

The A-Z of Drones 2013: Drone Proliferation and Protests against Drone Strikes

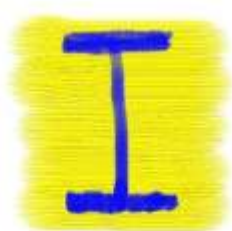
Part Two

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[DroneWars.net](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#),
[Militarization and WMD](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)



In February Human Rights Watch released a report detailing how [IDF drones](#) violated the Laws of War during operation Pillar of Defence, while War on Want released a report on UK links with the [Israeli drone industry](#). Drone Wars UK will be releasing its own report on Israel and the drone wars in January 2014. [Imran Khan](#) continued to lead opposition to US drone strikes in Pakistan, initiating a blockade of NATO supplies in December. Regulators continue to press ahead with plans for the [integration](#) of drones into civil airspace.



Drone [journalism](#) has been a big topic this year with a number of conference and events anticipating the growing use of drones by media organisations. The BBC made a song and a dance about using a drone for the first time in a news [report](#) – although they had to doctor the sound as there was too much noise coming from the, err, drone. [John Brennan](#) continues to be the ‘drone czar’ or ‘drone master’ (depending on source) by making the move from President Obama’s Counterterrorism Adviser to Director of the CIA. [Jordan](#) reportedly opened up its airspace to allow Israel drones to fly over Syria.



The [Killer Robots Campaign](#), which challenges the development of autonomous weapon systems, went from strength to strength this year with particular success at the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons meeting in Geneva. There has been little information about the US drones used over [Kurdistan](#) for surveillance since their deployment in 2011 so a Washington Post article on the subject was welcome. Russian drone use over [Kazakhstan](#) was revealed when one crashed April – although there was precious little information given.



US drones continue to fly over [Libya](#) according to reports, although the Libyan government refuses to allow the US to undertake armed strikes. [Lasers](#) for shooting down drones were (again) revealed as the next big thing, as were [laser carrying drones](#). The power of the drone [lobby](#) was exposed as it managed to get funding re-instated for the Global Hawk drone over the objections of the Pentagon and the White House. [Larry Lewis](#), a senior US military analyst, found that US drone strikes in Afghanistan were 10 times more likely to cause civilian casualties than manned aircraft. Incredibly this was hardly reported in the mainstream media.



US and French drones have been operating over [Mali](#) during the year but little information – apart from a Reaper crashing there – has been revealed. The [MTCR](#), the international control regime that regulates the export of larger drones, continues to come under pressure from the drone lobby. It was good to see this being challenged this year by campaigners and [MPs](#). The wonderful [Medea Benjamin](#) managed to get the media – and Obama – to focus on the victims of drones – if even just for a moment – with her dramatic intervention into the President's Counter Terrorism speech.

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The obsession with [naming](#) drones as something other than 'drones' continues, despite many in the industry recognizing the battle is lost. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [Navanethem Pillay](#) was one of a number of UN officials that challenged the US use of armed drones in Pakistan throughout the year. US drones began used [Niger](#) as a base to fly over Mali – with some arguing this was just the beginning for [Niamey drone base](#). The police service of [Northern Ireland](#) used drones several times during the year after acquiring them ahead of the G8 Summit.



President [Obama](#) gave a major speech on counterterrorism in May that focused to a large extent on the use of armed drones by the US. Many in the media obsequiously reported the speech as a major change in US policy. It wasn't. [Opposition](#) to drones continued to grow during the year – sometimes from unexpected sources. [Opinion polls](#) show that while opposition to such strikes continued to grow across the globe, in the US a (declining) majority continue to support the policy. It was good to see, in an August poll, [UK opinion](#) swing against US drone strikes for the first time.



[Protests](#) against drone strikes continued throughout the year, particularly in [Pakistan](#). Debate over whether Pakistan gives [permission](#) for such strikes continued despite UN expert Ben Emmerson making the Pakistani position perfectly clear – they don't. During the year a number of US drone [pilots](#) spoke out publicly for the first time – some clearly suffering from [PTSD](#). The '[public perception](#)' of drones continues to be of concern to the US, with one document released by Edward Snowden showing, according to the Washington Post, that 'U.S. spy agencies worried that their drone campaign was becoming increasingly vulnerable to public opposition.' As the US has allowed the sale of Reapers to France and the Netherlands in 2013, [proliferation](#) is likely to be a major issue in 2014.

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