

# End the secrecy surrounding the use of British drones!

By [Drone Wars UK](#)

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[Drone Wars UK](#)

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## Drone Campaign Network launch new petition

*Drone Wars UK is a member of the [Drone Campaign Network, an network of NGO's and local groups in the UK campaigning on the use of drones](#). The network has launched a new campaign to end the secrecy surround the British use of drones in Afghanistan. Here's more detail:*

Since June 2008, UK forces have carried out around 300 airstrikes in Afghanistan using armed unmanned aerial vehicles (commonly known as drones), controlled from thousands of miles away. Although there is some public information about US drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, there is almost no public information about drone strikes carried out by the UK in Afghanistan.

There are serious ethical, moral and legal questions about the growing use of armed drones which need to be properly debated. However, it is impossible to have such a debate while information is being kept secret. At the very least, it seems that public discussion is being controlled.

We call on the UK government to end the secrecy surrounding the use of British drones in Afghanistan and to release all necessary information for a proper public debate. This should include the reasons for individual drone strikes and the number of people killed.

[You can sign the petition online here.](#)

[You can download a hardcopy of the petition to use at meetings, street stall etc. here](#)

## *Background to the campaign:*

### Lift the Veil- End the secrecy surrounding the use of British drones

Many people are extremely troubled by the growing use of unmanned aerial vehicles (commonly known as drones) to launch attacks at great distances. Traditionally, one of the key restraints on warfare has been the risk to your own forces and, if this restraint is taken away, unmanned systems may simply make war more likely. The way that unmanned drones have enabled a huge increase in targeted killing is also causing deep disquiet amongst legal experts and scholars.

However, perhaps the greatest concern relates to what is seen as one of the key capabilities of drones – their ability to loiter over an area for hours or even days. Evidence is beginning to emerge that the persistent presence of drone sitting over remote villages and towns, simply looking for ‘targets of opportunity’, leads to an increase in civilian casualties.

Despite growing public concern, the UK is to double the number of armed Reaper drones in operation by 2013 and is also pressing ahead with plans to develop new armed drones over the next decade, all without public debate or parliamentary scrutiny.

There are serious questions about the use of drones:

Does the geographic and psychological distance between the operator and target make attacks more likely?

Does using unmanned systems mean attacks will happen more often?

Does the supposed accuracy of drone sensors and cameras mean that commanders are more willing to undertake ‘riskier’ strikes (in terms of possible civilian casualties) than they would previously have undertaken?

All of these questions, and many more, need to be debated openly and honestly, requiring careful analysis and judgement based on evidence. Unfortunately, that evidence is being kept under wraps. While it may be necessary to keep some information secret, we do not believe it is appropriate or legitimate to refuse to disclose any and all information about the circumstances in which Reapers have been used over the past four years. There is, at the very least, a sense that public discussion is being stifled.

With the use of armed drones set to increase, we need a serious, public – and fully informed – debate on all these issues.

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