



Drones



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What are Drones?

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as drones, are aircraft either controlled by ‘pilots’ from the ground or, increasingly, autonomously following a pre-programmed mission. While there are dozens of different drones they basically fall into two categories: those that are used for reconnaissance and surveillance purposes and those that are armed with missiles and bombs.

Does the UK have Drones?

The UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) will spend over half a billion pounds on acquiring and sustaining armed Reaper drones on operations in Afghanistan between 2007 and 2015, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism can confirm.

The British government has a control centre in RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire capable of directing unmanned British drones to kill

people in Afghanistan.

To date UK-owned reapers have fired some 200 missiles during 23,400 hours of flight-time.

Who do these Drones target?

Both the UK and the USA say that they target terrorists. Its not clear how the UK identifies these terrorists but the bulk of the CIA's drone strikes are signature strikes. According to the Wall Street Journal signature strikes target groups of men believed to be militants associated with terrorist groups, but whose identities aren't always known.

Do Drones kill with precision?

According to the M.O.D. these drone strikes are “incredibly discriminatory”. How they work this out is not clear but according to The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (TBIJ) drones don't do discrimination:

‘between 2,593 and 3,378 people have been killed in the 350 US drone strikes in Pakistan, of whom between 475-885 were civilians of which 176 were children.’

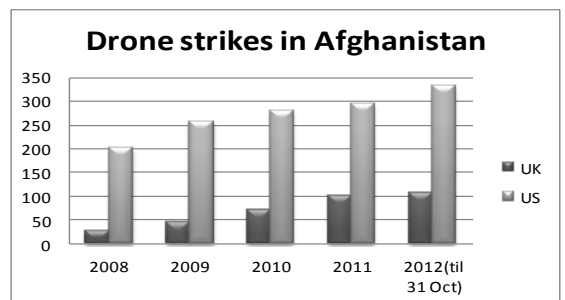
What do you think?

Researchers at NYU School of Law and Stanford University Law School have produced an insightful report on the effect of US drones in Pakistan.

It says that “In the United States, the dominant narrative about the use of drones in Pakistan is of a surgically precise and effective tool that makes the US safer by enabling

be deployed will undoubtedly mean more war, rather than more security’.

For us as Christians, more importantly, they disobey Christ, who said “What I command you is to love one another” (John 14.27). The violence of drone warfare destroys their bodies and our souls, desensitizing us to killing done in our name. That these remote-controlled murders incite so little protest from the public and government speaks to, among other things, how supportive of, immune and, perhaps, resigned, to the violence of the American led capitalist



‘targeted killings’ of terrorists, with minimal downsides or collateral impacts.” They then go on to show that “this narrative is false.”

A Catholic view.¹

The use of drones disregards national sovereignties, the laws of war, and the principles of international law. The ease with which they can

empire we have become.

The Catholic Catechism states, “The arms race is one of the greatest curses on the human race, and the harm it inflicts on the poor is more than can be endured” and, “Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and [hu]man[ity].”

The human cost of Drones ²



Drones hover twenty-four hours a day over communities in northwest Pakistan, striking homes, vehicles,

and public spaces without warning. Their presence terrorizes men, women, and children, giving rise to anxiety and psychological trauma among civilian communities. Those living under drones have to face the constant worry that a deadly strike may be fired at any moment, and the knowledge that they are powerless to protect themselves. These fears have affected behavior.

The US practice of striking one area multiple times, and evidence that it has killed rescuers, makes both community members and humanitarian workers afraid or unwilling to assist injured victims. Some community members shy away from gathering in groups, including important tribal dispute-resolution bodies, out of fear that they may attract the attention of drone operators. Some parents choose to keep their children home, and children injured or traumatized by strikes have dropped out of school. Waziris told our researchers that the strikes have undermined cultural and religious practices related to burial, and made family members afraid to attend funerals. In addition, families who lost loved ones or their homes in drone strikes now struggle to support themselves.

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What should we do?

1. Be mystics and contemplatives of peace and non-violence (eg, meditate daily).
2. Practice meticulous non-violence to self and others.
3. Be students and teachers of non-violence and peace (i.e., talk about it to others).
4. Be activists; get involved in a cause.
5. Be prophets and visionaries in the name of the God of peace.

(Fr John Dear SJ)

“Those who renounce violence and bloodshed and, in order to safeguard human rights, make use of those means of defense available to the weakest, bear witness to evangelical charity, provided they do so without harming the rights and obligations of other men and societies. They bear legitimate witness to the gravity of the physical and moral risks of recourse to violence, with all its destruction and death.” – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Catholic Worker communities are committed to nonviolence.

A Victim's Story ²

Sadaullah Wazir, teenager, former student from the village of Machi Khel in Mir Ali, North Waziristan, was severely injured in a September 2009 drone strike on his grandfather's home. Sadaullah has filed a complaint before the UN Human Rights Council.



Drone Strike

“Before the drone strikes started, my life was very good. I used to go to school and I used to be quite busy with that, but after the drone strikes, I stopped going to school now. I was happy because I thought I would become a doctor.” Sadaullah recalled, “Two missiles [were] fired at our *hujra* and three people died. My cousin and I were injured. We didn't hear the missile at all and then it was there.”

He further explained, “[The last thing I remembered was that] we had just broken our fast where we had eaten and just prayed. . . . We were having tea and just eating a bit and then there were missiles. . . . When I gained consciousness, there was a bandage on my eye. I didn't know what had happened to my eye and I could only see from one.”

Sadaullah lost both of his legs and one of his eyes in the attack. He informed us, “Before [the strike], my life was normal and very good because I could go anywhere and do anything. But now I am not able to do that because I have to stay inside. . . . Sometimes I have really bad headaches. . . . [and] if I walk too much [on my prosthetic legs], my legs hurt a lot. [Drones have] drastically affected life [in our area].”

¹ By Kate Riley and Martin Newell

² From researchers at NYU School of Law and Stanford University Law School