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WAR ON DEMAND

The Global Rise of Drones

By Medea Benjamin

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The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation is an internationally operating, progressive non-profit institution for civic education. In cooperation with many organizations around the globe, it works on democratic and social participation, empowerment of disadvantaged groups, alternatives for economic and social development, and peaceful conflict resolution.

The New York Office serves two major tasks: to work around issues concerning the United Nations and to engage in dialogue with North American progressives in universities, unions, social movements, and politics.

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Magical Weapons, Futuristic Warfare

The last years have witnessed the dawn of a new type of warfare: drone strikes. Especially since President Barack Obama took office in 2009, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), as they are technically named, have turned into a major weapon in the so-called War on Terror. With the United States in the lead, a number of other nations—including the United Kingdom, Israel, and China—have increased their use of UAVs. The latest newcomer to the club is Germany, where the government recently announced that it plans to acquire drones.

The promises put forth by drone advocates are huge: Drones are very cheap; they can be operated easily and with technical precision; and most important, they are very effective against terrorists, thereby precluding the need to send sons and daughters to the frontlines. They offer us, in short, a humane way of waging a clean war.

Or so we are told.

In this publication, Medea Benjamin, cofounder of CODEPINK and Global Exchange, convincingly demolishes popular myths surrounding the use of drones. Benjamin's firsthand accounts from her 2012 CODEPINK delegation to Pakistan show that reality is never quite as clean cut as futuristic fantasies would suggest. Rather, misidentified targets and human error remain just as much part of the picture as in traditional warfare. And while drones may seem to be an effective tool in targeting suspected terrorists, their inevitable impact on families and communities—cynically called “collateral damage”—only leads to radicalizing civilian populations against the United States. Farea Al-Muslimi, a young Yemeni activist and journalist who testified at the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee on the legality of drone strikes, concurs: “Drone strikes are the face of America to many Yemenis. If America is providing economic, social and humanitarian assistance to Yemen, the vast majority of the Yemeni people know nothing about it. [Drone strikes] allows AQAP [al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula] to convince more individuals that America is at war with Yemen.”

The unanswered legal and moral questions surrounding armed drone usage have, for the most part, not been addressed by the drone advocates. They try to avoid this debate because this is a debate they can hardly win. Given that the targeted people aren't given any trial, nor the presumption of innocence, can and should citizens entrust government officials with the power to “play prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner at the press of a button?” The answer, according to Benjamin, is a resounding “No.”

And in fact, resistance against drones is on the rise—in the U.S. and abroad. Protests have been organized not only in the targeted areas, but also in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany. The United Nations is conducting an official inquiry into the impact of drone usage on civilians. As with all these crucial efforts, the first step toward community action—and what we aim for with this publication—is the critical analysis of the current situation.

*Stefanie Ehmsen and Albert Scharenberg
Co-Directors of New York Office, June 2013*

War on Demand

The Global Rise of Drones

By Medea Benjamin

On September 7, 2009, throughout the day, two drones were hovering over the skies of Mirali Tehsil in North Waziristan, Pakistan. It was the month of Ramadan and people in the area were angry that the drones were interfering in their religious activities. They were also scared, but in Pashtun culture showing one's fear is cowardice and a matter of shame, so the fear was left unspoken.

Fifteen-year-old Sadaullah, a local student, was particularly happy that day since a feast for iftar (breaking of the fast) was planned at his house that evening. His grandfather and uncles were coming, and his mother was cooking his favorite meal. Sadaullah saw the unmanned machine in the air and joked with his friends about the "bangana," a local name given to drones in the area due to the constant noise they make.

In the evening, the house was crowded with all the men in the family—grandfathers, uncles, and cousins. Everyone broke their fast and proceeded to the courtyard for prayers.

The lucky ones had already reentered the house when the missile struck. Not Sadaullah. He fell unconscious under the debris of the fallen roof. When he awoke at a hospital in Peshawar, he was blind in one eye from the shrapnel and both his legs had been amputated. He later learned that his elderly uncle, who had been sitting in a wheelchair, was dead, as were two of his cousins, Kadaanullah Jan and Sabir-ud-Din.

"I had a dream to be a doctor," said Sadaullah, "But now I can't even walk to school." So he studies religion in the village madrassah and has little hope for the future.

1. The Evolution of Drones

As American and European publics grow weary of foreign interventions that kill their own soldiers, ground troops are rapidly leaving Afghanistan and Iraq, and government leaders are pledging to keep them out of Syria and other hot spots. Western lives are spared, while the killing continues unabated among a growing circle of "others"—primarily Arabs, Africans, and South Asians. The U.S. and Israel have been at the forefront of this shift in strategy, but Eu-

ropean countries are fast joining—inspiring a backlash that will increasingly haunt us.¹

At the same time, however, Western governments are increasingly using drones to monitor dissent at home. As Pakistanis, Palestinians, Yemenis, and others have learned around the world, surveillance can be a form of "terror"

¹ Special thanks to Pam Bailey for her assistance.

as well. One Pakistani father of three told my delegation, “Drones are always on my mind. It makes it difficult to sleep. They are like a mosquito. Even when you don’t see them, you can hear them; you know they are there.”

There is nothing wrong with the technology of drones, per se. They can be used to pinpoint and prevent forest fires. They can spot illegal loggers on vast expanses of land. They can track endangered species. They can even help to predict the weather. But the vast majority of drones are being used for killing and spying, and are both fueling a backlash from the innocent people caught in the crosshairs and eroding what little civil liberties remain after the launch of the “War on Terror.”

In the broader context, drones are a manifestation of the meteoric regeneration of the global arms trade—an industry that reached one trillion U.S. dollars in 2013, close to Cold War military spending levels.² Meanwhile, the expanding volume of arms produced for use overseas has triggered a concurrent militarization of domestic law enforcement. In the United States and elsewhere, for instance, massive SWAT raids using military-style equipment are becoming routine methods for executing search warrants. One study estimated that 40,000 such raids occur per year in the United States: “These increasingly frequent raids [...] are needlessly subjecting nonviolent drug offenders, bystanders and wrongly targeted civilians to the terror of having their homes invaded while they’re sleeping, usually by teams of heavily armed paramilitary units dressed not as police officers but as soldiers.”³

These are the inevitable outcomes of the fearful atmosphere that ensued in the wake of 9/11

and other terrorist attacks, coupled with the overwhelming power of the military-industrial complex, a development U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower warned against when he left office in 1961: “Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.”

Yet while the CIA had operated its drones program—in Pakistan, Yemen, and Afghanistan among other places—for a considerable amount of time, it refused to deny or confirm the very existence of the operation to prevent the release of documents as requested by the American Civil Liberties Union under the Freedom of Information Act.⁴ An alert citizenry kept in the dark by its own government about extrajudicial killings on foreign soil departs sharply from Eisenhower’s vision of a secure and prosperous future.

“Drones,” or un-manned aerial vehicles (UAVs), can be as tiny as a small bird or as large as an airliner, and while they were first used for surveillance (and still are), they are increasingly used to wage war via lethal missile payloads. Either way, what distinguishes drones from other high-tech military vehicles is their remote operation; sitting at control panels thousands of miles away, pilots play “big brother”—or assassin—simply by pushing a button or lever.

Pilotless aircraft for warfare were first tested by enterprising individuals attempting to cater to the U.S. and British military during World War I, although they were not ready for actual combat until much later. Development of radio-controlled, pilotless aircraft continued, leading up to and during World War II—including trial runs by Nazi Germany, reportedly causing more than 900 deaths and 35,000 injuries among

² Anup Shah, “The Arms Trade is Big Business,” www.globalissues.org, Jan. 5, 2013.

³ James Simpson, “The Growing Militarization of U.S. Police,” *WND*, April 7, 2013.

⁴ ACLU, Predator Drone FOIA www.aclu.org/national-security/predator-drone-foia.

civilians.⁵ The term “drone” is believed to have developed from a British prototype during this period, called the “Queen Bee.” At some point, this analogy is said to have led to the adoption of the nickname “drone” (the zoological term for male bees).⁶

It was not until the Vietnam War that the United States fully employed unmanned aerial vehicles. Concern was high that U.S. airmen would be captured by the enemy and divulge sensitive information. These fears were realized in May 1960, when U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers was shot down over the Soviet Union. Not surprisingly, work intensified on an unmanned drone that would be capable of penetrating deep into enemy territory, returning with precise military intelligence. Within three months of the downing of the U-2, the highly classified UAV program was born.

A decade later, another of today's heaviest drone users jumped on the accelerating bandwagon. During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Soviet-supplied surface-to-air missiles in Egypt and Syria caused heavy damage to Israeli fighter jets. Stung to the quick, Israel obtained Ryan Firebee drones from the United States,

successfully luring Egypt into firing its entire arsenal of anti-aircraft missiles. This mission was accomplished with no injuries to Israeli pilots, who soon swooped in over the depleted defenses. High on this success, Israel developed what is considered the first modern UAV, using its light, glider-style Scout and Pioneer drones as decoys as well as for real-time surveillance and electronic warfare.⁷

The United States acquired Pioneer UAVs from Israel for deployment in the Gulf War, but it wasn't until San Diego-based General Atomics developed the Predator drone that unmanned aerial vehicles earned a permanent place in the U.S. arsenal. Military use of drones was becoming an American staple, from the 1999 Kosovo intervention, to the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, and later to the 2003 occupation of Iraq.⁸ Israel also continues to rely on them extensively to both monitor the movements of Palestinians and conduct targeted killings. In fact, according to Human Rights Watch, multiple reports indicate that the strike on Hamas military chief Ahmed al-Jabari, whose assassination kicked off the “Eight-Day War” on the Gaza Strip in 2012, was carried out by a drone.⁹

2. Justifying a Dirty Business

It is clear why drones are being embraced with such ardor. They are a lucrative business and they allow governments to prosecute the “War on Terror” indefinitely at an acceptable cost in terms of their own citizens' lives and tax dollars. Or so it is commonly believed. Let's take a look at each of those justifications separately.

Drones Are a Humane Way of Waging War

It is claimed that drones are so precise that civilian deaths and injuries are rare. First, it is im-

5 NOVA, www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/spiesfly/uavs_07.html.

6 Greg Goebel, “Early US Target Drones,” vectorsite.net.

7 Tom Scheve, “A Brief History of UAVs,” howstuffworks.com.

8 Jeremiah Gertler, “U.S. Unmanned Aerial Systems,” Congressional Research Service, Jan. 3, 2012.

9 Alex Pearlman, “Drones: ‘Killer robots’ wage Israel-Gaza violence,” *Global Post*, Nov. 10, 2012.

portant to recognize that we really don't know how many people drones have killed. Government officials rarely divulge civilian casualties from drone strikes. When they do, they generally cite extremely low and heavily contested estimates in the single digits but offer no substantiation. For Iraq, no reliable information exists on drone usage and its impact on civilians, though it is clear that the deployment of drones was amped up as it became clear that U.S. soldiers were going to leave the country.¹⁰ In Afghanistan, the UN Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has tracked the frequency of U.S. drone strikes, which increased 72 percent in 2012 and which are similarly expected to take center stage in the War on Terror.

The three best-known and most widely quoted sources of aggregated strike data are the *Year of the Drone* project by the New America Foundation think tank; *The Long War Journal*, a blog and project of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies; and The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (TBIJ), a London-based non-profit. The bureau maintains the most dynamic database, updating its strike information frequently to reflect new information as it comes to light from its own and other investigations.

According to the bureau, about 3,800 individuals have been killed by U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia, but the U.S. government can only identify two percent of these as "high-value targets." So who are all these others? Many were low-level fighters, who got involved as a means of financial survival or to fulfill a tribal code of revenge against those who killed their loved ones. Still others were civilians.

The use of "signature strikes"—in which missiles target "patterns of activity" such as large gatherings instead of known individuals—makes civilian deaths and injuries inevitable,

particularly when those large gatherings turn out to be weddings and other family celebrations. But even when specific persons are the target, "collateral damage" is common. For example, as a result of equipment errors, design defects, and bad weather, the U.S. Air Force employs a tactic it dubs the "double tap" (firing two missiles consecutively at each target) to compensate for deficiencies. However, this increases the possibility of civilian deaths, particularly as individuals rush to help others hit by the first strike. TBIJ has documented more than fifty civilian deaths as a result of "double taps."¹¹

In addition, even when missiles hit their designated target, casualties, injuries, and damage are broader. The blast radius from a Hellfire missile can extend anywhere from 15 to 20 meters (49 to 65 feet), and shrapnel is frequently projected significant distances.

Drones Are Effective Against Terrorists

There is ample evidence that drone strikes are recruiting new members for militant groups, which is a risk not only for U.S. soldiers and personnel overseas but for all Americans. A Pew poll in 2012 found that roughly three in four Pakistanis (74 percent) consider the United States an enemy, up from 69 percent last year, and 64 percent three years ago.¹² When Pakistani Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar was asked why there was so much animosity in her country towards the United States, she gave a one-word answer: "drones."

Anum Abbasi, an associate with the Research Society of International Law in Islamabad, told my CODEPINK delegation to Pakistan in Octo-

10 Tom Vanden Brook, "Drone attacks hit high in Iraq," *USA Today*, April 29, 2008

11 Chris Woods and Christina Lamb, "Obama terror drones: CIA tactics in Pakistan include targeting rescuers and funerals," *Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, Feb. 4, 2012.

12 "Pakistani Public Opinion Ever More Critical of U.S.," *Pew Research Global Attitudes Project*, June 27, 2012.

ber 2012 that her own research has documented that this anti-American sentiment is indeed largely driven by the drone attacks, which are directly fueling membership in militant groups.

"I interviewed young children from Waziristan and surrounding areas, all under the age of 21, who were being questioned by Pakistani authorities for having links with extremist organizations, including Taliban factions," Anum told us. "What became clear from this empirical research is that a primary motivator is the U.S. drone strikes. They breed anger, hatred, and desperation."

We will, in other words, reap what we sow. We saw this firsthand when the delegation met Karim Khan, the head of a large family in a tiny village in North Waziristan. On December 31, 2009, as most Westerners were gearing up for an evening of festivities, a drone strike leveled the *hujra*, or "community space" within his compound. Normally, the space was used for *jirgas*, gatherings in which community members make decisions on issues that affect their village, but there was no *jirga* in process that evening. Khan was hundreds of miles away, in Islamabad, when a U.S. drone sent six Hellfire missiles crashing into his compound. The victims: a mason who was building a mosque nearby, Khan's 18-year-old son, and his younger brother, who worked as a teacher and believed education was more powerful than the gun. Instead, the drones taught Khan, and his brothers' students, hatred.

"I will never forget what the American soldiers did to my country, my tribe, and my family," Khan told the CODEPINK delegation. "They violated our national sovereignty and our Islamic laws. They killed my son and my younger brother. They destroyed my home. If I see the soldiers who are responsible for this—if I have the opportunity—I will kill them." This is what "blow-back" means—the longer-term consequences

of the spread of a murder-by-remote-control technology that, in the words of Captain Kirk from *Star Trek*, makes war—for the perpetrators, at least—"neat and painless. So neat and painless, you've had no reason to stop it."

And then there is faulty intelligence. The CODEPINK delegation was informed of numerous cases of deliberate misinformation from informants trying to either settle old tribal feuds or simply make some desperately needed cash. Simple mistakes are common as well. A video of a truck carrying pomegranates can look just like a truck carrying boxes of explosives. In February 2002, for example, a drone pilot reportedly killed three Afghan men—including a tall man who he thought was Osama bin Laden but was just a villager gathering scrap metal.¹³

"The U.S. just does not have very good human intelligence capabilities in a place like Yemen, and I think that's born out in the mistaken strikes it carries out as well as the growing number of Al Qaeda fighters there," Gregory D. Johnsen, author of *The Last Refuge: Yemen, Al Qaeda and America's War in Arabia* told *The National*. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has at least tripled in size since the United States intensified targeted strikes in Yemen.¹⁴

Al-Qaeda members have become more accustomed to drones and have found many ways to avoid them. A document containing al-Qaeda's 22 tips for dodging drone attacks was found in an abandoned building in Mali. They range from buying a Russian-made device to scramble the drone's electronic communication, to using underground shelters, to hiding under thick trees.¹⁵

13 Jane Mayer, "The risks of CIA's Predator drones," *The New Yorker*, Oct. 26, 2009.

14 Taimur Khan, "Drone war goes global as demand soars," *The National*, Feb. 22, 2013.

15 "Al-Qaeda's 22 tips for dodging drone attacks: the list in full," *The Telegraph*, Feb. 21, 2013.

Drone Strikes Are Legal

The legality of killing by drone has been the subject of much posturing. The arguments for or against basically depend on whether the perpetrator can credibly argue that the strikes are in self-defense, or with the consent of the government of the targeted country.

John Brennan, President Obama's counter-terrorism advisor and CIA chief, had this to say in a 2012 speech:

As a matter of international law, the United States is in an armed conflict with al-Qaeda, the Taliban and associated forces, in response to the 9/11 attacks. We may also use force consistent with our inherent right of national self-defense. There is nothing in international law that bans the use of remotely piloted aircraft for this purpose or that prohibits us from using lethal force against our enemies outside of an active battlefield, at least when the country involved consents or is unable or unwilling to take action against the threat.¹⁶

However, many human rights experts outside the Obama Administration dispute Brennan's claim that the United States is in legal armed conflict in locales such as Pakistan and Yemen. "Today, under the international legal definition of armed conflict, the United States is involved in such hostilities in one country only: Afghanistan (which served as home for Osama Bin Laden, mastermind of the World Trade Tower attacks)," writes Law Professor Mary Ellen O'Connell for *The Guardian*.

Beyond Afghanistan, any use of lethal force by designated authorities of the United States must follow the normal human rights limits on peacetime resort to lethal force. Authorities may engage in lethal force only when necessary to save a human life immediately, if there is no alternative. In other cases, an attempt to arrest is required, followed by a fair trial within a reasonable period.¹⁷

16 Tabassum Zakaria, "White House: U.S. drone killings legal to combat threats," Reuters, April 30, 2012.

17 Mary Ellen O'Connell, "Why Obama's 'targeted killing' is worse than Bush's torture," *The Guardian*, Jan. 20, 2012.

"Anticipatory" self-defense requires "immediate" danger and "distinction" in targets; a practice of targeting all military-age men is clearly not permissible.

As for the consent of local governments, that excuse no longer exists for Pakistan. "Drone attacks are against sovereignty of Pakistan, against international law and against the UN charter," Jalil Abbas Jilani, the administrative head of Pakistan's Foreign Ministry has told members of Parliament in Islamabad.¹⁸ In March 2013, Ben Emmerson, the United Nations' special rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights, agreed, noting that the U.S. attacks no longer have the excuse of even tacit consent.

What remains is John Brennan's claim that the United States, or one of its partners, can intervene militarily when a local government is "unable" or "unwilling" to act on its own. However, international lawyers beg to differ. "Drones are not lawful for use outside combat zones," O'Connell, a professor at Notre Dame Law School, told a Congressional hearing in April 2010. "Outside such zones, police are the proper law-enforcement agents, and police are generally required to warn before using lethal force."

The entire world is not a war zone, and wartime tactics that may be permitted on battlefields cannot be deployed anywhere in the world simply because of where a suspected terrorist is believed to be located. At least, not unless we're prepared to scrap all semblance of international law.

Drones Are Cheap and Easy to Use

It is true that drones are significantly cheaper to purchase than manned aircraft. Lockheed Martin's F-22 fighter jets cost around \$150 million apiece, while F-35s are \$140 million and F-16s

18 "Pakistan urges U.S. to end drone strikes," Al-Jazeera, Feb. 8, 2013.

are \$55 million. In contrast, the 2011 price of the Predator was \$5 million and the Reaper was \$28.4 million.¹⁹ However, the drone itself isn't the entire cost. For example, the purchase price of each Hellfire missile is \$68 000, and while the cost of fueling, operating, and maintaining drones is not fully known (it's in the CIA's "black budget"), every hour a UAV is in the air, the cost is an estimated \$2000-\$3500. Between 2001-2010, the time the Air Force devoted to flying missions went up 3,000 percent.

Then there is the significant number of personnel needed to support a drone operation, even though the vehicles are unmanned. According to the U.S. Air Force, it takes a jaw-dropping 168 people to keep just one Predator aloft for 24 hours. For the larger Global Hawk surveillance drone, 300 people are required for the same period. In contrast, an F-16 fighter aircraft requires fewer than 100 people per mission.²⁰

Drones also often don't last very long. They crash, a lot. One Congressional study found that "excessively high losses of aircraft can negate cost advantages."²¹ In 2009, the Air Force admitted that more than a third of its Predator spy planes had crashed, mostly in Afghanistan and Iraq.²²

As for the pilots themselves, there is no question that the countries using drones are sheltering their own soldiers from the risk of harm in combat. But that does not mean drones are "risk free." What is rarely discussed is the high level of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among drone operators. Studies conducted by the Air Force itself found that nearly half of drone pilots report "high operational stress," in contrast to 36 percent of a control group of 600 Air Force members in logistics or support jobs. Nearly a third of the U.S. Air Force's 1,100 drone operators suffer "burnout," with 17 percent thought to be "clinically distressed."²³

Drone pilots also complain of the stress—and boredom—of looking at a screen for 10-12 hours a day. Others find it hard to integrate into their families and communities after a day on the job that might include pressing a "kill button." While killing people from afar might be traumatizing, the rationale goes, at least the soldiers are not risking their lives. That's a very shortsighted perspective, however.

With all these hidden costs, drones are certainly not as cheap and risk-free answer as they are claimed to be.

3. The Players and Their Targets

Today, both the targets and the perpetrators are expanding at a dangerously rapid rate. The United States accounts for 77 percent of worldwide research and development of drones and

about 69 percent of purchasing dollars²⁴—a status earned after its drone program went into overdrive in the wake of the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 and Congressional passage of a mandate to literally pursue terrorists to the ends of the earth. However, U.S. aggression is triggering drone development and deployment around the world.

19 Jeremiah Gertler, "U.S. Unmanned Aerial Systems," Congressional Research Service, Jan. 3, 2012, p. 22.

20 David S. Cloud, "Contractors' Role Grows in Drone Missions, Worrying Some in the Military," *McClatchy News*, Dec. 29, 2011.

21 "Policy Options for Unmanned Aircraft Systems," Publication 4083, Congressional Budget Office, Washington, DC, June 2011.

22 Christopher Drew, "Drones Are U.S. Weapons of Choice in Fighting Qaeda," *The New York Times*, June 20, 2011.

23 Rachel Martin, "Report: High Levels Of 'Burnout' In U.S. Drone Pilots," NPR, Dec. 19, 2011.

24 Steve Zaloga and David Rockwell, "UAV Market Set for 10 Years of Growth," *Earth Imaging Journal*, 2011.

The U.S. example of sending drones wherever it wants and killing whomever it wants on the basis of secret information, treating the entire world as a battlefield, is leading to a world of lawlessness. Innocent lives are snuffed out without a trace of responsibility or accountability. Gone are the niceties of judicial processes—charges, trials, convictions, innocent until proven guilty. Drones don't give their targets a chance to surrender. They don't capture, charge, and try their victims; they simply pulverize them.

According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), in 2005 there were already 41 countries that had UAVs, mostly for surveillance purposes. By 2012, that number had almost doubled to 76.²⁵ About 50 of those governments are jumping into the drone business as a "profit center" by building their own.

Although the United States and Israel dominate the export market, South Africa, Germany, Austria, Italy, and China all export UAV technology as well.²⁶ How many of these countries actually possess armed drones is unknown, although the British Ministry of Defense puts the number at "less than a dozen."²⁷ Only the United States, the United Kingdom, and Israel are known to have launched drone strikes against their adversaries,²⁸ although other members of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, such as Australia, have "borrowed" weaponized drones from Israel.

For how long will the lid stay on Pandora's box? Those with access to this remote-controlled technology—whether they are democratically elected leaders, dictators, or terrorists—acquire the simultaneous ability to play prose-

cutor, judge, jury, and executioner at the press of a button. In the following I will highlight the main players in the escalating drone race.

United States

During the years of President George W. Bush, drones played a key role in the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. In Afghanistan, they were mainly used for surveillance but also to target low-level Taliban fighters in remote areas and to support U.S. troops in firefights. In Iraq, drones were deployed for everything from protecting oil fields, to blowing up government buildings, to tracking and killing militants.

However, it was really under President Barack Obama, who pledged to minimize the deployment of American troops during his election campaign, that the use of drones took off — both in countries where the United States was at war, and in those where it was not. Meanwhile, a number of other U.S. targets have emerged, with the military and the CIA operating from no fewer than 60 drone bases around the world.²⁹

Afghanistan and Pakistan

Even as President Obama announced the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, drone attacks increased. The *Los Angeles Times* reported on February 21, 2013, that in the previous year, the U.S. military launched 506 drone strikes in Afghanistan, up 72 percent over 2011. UAVs accounted for five percent of air strikes in Afghanistan in 2011; in 2012, the figure rose to twelve percent.³⁰

Pakistan has been the "bull's-eye" for U.S. drone use—primarily under the covert direction of the CIA. In 2009, during his first full year in office,

25 "Agencies Could Improve Information Sharing and End-Use Monitoring on Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Exports," U.S. Government Accountability Office, July 30, 2012.

26 David Knoll, "Will America's Addiction to Drone Strikes Backfire?", *The Diplomat*, Oct. 23, 2012.

27 UK Parliamentary records, Commons debate, Oct. 29, 2012.

28 Peter Bergland and Jennifer Rowland, "A dangerous new world of drones," CNN, Oct. 8, 2012.

29 Nick Turse, "America's Secret Empire of Drone Bases," www.tomdispatch.com, Oct. 16, 2011.

30 Shashank Bengali and David S. Cloud, "U.S. drone strikes up sharply in Afghanistan," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 21, 2013.

President Obama authorized as many drone strikes on Pakistan as Bush had in *five years*.

Graphic: CIA Drone Strikes on Pakistan

	Bush (2004 to early 2009)	Obama (2009)
Total CIA drone strikes	52	53
Total reported killed	416-599	517-729
Civilians reported killed	170-292	98-207
Children reported killed	106-123	36-41
Total reported injured	211-284	301-376

Source: The Bureau of Investigative Journalism

That pattern continued into 2010, driven in part by a policy that, as reported by *The New York Times*, “in effect counts all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants.” Intelligence officials were quoted as saying, “Simple logic indicates that people in an area of known terrorist activity [...] are probably up to no good.”³¹ The hits resulting from this philosophy have become known as “signature strikes”—the targeted killing of individuals whose names are not known but whose behavior is considered the “signature” or “hallmark” of militants/insurgents/terrorists.

Yemen

According to The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, the CIA implemented the first U.S.-directed targeted assassination using a drone in November 2002 in Yemen. The country increasingly became a target as it experienced extreme turmoil during the Arab Spring. As al-Qaeda (along with other militants) seized control of cities and towns in the south, the United States significantly stepped up its attacks, most notably with drone strikes. The attacks—conducted by the CIA and the military’s elite Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), separately or together—are at times implemented in conjunction with the Yemeni military.

31 Jo Becker and Scott Shane, “Secret ‘Kill List’ Proves a Test of Obama’s Principles and Will,” *The New York Times*, May 29, 2012.

At first, according to *The New York Times*, President Obama overruled military and intelligence commanders who wanted to carry out signature strikes in Yemen. However, he reversed himself in April 2012, when Obama gave permission to kill suspects in Yemen whose names were not known.³² The result has been an escalating level of civilian “collateral damage” and an undermining of the Yemeni government in the eyes of its people. This story reported in the *Washington Post* about a Sept. 2, 2012 incident illustrates once again the principle of “blowback:”

A rickety Toyota truck packed with 14 people rumbled down a desert road from the town of Radda, which al-Qaeda militants once controlled. Suddenly a missile hurtled from the sky and flipped the vehicle over.

Within seconds, 11 of the passengers were dead, including a woman and her 7-year-old daughter. A 12-year-old boy also perished that day, and another man later died from his wounds.

The Yemeni government initially said that those killed were al-Qaeda militants and that its Soviet-era jets had carried out the attack. But tribal leaders and Yemeni officials later revealed that it was an American assault and that all the victims were civilians who lived in a village near Radda, in central Yemen. U.S. officials last week acknowledged for the first time that it was an American strike...

U.S. airstrikes have killed numerous civilians in Afghanistan, Pakistan and other parts of the world, and those governments have spoken against the attacks. But in Yemen, the weak government has often tried to hide civilian casualties from the public, fearing repercussions in a nation where hostility toward U.S. policies is widespread.

Since the attack, militants in the tribal areas surrounding Radda have gained more recruits and supporters in their war against the Yemeni government and its key backer, the United States. The two survivors and relatives of six victims, interviewed separately and speaking to a Western journalist about the incident for the first time, expressed willingness to support or even fight alongside AQAP, as the al-Qaeda group is known.

32 Ibid.

"If we are ignored and neglected, I would try to take my revenge. I would even hijack an army pickup, drive it back to my village and hold the soldiers in it hostages," said Nasser Mabkhoot Mohammed al-Sabooly, the truck's driver, 45, who suffered burns and bruises. "I would fight along al-Qaeda's side against whoever was behind this attack."

*Abdul Rahman Berman, executive director of the National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms, or HOOD, a local human rights group, believes that, "The drone war is failing. If the Americans kill 10, al-Qaeda will recruit 100."*³³

U.S. military and intelligence planners—and Western governments with the same philosophy—may think they are winning by killing "terrorists." But the victory will be overshadowed in the longer term by the consequences of a Yemeni government that is distrusted by its own constituents and by a populace that believes "the enemy of my enemy (the United States) is my friend."

A report from Dr. Peter Schaapveld, a clinical and forensic psychologist who visited Yemen in March 2013, warned that the drone attacks are having an insidious effect on the next generation. Children are "traumatized and re-traumatized" by the strikes, whose use, he concluded, "amounts to a form of psychological torture and collective punishment."³⁴

U.S. drone strikes in Yemen continued unabated in 2013, with ten attacks and as many as 37 killed in just the first month.

Somalia

In June 2011, the United States began carrying out drone strikes in Somalia, primarily under the direction of JSOC. Reporting directly to the President, the agency has its own fleet of armed drones, which are flown from various bases in the region. Frequently assisting JSOC

are private contractors, such as the company formerly known as Blackwater (infamous for its track record as a reckless killer in Afghanistan and Iraq).³⁵

The United States' primary target in Somalia is *al Shabaab*, the militant group that controls much of the country's south. In October 2012, *Washington Post* reported,

the U.S. military (has) confirmed for the first time that armed drones fly out of Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, the busiest Predator drone base outside of the Afghan war zone. About 300 JSOC personnel coordinate drone sorties and counterterrorism raids in Somalia from the 500-acre base. On August 20, the Defense Department told Congress that 16 drones take off or land every day from the base. They can be over Somalia "in minutes." And the Pentagon plans to expand their operation. In August 2012, the U.S. military told Congress it wanted a \$1.4 billion [budgetary] increase to expand capacity to store munitions and arm aircraft there.

Reflecting the swashbuckling, romantic self-image of the Air Force squadron that carries out these sorties, it has adopted a uniform patch emblazoned with a skull, crossbones and a suitable nickname: "East Africa Air Pirates."³⁶

Not to be left out, the CIA also operates a secret base at the Mogadishu airport, according to a detailed investigation by Jeremy Scahill at *The Nation*. Both armed and unarmed U.S. surveillance drones regularly fly from the airport, supporting the "War on Terror," as well as peace-keeping operations in the region.³⁷

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism has attempted to document the human impact of the United States' covert war in Somalia since 2007, and through March 20, 2013, reported up to 23

³³ Sudarsan Raghavan, "When U.S. drones kill civilians, Yemen's government tries to conceal it," *Washington Post*, Dec. 24, 2012.

³⁴ 4 News, "Drone attacks traumatizing a generation of children," Mar. 5, 2013.

³⁵ See Lou Pingeot, *Dangerous Partnership: Private Military & Security Companies and the UN*, New York 2012, www.rosalux-nyc.org.

³⁶ Craig Whitlock, "Remote U.S. base at core of secret operations," *Washington Post*, Oct. 25, 2012.

³⁷ Jeremy Scahill, "The CIA's Secret Sites in Somalia," *The Nation*, July 12, 2011.

covert operations (including three to nine drone strikes), with as many as 170 people killed—including up to 57 civilians.

Libya

On March 17, 2011, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1973, establishing a no-fly zone and permitting the use of “all means necessary” to protect civilians within Libya. Just weeks later, President Obama approved the use of Predator drones armed with Hellfire missiles to pound Muammar Qaddafi’s compound and his loyalist troops. Six months and 145 drone strikes later, Qaddafi was captured and killed.

President Obama authorized the use of force in Libya without seeking the approval of the U.S. Congress. The administration claimed that U.S. military operations in Libya were consistent with the 1973 War Powers Resolution (which defines when the President can commit the nation to armed conflict without prior Congressional approval) since it did not require ground troops or sustained fighting and did not pose a serious threat of American casualties.

While Congresspersons from both major political parties refuted this argument, the Obama administration did not budge. U.S. involvement in Libya set a precedent for a bizarre definition of war that only applies if U.S. troops are put at significant risk.

Next up...fellow Americans?

In the winter of 2013, the confirmation of President Obama’s nomination of John Brennan as CIA chief was held up as Senator Rand Paul demanded an answer to a seemingly simple question: “Does Obama believe he has the authority to use lethal force, including drone strikes, to kill an American citizen on American soil?”

Paul was giving voice to a growing concern that the same remote-controlled technology our

governments are using overseas could soon be turned against their own citizens at home. He declared victory when Attorney General Eric Holder Jr. released this statement: “Does the President have the authority to use a weaponized drone to kill an American not engaged in combat on American soil? The answer to that question is no.” However, the insertion of the phrase “not engaged in combat” should alarm all citizens—both Americans and those who live in countries who follow the lead of our government. As Ryan Goodman, professor of law and co-chairman of the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice at New York University, pointed out in a March 8 op-ed in *The New York Times*, the Obama administration, like the Bush team before it, appears to have adopted an overly broad definition of what it means to be “engaged in combat”—including, for instance, contributing money to individuals affiliated with groups labeled as “terrorist.”

“Is there any reason to believe that military drones will soon be hovering over Manhattan, aiming to kill Americans believed to be involved in terrorist financing?,” wrote Goodman. “No. But is it well past time for the United States government to specify, precisely, its views on whom it thinks it can kill in the struggle against Al Qaeda and other terrorist forces? The answer is yes. The Obama administration’s continued refusal to do so should alarm any American concerned about the constitutional right of our citizens—no matter what evil they may or may not be engaged in—to due process under the law.”³⁸

Starting in 2005, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) began deploying unarmed Predator drones. By the end of 2011, CBP was flying eight Predator drones along the country’s borders with Mexico and Canada to search for illegal immigrants and smugglers. By 2016, CBP hopes to possess 24 drones, giving it the ability to deploy the technology anywhere over the

³⁸ Ryan Goodman, “The Drone Question Obama Hasn’t Answered,” *The New York Times*, March 8, 2013.

continental United States within three hours. Likewise, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency has sent several drones into Mexico to spy on that country's powerful drug cartels.

There is even greater cause for alarm. Any entity wishing to operate a UAV must obtain permission from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Until recently, very few permits were issued due to concern that remotely piloted aircraft don't have adequate "detect, sense, and avoid" technology to prevent mid-air collisions. However, the FAA came under increasing pressure from Congress, industry, and law-enforcement agencies to open the skies to UAVs. In February 2012, Congress passed a law that requires the FAA to integrate drones into American airspace by September 15, 2015. The bill also requires expedited access to the skies for publicly owned drone operators, such as police, firefighters, and other emergency responders. The Department of Homeland Security is even offering grants to help local law-enforcement agencies purchase the technology.

Quick to smell the opportunity for expanding profits, drone manufacturers are beginning to market small, super-lightweight versions specifically for policing³⁹—a worrying trend in the increasing militarization of police forces in post 9/11 America. For example, the Sheriff's Office in Mesa County, Colorado, is testing a remotely operated helicopter designed to carry wireless video, still cameras, and thermal-imaging equipment. Likewise, a police department just outside of Houston, Texas, bought an unmanned, fifty-pound helicopter outfitted with a powerful zoom camera and infrared light. While unarmed, the drone could one day be equipped with a forty mm grenade launcher, twelve-gauge shotgun and tasers that can electrocute suspects on the ground. "In the near future," said a September 2012 Congressional Research Report,

law-enforcement organizations might seek to outfit drones with facial recognition or soft biometric recognition, which can recognize and track individuals based on attributes such as height, age, gender and skin color...and will soon have the capacity to see through walls and ceilings.

Of course, UAVs can be used for many benign purposes—to track fleeing criminals, for instance, or even to find stranded hikers. But they just as easily could be used to monitor and intimidate political protesters—and without enforceable restrictions, they likely will. An article posted on the American Civil Liberties Union blog, called "Drones: The Nightmare Scenario," offers this warning:

1. *Acting under orders from Congress, the Federal Aviation Administration in coming months and years will significantly loosen the regulations that have been holding back broader deployment of drones. As of 2012, the FAA must allow any "government public safety agency" to operate any small drone (under 4.4 pounds) as long as certain conditions are met.*
2. *More and more police departments begin using them.*
3. *We start to hear stories about how they're being used.*
4. *Drone use broadens.*
5. *The technology and analytics gets better.*
6. *Flight durations grow.*
7. *The cycle accelerates.*
8. *Laws are further loosened.*
9. *Pervasive tracking becomes common.*
10. *Technologies are combined.*
11. *The data is mined for future targets.*⁴⁰

Ultimately, such surveillance leads to an oppressive atmosphere in which people learn to think twice about everything they do, knowing that it will be recorded, charted and scrutinized by increasingly intelligent computers and possibly used to target them. "All the pieces appear to be lining up for the eventual introduction of routine aerial surveillance in American life"—a development that would profoundly change the character of public engagement, concluded the ACLU.

39 Somini Sengupta, "Rise of Drones in U.S. Drives Efforts to Limit Police Use," *The New York Times*, Feb. 15, 2013.

40 Jay Stanley, "Drones: The Nightmare Scenario," www.aclu.org/blog, May 5, 2012.

Behind the government is a cast of corporations (and, increasingly, universities) that, while based in the United States, are ready and willing to do business with everyone—within an ever-weakening framework of regulations. They are chomping at the bit to get their piece of an expanding pie of purchase dollars. In April 2012, the marketing firm Teal Group projected that global annual spending on UAVs will double over the next decade, soaring from the current total of \$6.6 billion annually to \$11.4 billion—bringing the cumulative total to more than \$89 billion in the next 10 years.

The United States ranks second in drone exports (behind Israel), in part because its companies are somewhat restricted by the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)—which the U.S. government signed, and Israel's did not. Echoing the rhetoric of the manufacturers' lobby, Congressman Howard Berman, a Democrat from Los Angeles and ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said in early 2012, "It's crazy for us to shut off sales in this area while other countries push ahead."⁴¹ Members of the U.S.-based drone lobby group, the Association of Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI), are hard at work with their Congressional supporters to totally dismantle the constraints imposed by the MTCR. In the fall of 2012, the group moved one step closer to its goal: The U.S. Defense Department announced that as many as 66 countries would be eligible to buy U.S. drones under new guidelines awaiting approval from Congress and the State Department.⁴² Among the leading U.S.-based drone manufacturers are: General Atomics, developer of the Predator and successor Reaper drones, most well known for their killer missions; Northrup Grumman, maker of the large, high-altitude Global Hawk used for surveillance; and Lock-

heed Martin, both for manufacturing the Sentinel surveillance drone and the Hellfire missile carried by the massively popular Predators and Reapers.

Capitalizing on the growing popularity of "micro" UAVs as small as insects for police forces are AeroVironment (think "Raven," "Hummingbird," "Wasp," and "Switchblade") and Raytheon (which rolled out a "smart bomb" as light as 13.5 pounds in 2012).

The marketing materials for these manufacturers' products attempt to paint a veneer of romance and natural beauty on their killing mission: Lockheed Martin, for instance, promotes its "Romeo Hellfire" missile by promising it can "engage targets from the side or behind."⁴³ And its "Samurai Monocopter" now in development is inspired by the "winding flight of a falling maple seed."⁴⁴

Israel

Israel is second on the list of world heavyweights when it comes to drone use. Giora Katz, vice president of the Israeli-based Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd., told *The Wall Street Journal* in 2010 that he expects a full one-third of all Israeli military hardware to be unmanned by 2025, if not sooner.⁴⁵

While Israel has regularly used drones for airstrikes in Gaza, the use of UAVs during "Operation Pillar of Defense" in November 2012 was described as "unprecedented" by Israeli sources interviewed by one online news site.⁴⁶ In addition, although it went almost unnoticed, Israel

41 Charlotte Silver, "Normalising death: The business of drones," *Al-Jazeera*, Dec. 7, 2012.

42 Doug Palmer and Jim Wolf, "Pentagon Lists 66 Countries As Eligible to Buy US Drones," *Reuters*, Sept. 6, 2012.

43 "Multipurpose Hellfire II 'Romeo' Strikes Target, Complete Proof of Principle Flight Test," Lockheed Martin press release, March 23, 2011.

44 Rebecca Boyle, "Sneak Preview: Military's Maple-Seed-Inspired Drone," *Popular Science*, Aug. 12, 2011.

45 Charles Levinson, "Israeli Robots Remake Battlefield," *The Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 13, 2010.

46 Arie Egozi, "Israeli sources hail UAV contribution to Gaza operation," *Flightglobal*, Nov. 23, 2012.

launched a drone strike into Egypt for the first time the same year, assassinating an individual labeled a “terrorist” who had recently been released by local security forces.⁴⁷

While it may trail the U.S. in terms of sheer volume of use, Israel is the single largest exporter of drones worldwide, with its companies selling to at least 24 countries and accounting for 41 percent of the global drone exports between 2001 and 2011.⁴⁸ The most prominent of the Israeli drone conglomerates is Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), which makes and markets the Heron, Panther, and Hunter UAVs. One of IAI's subsidiaries, Stark Aerospace, is based in Columbus, Mississippi—and is perhaps the only foreign-owned company with permission to fly a drone in U.S. airspace. The Israelis set up Stark in 2006 to “drum up business in America,” according to *Haaretz*, because the United States prefers “to buy armaments and other defense gear from local companies.” Stark now sells its Hunter UAVs through the U.S. manufacturer Northrop Grumman. In fact, U.S. armed forces have been using Israeli-made Hunter drones since the early 1990s.⁴⁹

The other primary Israeli drone manufacturer is Elbit Systems, which makes the Hermes 450—called the “workhorse of the Israeli Defense Force.”⁵⁰ In addition to their use for scouting and tracking targets, Hermes drones were used in some of the more horrific incidents in the 2006 war on Lebanon and the 2008-2009 attack on Gaza. In the latter 23-day assault, missiles fired from these drones were directly attributed to the killing of 78 Palestinians, including 29 children, and wounding 73 others.⁵¹ The Hermes has sensors so precise that they enable a

drone operator to read a license plate number and determine whether a person on the ground is armed. Infrared sensors allow images to be obtained both during the day and at night. “This makes the killing of civilians all the more troubling,” the site's authors concluded.

A top Israeli official boasted to *The Jerusalem Post* about three reasons for Israel's world “leadership” in drone surveillance and warfare: “We have unbelievable people and innovation, combat experience that helps us understand what we need, and immediate operational use, since we are always in a conflict that allows us to perfect our systems.”⁵²

United Kingdom

In July 2011, four Afghan civilians in Helmand Province were mistakenly killed and two others injured in an attack by a remotely controlled Royal Air Force drone, marking the first confirmed operation in which one of the UK's Reapers was identified as responsible for the deaths of innocents.⁵³ The UK Ministry of Defense insists these are the only Afghan civilians that have been killed in UK drone strikes, although it also maintains it is impossible to know exactly how many people have perished in such hits.⁵⁴

Reprieve, a British human rights group, attempted to hold the UK government to account by bringing suit against it on behalf of Noor Khan, whose father was killed in a 2011 drone strike in Pakistan. The filing requested a judicial declaration that British intelligence officials were liable for assisting acts of murder, war crimes, and crimes against humanity by sharing intelligence used to target the victim with the U.S. government. Khan also asked the court to

47 Gil Ronen, “Israeli UAV Kills Jihadi in Sinai – Report,” *Israel National News*, Aug. 26, 2012.

48 Jefferson Morley, “Israel's drone dominance,” *Salon.com*, May 15, 2012.

49 Ora Coren, “Israel Aerospace Industries moving production to Mississippi,” *Haaretz*, Nov. 17, 2009.

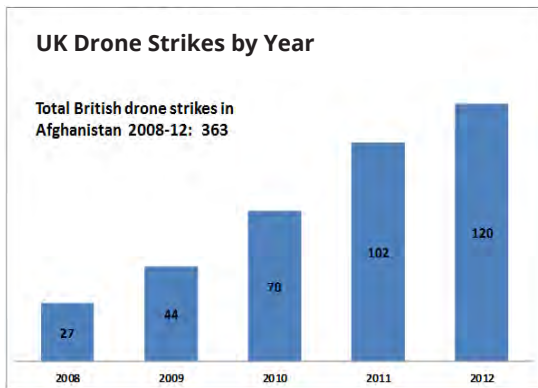
50 Ian Sample, “Hermes 450 drone is workhorse for Israeli Defense Forces,” *The Guardian*, March 23, 2009.

51 <http://wedivest.org/learn-more/elbit>.

52 Yaakov Katz, “Israel's eye in the sky,” *The Jerusalem Post Magazine*, Oct. 7, 2011.

53 Nick Hopkins, “British reliance on drones in Afghanistan prompts fears for civilians,” *The Guardian*, June 18, 2012.

54 Nick Hopkins, “Afghan civilians killed by RAF drone,” *The Guardian*, July 5, 2011.



Source: Drone Wars UK

direct the British Foreign Secretary to issue a policy "identifying the circumstances in which intelligence may lawfully be passed on if it relates to the location of individuals who may be targeted in a drone strike." However, the British judges hearing the case recognized that they were essentially being asked to pass judgment on the legality of the U.S. drone program (and of Obama Administration's drone policies), and in December 2012, they refused to do so. Khan has announced he will appeal.⁵⁵

Chris Cole from the investigative website Drone Wars UK reports that Great Britain is still very much in the game, in close collaboration with the United States. In fact, until recently, UK drones were controlled by Royal Air Force pilots from a U.S. Air Force base in Nevada.⁵⁶

"The UK's use of armed drones is swathed in secrecy too and there is much that we are not allowed to know," he said in an article on March 8, 2013. "What we do know is that the UK launched 120 drone strikes in Afghanistan in 2012, bringing the total number of UK drone strikes to 363 since British forces began launching weapons from its Reaper drones in May 2008. Beyond this basic figure, however, we know precious little."

55 John Bellinger, "British Court Rejects Drone Lawsuit," *Lawfare*, Dec. 22, 2012.

56 Michael Goldfarb, "UK brings drone command operations home from US," *Global Post*, Oct. 26, 2012.

Germany

Since the end of WW II, Germany has defined itself as a "civilian power," professing a reluctance to use military means as well as a desire to strengthen international law, preserve human rights, and act in a multilateral fashion. The German public generally expresses a feeling of unease related to anything military, with a recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in February 2013 finding 59% of adults in Germany disapproving of drone strikes.⁵⁷ "Defense policy," as a politician from the Green Party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) once declared, "cannot win an election, but it might lose one."⁵⁸

However, a shift began with the war in Afghanistan. Germany contributed more than 3,000 soldiers to the International Security Assistance Force, although using only unarmed drones in combat. Thomas de Maizièr, the German defense minister, told a gathering of army reservists in May of 2012 that he considered the U.S. strategy of using drones for targeted killings a "strategic mistake."⁵⁹

Yet, on January 25, 2013, *Spiegel Online* reported that the federal government in Berlin has bowed to pressure from its armed forces, the Bundeswehr, and is now preparing to deploy armed, unmanned drones in foreign conflicts. In an answer to an official query submitted by the Left Party (DIE LINKE), which was obtained by *Spiegel*, the government wrote that its experience in foreign combat operations has made it clear that reconnaissance vehicles must be armed "in order to provide protection against sudden and serious changes in the situation." Minister of Defense Thomas de Maizièr explained the reversal in more blunt, political

57 Elsa Rassbach, "Germany Sees Rise of Campaign Against Combat Drones," *Common Dreams*, March 27, 2013.

58 Ulrike Franke, "Discussing the Procurement of Armed Drones: A Very German-style deliberation," *Politics in Spies*, Feb. 22, 2013.

59 Judy Dempsey, "Europe Stays Quiet Despite Unease About Drones," *The New York Times*, June 11, 2012.

terms to the German Parliament: “[We] cannot keep the stagecoach while others are developing the railway.”⁶⁰

The move fed a frenzy of media stories and rekindled the debate within the government over fighter drones. Just the year before, the head of the German air force, Karl Müllner, landed in hot water shortly after assuming office for vehemently supporting the purchase of armed drone systems. At the time, the government remained cautious and called for a “broad discussion” in parliament before making any decision.⁶¹

German politicians remain divided on the issue. Although parties from the center right, such as the ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU), tend to view drones as a necessary evil, there have been some defections, such as a few prominent members of the pro-business Free Democratic Party (FDP). The center-left Social Democratic Party wants to further examine the use of armed drones, thereby deferring their acquisition. More consistently against weaponized drones are the Left Party and the Green Party.⁶² “I’m vehemently opposed to the Bundeswehr’s drone strategy,” Andrej Hunko, a parliamentarian with the Left Party, told *Spiegel*. “I’m also critical of expanding the use of reconnaissance drones.” Hunko said he fears such aircraft would be used domestically as well,⁶³ just as the United States is intending to do.

France

In contrast, according to most accounts, France has so far shied away from purchasing armed drones, opting instead for reconnaissance vehi-

cles. In response, several French senators sent an open letter to *Le Monde*, protesting this reticence and calling for the acquisition of armed UAVs.⁶⁴

Indeed, France’s status may soon change. In January of 2013, France and Germany announced that they are set to renew efforts to work on joint development of a new UAV, supporting the company European Aeronautic, Defence & Space Co. (EAD) in its attempt to compete in a market now dominated by Israeli and U.S. companies.⁶⁵ A year earlier, France signed a joint declaration on security and defense with the UK, saying in part: “Unmanned air systems are crucial to success in the battlefield...”⁶⁶

Meanwhile, the French are very much incorporating drones into combat. In October of 2012, France announced its intention to send surveillance drones into Mali, backed up by air and ground troops, as part of an international intervention force to cleanse the former colony in West Africa of al-Qaida-backed insurgents who control large swaths of its territory.⁶⁷ Critics, however, charge that behind the military campaign in Mali are the country’s untapped resources of oil, gold, and uranium.

The Rest of the World: Following Our Lead

A full accounting is not possible, but a partial survey gives a feel for the dangers of proliferation without debate or a system of checks and balances.

60 Veit Medick, “Credible Deterrence: Germany Plans to Deploy Armed Drones,” *Spiegel Online*, Jan. 25, 2013.

61 Ulrike Franke, “Discussing the Procurement of Armed Drones: A Very German-style deliberation,” *Politics in Spires*, Feb. 22, 2013.

62 Ibid.

63 Veit Medick, “Credible Deterrence: Germany Plans to Deploy Armed Drones,” *Spiegel Online*, Jan. 25, 2013.

64 Ulrike Franke, “Discussing the Procurement of Armed Drones: A Very German-style deliberation,” *Politics in Spires*, Feb. 22, 2013.

65 Joseph de Weck and Brian Parkin, “European Drone Plan Seeks Political Backing as in Boost to EADS,” Bloomberg, Jan. 21, 2013.

66 UK-France Declaration on Security and Defense, Feb. 17, 2012. www.number10.gov.uk/news/uk-france-declaration-security.

67 Afua Hirsch, “France to send drones to Mali in fight against al-Qaida-backed insurgents,” *The Guardian*, Oct. 22, 2012.

Canada: The government has proposed to spend one billion Canadian dollars on military drones that would be capable of conducting surveillance in the Arctic, as well as carrying “precision-guided munitions.”⁶⁸ Meanwhile, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), as well as some local and provincial forces, are increasingly using small, unarmed models as part of their surveillance work. “It’s starting to catch on more and more. Eventually, I think you’ll see [UAVs] in almost all the provinces,” an RCMP staff sergeant told the *National Post*.⁶⁹

Italy: Italy has long used unarmed surveillance aircraft to help protect its 4,000 troops in Afghanistan. But Italian officials have been eager to upgrade their drones to include missiles, ever since an Italian soldier died in a firefight while the unarmed aircraft hovered helplessly overhead. In 2012, the Obama administration announced it would fulfill that desire by supplying Hellfire missiles and precision-guided bombs for the Italian drones. That makes Italy the second country, after the UK, to be allowed to deploy U.S. drone technology—making it virtually impossible to deny the same to other NATO countries and partners in the future.⁷⁰

Poland: Poland’s Defense Ministry announced in 2012 that it plans to replace its fleet of aging Russian combat aircraft with armed UAVs by 2014-18.⁷¹

China: Coming in at No. 3 in drone export sales is a relative newcomer: China. While a U.S.-made Predator costs around \$4.5 million, and a Reaper is closer to \$10 million, Chinese sources

claim that their equivalent UAVs cost less than \$1 million, making them highly affordable for a host of international customers, especially those unable or unwilling to source from the United States or Israel. “If there is an alarm bell worth ringing about the emergence of Chinese UAVs,” writes Trefor Moss in *The Diplomat*, “it is probably not the threat they will pose to the U.S. or Japan in the Asia-Pacific. It is the proliferation to the developing world of armed, unmanned systems that China’s low prices, and even lower export barriers, may soon begin to drive.”⁷²

As of 2011, China had stockpiled at least 280 drones that could be used for intelligence missions and electronic warfare, according to the Project 2049 Institute, a Virginia-based think tank. Since then, the country has probably manufactured many more. In September of 2012, China announced plans to use drones to monitor disputed territories, including the Senkaku Islands that have caused recent friction with Japan. The government indicated that it plans to locate drone bases in eleven coastal provinces, operational by 2015.

Although China’s planned drone use is strictly for reconnaissance for now, it clearly has the capacity—and the willingness—to arm them if the need arises. In February of 2013, the *Global Times* reported that China had been poised to send a drone carrying twenty kilograms of TNT into Myanmar to assassinate a drug trafficker who had murdered 13 Chinese nationals. The Chinese government ultimately decided instead to capture him alive, but it is evidently tempted to follow Washington’s lead in reserving the right to use UAVs to target enemies of the state, even on foreign soil.⁷³

Rest of the Asia-Pacific: Where China goes, many others in the Asia-Pacific will follow, it is feared. The list of countries that have developed

68 David Pugliese, “Canada’s drone squadron still stalled, with neither planes nor troops,” *Ottawa Citizen*, Dec. 27, 2012.

69 Douglas Quan, “Not just for modern warfare: RCMP to expand use of drone mini-helicopters,” *National Post*, Jan. 13, 2013.

70 Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Proposal Would Arm Italy’s Drones,” *The New York Times*, May 29, 2012.

71 Arie Egozi, “Will the real UAV revolution begin in Poland?”, *Israel Defense*, Aug. 27, 2012.

72 Trefor Moss, “Here Comes....China’s Drones,” *The Diplomat*, March 2, 2013.

73 Liu Chang, “Manhunt for deadly drug kingpin,” *Global Times*, Feb. 9, 2013.

or purchased drones already includes Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand, and the Philippines.⁷⁴ Add the Obama administration's increasing focus on the region—the so-called “Asia Pivot”—along with U.S. announcements of further deployments of advanced UAVs to the area, and “a massive game of drone chess looks increasingly likely,” writes Michael Standaert from *The Global Post*.

Iran: In perhaps the best example of blowback, the spread of UAVs is also reaching America's foes. Iran is touting an indigenously developed UAV program that includes unarmed reconnaissance drones and (purportedly) kamikaze attack drones. More alarmingly for the United States and Israel, Iran has reportedly transferred UAVs to its non-state allies, such as Hezbollah. In October of 2012, Israel was said to have shot down a Hezbollah-operated drone a mere thirty km from the Dimona nuclear facility. “The unit was a rudimentary reconnaissance UAV, but just as armed drone development lagged behind non-armed drone development in the United States, there is no reason to believe that the proliferation of armed drones won't soon follow,” writes David Knoll,⁷⁵ a doctoral candidate

in international relations at the Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy at Tufts University, in *The Diplomat*.⁷⁶

Latin America: By 2013, drone companies—mostly Israeli—had sold unarmed drones to nine countries in Latin America, where they are used for everything from countering drugs and gang violence to illegal logging. The countries are Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Ecuador, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Africa: South Africa's defense industry has been producing, using, and exporting unarmed drones. But in 2013 it was reported that Denel Dynamics sold armed drones—the Seeker 400, which is equipped with air-to-ground missiles—to Saudi Arabia.

The U.S. military has built drone bases in Djibouti and Niger, and flies unarmed Reaper drones from Ethiopia and the Seychelles. The base in Niger is being used to fight extremist groups in Mali, Libya, and Nigeria.

UN peacekeepers are deploying drones in the Congo and potentially in the Ivory Coast and South Sudan.

4. What Can Citizens Do to Stop This Juggernaut?

The use of drones often starts with surveillance—a practice that, as documented here, can seem benign until the impact on civil liberties is fully understood. Thus, it is incumbent on us all as global citizens to call for public debate and regulations on drone use of all types, and for a renewed respect for both international law and the rights of the “other.”

⁷⁴ Michael Standaert, “Stage set for drone chess match in Asia-Pacific,” *Global Post*, Nov. 5, 2012.

⁷⁵ David Knoll, “Will America's Addiction to Drone Strikes Backfire?,” *The Diplomat*, Oct. 23, 2012.

When up against the power and money of governments and corporations, it can seem like an impossible task to reverse, or even force a pause in, the swelling tide of drone use. So far, international bodies like the United Nations have done little to stop the new arms trade in drones. The much-lauded Arms Trade Treaty approved by the UN General Assembly in April 2013 applies to the transfer of conventional weapons such as

⁷⁶ Sheera Frenkel, “Hezbollah drone may have been sent to monitor Israel's nuclear facility at Dimona,” *McClatchy News Service*, Oct. 12, 2012.

battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, large-caliber artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles and missile launchers, and light weapons. The treaty says nothing about the proliferation of drones. However, citizens working together around the world are pressing for regulations on the local, national, and global levels, and have already forced a sea change.

In February 2012, a *Washington Post*/ABC U.S. opinion poll on the use of drones against “terrorist suspects overseas” produced an approval rate of 83 percent. This included not only a majority of Republicans and independents, but Democrats and people who self-defined as liberal Democrats. A clear majority of 79 percent even approved of using drones against American citizens overseas.⁷⁷ One year later, in a *Huffington Post*/YouGov poll, the picture looked quite different: While a majority of Americans (54 percent) still supported using drones to kill high-level terrorism suspects overseas, approval dropped to 43 percent if the suspects are U.S. citizens and to 29 percent if innocent civilians could also be killed in the process.⁷⁸

The American Civil Liberties Union and the Center for Constitutional Rights announced that they were following the lead of the UK’s Reprieve by filing a lawsuit, charging that senior CIA and military officials violated the U.S. Constitution and international law when they authorized and directed drone strikes that resulted in the deaths of three U.S. citizens, including a 16-year-old boy, in Yemen in 2011.⁷⁹ The mainstream media welcomed the move, with the editors of the *Los Angeles Times* writing, “Ideally this lawsuit [will] result in a thorough

examination of the legality of targeted killings without the administration hiding behind the ‘state secrets’ privilege, as it has done in the past.”⁸⁰ This lawsuit is not the first, and probably won’t be the last, to bring the issue of drones and targeted killing into a courtroom. Next up: broadening the focus beyond the killing of our own citizens! Western lives must not be “privileged” over others.

There has been an unprecedented surge of activity in cities, counties, and state legislatures across the United States aimed at regulating domestic surveillance drones.⁸¹ After a raucous city council hearing in Seattle in February 2013, the mayor agreed to terminate its drone program and return the city’s two drones to the manufacturer. Also in February, the city of Charlottesville, Virginia, passed a two-year moratorium and other restrictions on drone use, and other local bills are pending in cities from Buffalo to Fort Wayne. Simultaneously, bills are proliferating on the state level, with bills already passed in Virginia and Idaho to limit the use of drones in surveillance and evidence gathering, and similar legislation is pending in at least 13 other state legislatures.

In **Germany**, the federal prosecutor’s office opened a probe into the 2010 death of a German national in a drone strike in a Pakistani tribal district bordering Afghanistan. In a statement, the prosecutor’s office said the investigation launched on July 10, 2012, “aims to find out if the use of drones which led to the death of the German citizen is in line with international law.”⁸² Meanwhile, a coalition of local and national peace and justice groups in Germany has launched a “No Combat Drones” petition.⁸³

77 Scott Wilson and Jon Cohen, “Poll finds broad support for Obama’s counterterrorism policies,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 8, 2012.

78 Emily Swanson, “Drone Poll Finds Opposition to Use Against American Citizens in U.S., Even to Stop a Terrorist Attack,” *Huffington Post*, March 8, 2013.

79 “Rights Groups File Challenge to Killings of Three Americans in U.S. Drone Strikes,” www.aclu.org, July 18, 2012.

80 “When the government kills,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 29, 2012.

81 Somini Sengupta, “Rise of Drones in U.S. Drives Efforts to Limit Police Use,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 15, 2013.

82 “Germany probes drone killing in Pakistan,” *The Local*, July 20, 2012.

83 Elsa Rassbach, “Germany Sees Rise of Campaign Against Combat Drones,” *Common Dreams*, March 27, 2013.

In the **United Kingdom**, in April 2012 there were protests and seven arrests at a drone conference in Bristol and regular protests outside drone factories in Birmingham, Leicester, and Brighton throughout the year. A major three-day gathering of the drone industry due to take place in central Bath was moved at the last minute into a secure military base after planned protests gained widespread support.⁸⁴ At the new UK drone base, RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire, 74-year-old Helen Johns maintains a “peace camp,” and on April 27, 2013 she was joined by hundreds of protesters. In 2013, a campaign against “fully autonomous warfare” was launched in the House of Commons by human rights organizations, Nobel laureates, and academics, many of whom were involved in the successful campaign to ban landmines. The goal of the campaign is to ban killer robots *before* they are used in battle.⁸⁵

Meanwhile, **Pakistanis** are challenging their own government. An Islamabad-based legal charity, the Foundation for Fundamental Rights, filed two constitutional petitions challenging the government of Pakistan for failing to protect its citizens from U.S. drone attacks.⁸⁶ Tribesmen from Waziristan staged a sit-in outside the Pakistani Parliament in Islamabad.⁸⁷ Cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan’s march against the drones drew thousands—including CODEPINK’s delegation of 31 Americans—and attracted international media coverage. By the end of 2012, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari demanded in direct, face-to-face talks that the United States end its drone attacks. Driven by several crises in U.S.-Pakistani relations—the backlash against the missile hits, the arrest of CIA contractor Raymond Davis for murder, and the killing of Osama bin Laden—the opposition might be having some

impact, with the number of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan dropping by a third in 2012.

In **Yemen**, where the number of U.S. drone strikes has substantially increased and it is much more difficult and dangerous to organize, local human rights groups have still had the courage to speak out,⁸⁸ and some protests have taken place. Yemeni journalist Abdulelah Haid-er Shaye continues to be detained for his brave work to expose U.S. military intervention in his country.⁸⁹ In April 2013 Yemeni human rights activist made the news globally after he testified before a U.S. Senate Judiciary Subcommittee about how drones are helping extremists.

The **United Nations** announced in January 2013 that it is launching an inquiry into the impact on civilians of drone strikes and other targeted killings. There is a need for “accountability and reparation where things have gone badly wrong,” Ben Emmerson, the British lawyer heading the investigation, told journalists. The inquiry will study the impact of drone strikes in five places: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, the Palestinian territories, and Somalia. The inquiry will assess the extent of civilian casualties, the identity of militants targeted, and the legality of strikes where there is no UN recognition of a conflict.⁹⁰

Each of these actions was only possible because of individuals who care, and who won’t give up until the use of drone technology is exposed to public scrutiny and regulated by individual nations and international bodies. The burden is squarely on us to push back against the normalization of drones as a military and law-enforcement tool. Our ability to curb the use of drones will not only determine the future of warfare and the sanctity of individual privacy, but how we live together as a global community of humans.

84 Monica Pearce, “Bath peace activists drive out drone conference,” CAAT blog, June 25, 2012.

85 Tracy McVeigh, “Killer robots must be stopped, say campaigners,” *The Guardian*, Feb. 23, 2013.

86 “Drones victims sue Pakistan for complicity in CIA killing of 50 villagers,” www.repriev.org.uk, May 9, 2012.

87 “Tribesmen protest against drones, NATO supply,” *Pakistan Today*, Feb. 26, 2012.

88 Yasser Ezzi, “Yemen’s rights groups strongly condemn U.S. drone attacks,” *Al-Sawhah.net*, May 9, 2012.

89 Jeremy Scahill, “Why Is President Obama Keeping a Journalist in Prison in Yemen?,” *The Nation*, March 13, 2012.

90 “UN launches inquiry into drone killings,” *BBC News World*, Jan. 24, 2013.

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