

DRONE ATTACKS



OCCUCARD #11



EXPOSING AND OPPOSING THE CORPORATE STATE

Since 2001, unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), also known as drones, have been used by the military and CIA for the targeted killing of individuals around the world accused of being “terrorists” or “militants.” These extrajudicial assassinations have taken place in six countries, including Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, where the U.S. isn’t officially at war. Between 2004 and 2012, the CIA has conducted over 330 drone attacks in Pakistan alone, killing approximately 3,000 people, including 175 children.

Drone attacks deny those targeted a fair trial and amount to illegal, summary executions, violating U.S. and international law.

Targets are chosen from a “kill list” compiled by the CIA and approved by the President in secret meetings with no transparency or oversight of any kind. Due process is completely absent. As Medea Benjamin writes in her book, *Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control*, “The US government need not be formally at war with any country in which it carries out these killings, nor need it present any evidence—in a civilian trial, a military tribunal or the court of public opinion—that the target has committed a crime.” The CIA and President thus become judge, juror and executioner.

Drone attacks kill non-combatants, including women and children.

Many non-targeted individuals are killed with every successfully killed target, and while the Obama Administration claims the vast majority of these people are militants, administration officials admitted in May, 2012 that they use the CIA’s definition of a “militant,” which is simply “any military-age male in a strike zone.” Furthermore, most drone strikes are actually what are called “signature strikes,” where a drone operator thousands of miles away targets an unknown individual based merely on a perceived pattern of behavior. The CIA’s criteria for determining the “behavior signature” of a terrorist, however, has been criticized by State Department officials as too lax. Faulty intelligence, misidentifications and

malfunctions are also common occurrences that have led to the killing of dozens of non-targeted individuals.

Drone attacks violate national sovereignty, anger local populations, stoke anti-American sentiment and prompt violent acts of revenge.

While the corporate media loves to emphasize the high-profile al-Qaeda members the strikes have killed, it is foolish to believe drone attacks, which kill so many non-combatants, make us safer from terrorism. As former Army officer Andrew McDonald Exum writes, “Every one of these dead noncombatants represents an alienated family, a new desire for revenge, and more recruits for a militant movement that has grown exponentially even as drone strikes have increased.”

Drones have become a primary weapon of United States foreign policy, a policy designed to maximize profits for transnational corporations. The areas where killer drones are being used—the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa—are all places that either have large oil reserves, are key oil transportation routes, or have other resources being sought by transnational corporations. One must ask whether the so-called “War on Terror” is really about keeping us safe, or as retired Lieutenant Colonel William Astore writes, about feeding the “web of crony corporations, lobbyists, politicians and retired military types who pass through Washington’s revolving door ... engorged by untold trillions devoted to a national security and intelligence complex that dominates Washington.”

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