surveillance and strikes has increased through the request of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. Last year, U.S. tax payers paid millions for 24 new Reaper drones and Global Hawks. Northrop Grumman is the maker of the \$30 million dollar Global Hawk spy drone which is used for surveillance in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the U.S./Mexico border.



Above The Law

The United Nation's special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Philip Alston, has said that the use of drones is not so much combat as "targeted killing." Alston has repeatedly tried to get the United States to explain how they justify under international law the use of drones to target and kill individuals. The U.S. so far has refused to provide any information on the drone program. In a report to the U.N., Alston has said the U.S. government "should specify the bases for decisions to kill rather than capture particular individuals...and should make public the number of civilians killed as a result of drone attacks, and the measure in place to prevent such casualties." A further question is the extent to which a drone operator makes a killer mistake while sitting comfortably in their Langley, Virginia or Las Vegas, Nevada base safe distance from the conflict zone.

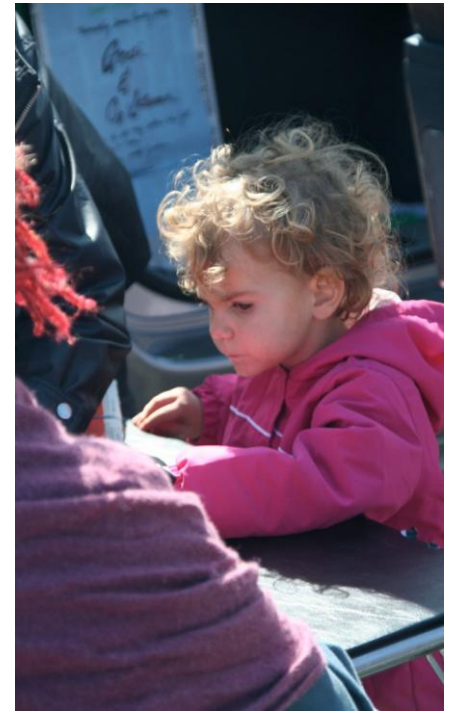
The Only Game In Town

While the U.S. Reaper and Predator drones are physically in Afghanistan and Iraq, they are controlled remotely via satellite from Creech Air Force Base just outside of Las Vegas. Ground crews launch drones from the conflict zone, then controls are handed over to operators in the Nevada desert. One person "flies" the drone; another operates and monitors the cameras and sensors; while a third person is in contact with ground troops in the conflict zone. The United States has two separate "squadrons" of armed drones – one run by the U.S. Air Force and one run by the CIA. At any one time, there are a number of armed U.S. UAV's over Afghanistan and Iraq. CIA director Leon Panetta has recently said that drones are "the only game in town." The Central Intelligence Agency has been using drones over Pakistan and other countries to assassinate "terrorist leaders." While this program was initiated by the Bush Administration, it has increased under Obama. Analysis with the Brookings Institution, of drone attacks in Pakistan, has shown that for every militant leader killed, 10 civilians have died.

Myths

Drone supporters argue since they have significant surveillance capacity and great precision, that they are able to avoid collateral casualties and injuries. Supporters state that since drones may provide the "pattern of life" information, they may allow operators to distinguish between peaceful civilians and those engaged in direct hostilities. In the Marja assault, reports indicate that 23 Afghan civilians were killed at the fault of Predator drone pilots. The statement by drone supporters is false and there is a great danger to the civilian population.

They also argue that drone strikes make American lives safer. But looking at recent events, the Pakistani-American suspected in the attempted car bombing in Times Square told authorities he was upset over the U.S. drone attacks in Pakistan. Launching drone attacks abroad angers the local population, stoking anti-American feelings and prompting acts of revenge. Finally supporters of drones will wonder why not protest manned aircrafts instead, and it is because drones kill more innocent civilians than any other conventional weapon.



CODEPINK is a women-initiated grassroots peace and social justice movement working to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, stop new wars, and redirect our resources into healthcare, education, green jobs and other life-affirming activities.

CODEPINK
WOMEN FOR PEACE: www.CODEPINKALERT.org

www.codepink.org
San Francisco, CA 94110

Further Reading

The New American Foundation website is updated regularly with research and statistics about casualties from drone strikes:
www.newamerica.net

Alston, Philip (2010) 'UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Killings, Philip Alston on DemocracyNow!
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zezGCt1KnYM&feature=player_embedded

Human Rights Watch (2009) 'Precisely Wrong: Gaza Civilians Killed by Israeli Drone-launched Missiles' Human Rights Watch Report, June 2009

Center For American Progress website has an interactive map about early drone strikes
http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/03/pakistan_map.html

Pakistan Body Count website shows an overwhelming number of civilian casualty deaths www.pakistanbodycount.org