

## US Terrorism from the Skies: The Truth Behind Drone Strikes as the President's Personal Choice of Warfare

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Imagine attending your son or daughter's or brother or sister's wedding, a family member's funeral, or just relaxing with friends at a local restaurant. While you may be busily living the most exciting high point of your life to the lowest grieving the loss of a family loved one, to just attending an everyday social gathering, all of a sudden your world is abruptly shattered never to be the same. Out of the blue from out of nowhere, a bomb hits and you are either dead, or barely alive suffering from life threatening injuries, or traumatized for life, forever changed for the worse. You will never enjoy another wedding, attend another funeral, or experience another emotional high or joy without sudden flashback memories of that fateful day flooding your consciousness and invading your world. Intrusive fear and panic rule your daily life where your sense of normalcy and homeostasis is forever knocked out of whack. Destroying lives is what US predator drones do every day of the week, year in and year out for more than a dozen years to thousands of innocent people in the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa and no doubt other hidden places we do not even know.

Terror from the skies causes Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and severe depression in surviving victims. Mothers become so terrified they frequently stop sending their children to school. Recurring nightmares, flashbacks, anxiety attacks often linger on haunting victims for years after the traumatic event has come and gone. Moreover, virtually all the people suffering from US drone strike terrorism remain untreated without psychological care, treatment or support. Americans that never experience this level of sheer trauma and terror have no clue how their nation's longtime drone policy devastates so many lives thousands of miles away. Again, it is largely a matter of out of sight, out of mind.

Return to the drone attacks at weddings, funerals or just hanging out with friends, how do you think survivors of US drone blasts respond to seeing their lives literally shattered and destroyed? Needlessly losing your loved ones compliments of US Empire terrorism is a very bitter pill to have to swallow. Becoming easy to hate America as your eternal enemy, the human response is to want to get even, seeking revenge and avenging the tragic deaths of those you loved.

And in this sinister way, the US government guarantees a fresh supply of enemies in its permanent war on terror. Committing crimes against humanity as an effective means of bleeding US taxpayers dry while waging multiple secret dirty wars around the world keeps the oligarch war profiteers happy. The handful of controlling shareholders owning Lockheed, Halliburton, General Dynamics, Raytheon, Blackwater all love war, and also love the puppet they own in their warmongering president. Under Obama's watch the drone warfare campaign in Pakistan alone has expanded to eight times more than his fellow war criminal

predecessor Bush. In his first five years as president, more than 2400 people have been killed in 390 drone attacks (although records are largely withheld from news media). Aside from Pakistan and the two decade long warfronts in Iraq and Afghanistan, Obama expanded predator drone strikes regularly in Somalia and Yemen as well.

Of course the CIA and military also lie all the time about the number of innocent civilians killed by drones. More civilians were obliterated in Yemen last year than any previous year. It was Yemen in December 2009 that a cruise missile launched from a nuclear submarine murdered 41 civilians in a small hamlet, 21 of them children and 12 were women. This war crime atrocity in a nation the US was not even at war with came just a week after Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Obama made the puppet Yemen government falsely admit it was their missile but that lie was exposed. The Yemen journalist who told the truth was then falsely imprisoned. When the journalist was about to be released, Obama spitefully intervened and pressured the Yemen president to keep him in prison.

Meanwhile the so called al Qaeda enemy that drones are supposed to attack are now our US taxpayer backed friend and ally wherever the US hires bloodthirsty mercenaries for its next regime changing Empire agenda. They took out four Americans in Benghazi after taking out Libya's Gaddafi and to this day are still taking out innocent Syrians against Bashar al Assad. Currently handing over more sophisticated American made high-powered weaponry to al Qaeda militants in Syria in a losing cause may one day be used against the United States. Entrusting al Qaeda mercenaries guilty of known war atrocities with such lethal US military hardware is playing Russian roulette.

As a National Security Agency (NSA) analyst, whistleblower Edward Snowden saw unsuspecting lives forever altered by US foreign policy, specifically the modern secret weapon in the American Empire arsenal known as drone warfare and surveillance. Snowden later told investigative journalist Glenn Greenwald, "The stuff I saw really began to disturb me. I could watch drones in real time as they surveilled the people they might kill." It was this Godlike power to invade and destroy other human lives that compelled the morally principled Snowden to reveal the depth of malevolence he could no longer secretly live with perpetrated by the US government's reign of terror from the skies.

Without even using on-the-ground informants or intelligence operatives, half a world away somewhere in America a US military drone pilot sits in a safe quiet room manipulating buttons on a computer that launch missile strikes from his faraway piloted drone. Utilizing NSA data from the targeted victims' cell phones, at the end of his shift the drone pilot simply goes home to his wife and kids as just another day at the office and can ironically play more video games at home before going to sleep. This is what the insanity of hi-tech warfare has come to. But victims at the other end of the US war game have been shredded into pieces and cannot even be identified. This is the one-sided, bloodless, cowardly way America conveniently fights its modern wars in nations that the US is not even at war with in the twenty-first century. If you are a psychopath, it is hi-tech Empire killing at its finest. If you are a human being, it is the heinous war crime of the century.

Meanwhile back at the White House every Tuesday morning for over half a decade, President Obama sits with key members of his security council, CIA and military intelligence to hand pick his next drone victims. Little does it matter that more often than not the intended targets on Obama's hit list are not even killed. It makes no difference that far more innocent civilians who are neither terrorists nor enemy sympathizers are being murdered

than the so called enemy.

A Stanford-New York University <u>study</u> determined that the dual drone attack program in Pakistan kills just one terrorist for every 50 fatalities. This double tap drone coldly fires upon rescuers tending to victims of the first drone attack murdering 49 innocent humans for every one intended terrorist killed. This wholesale slaughter is unconscionable.

Nor does it even matter to our President that the murdered victims may be American citizens. Obama stated arrogantly that he could one day foresee killing Americans on American soil. Recall in September 2011 the Islamic American citizen Anwar al Awlaki deemed an enemy sympathizer in Yemen who died with another American Moslem and then two weeks later his own sixteen year old son from Colorado was targeted and murdered along with his several friends while dining in a remote Yemen village. While embedded mainstream press never dared to press the president on these cold-blooded killings, his press secretary responded by callously blaming the dead sixteen year old boy for "choosing the wrong parents."

Three weeks ago the US Second Circuit Court of Appeals <u>ruled in favor</u> of the *New York Times* and the ACLU against the Obama regime to force disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act the rationale used by Obama to justify killing the three Americans in Yemen. "The eminent threat to national security" that Obama previously alluded to in explaining his reason will have to be further elaborated. The transparency he promised the American electorate that voted him into power will be coerced by court order on the least transparent, most secretive president in US history.

Clearly Obama sees it as his ordained right to be able to personally cherry pick his drone victims on a weekly matter-of-fact basis. To our psychopathic Commander-in-Chief who assassinates without conscience from the armchair comfort of his Oval Office, in effect playing the role of judge, jury and cold blooded executioner, none of the destruction he inflicts on thousands of other human beings apparently causes him to lose any sleep. Just like flying off to another hoity-toity affair to raise funds ensuring his reelection the night four Americans were being murdered in Benghazi on 9/11/12, Barrack Hussein Obama manages to sleep comfortably at night.

Drone strikes are completely under public radar. The military operates in total secrecy and impunity without any apparent oversight or accountability. The <u>British Air Force</u> is under current fire from using American made drones to kill in Afghanistan without even informing the UK Parliament. This came after so much public criticism levied against the British drone strike program using British drones. The US military similarly operates answering to no one except perhaps the judge-jury-executioner himself and his chain of command.

Despite the use of drone warfare as an act of terrorism being a clear violation of every international law along with the loud public outcry from such groups as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the bloodbath continues year after year unabated uninterrupted. Beginning to surface are anonymous drone pilots suffering from guilt and remorse for taking part in impersonal remote killing. One pilot told the Intercept recently:

"It's really like we're targeting a cell phone. We're not going after people – we're going after their phones, in the hopes that the person on the other end of that missile is the bad guy."

Such hit and miss, indiscriminate murder in cold blood makes it long overdue to reign in the seemingly out of control Empire war machine by assessing the enormity of suffering US predator drones inflict on fellow human beings. Citizens of the world must demand an end to drone warfare.

Joachim Hagopian is a West Point graduate and former Army officer. His written manuscript based on his military experience examines leadership and national security issues and can be consulted at <a href="http://www.redredsea.net/westpointhagopian/">http://www.redredsea.net/westpointhagopian/</a>. After the military, Joachim earned a masters degree in psychology and became a licensed therapist working in the mental health field for more than a quarter century. He now focuses on writing.

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