

Ground the Drones



Together we can stop the escalating
use of armed unmanned aircraft

Week of Action: 1st – 8th October 2011

Introduction

Over the past few years we have witnessed the increasing use of unmanned aerial vehicles, commonly known as drones, to undertake armed attacks around the globe.

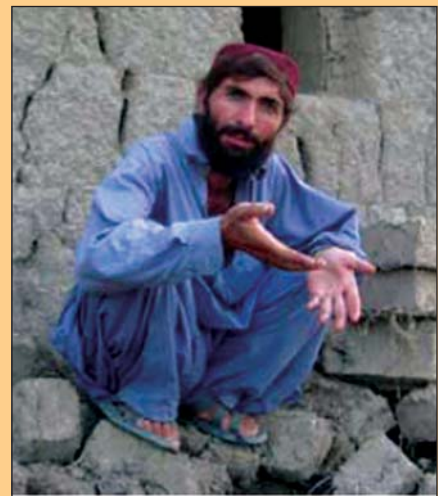
Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Yemen and Somalia have all been subject to drone strikes by US or British drones controlled from many thousands of miles away. Palestine is also subjected to drone strikes from Israel. Although there are claims that the drone strikes are precise and accurate, there are many reports - particular from Pakistan where media are able to obtain first hand reports - of high numbers of civilian casualties.

Legal experts as well as peace and human rights organisations have expressed serious concerns about the growing use of armed drones - and even some within the British Ministry of Defence have raised questions about the push towards greater autonomy for armed drones.

During the week of 1st to 8th October, we are encouraging local groups and individuals to take part in the first Week of Action to ground the drones. See inside for more information and ideas.

Voice of the Victims:

In June 2010, Shakeel Khan was sitting in his home in North Waziristan with his family when a drone missile struck: *"I was resting with my parents in one room when it happened. God saved my parents and I, but my brother, his wife, and children were all killed."* The children were 5 and 3 years old. Khan says, *"I must support my aged parents now but I earn a very little amount which can hardly meet our expenses. We don't have enough to reconstruct our house and fear that the drones will strike us again."*



- Shakeel Khan, interviewed by CIVIC 29th August 2010

Drone Wars UK

Military drone sites in the UK



1 - General Atomics - London office of manufacturer of Predator and Reaper drones. 25 Old Broad Street, Liverpool Street, London, EC2N 1HQ.

2 - RAF Northwood - UK's permanent joint military headquarters responsible for multi-national operations – has ultimate authority over UK drones in Afghanistan. Sandy Lane, Northwood, Middlesex, HA6 3HP.

3 - Paradigm Secure Communications - Ground Control Station for Skynet 5 military satellite which enables communication with UK drones over Afghanistan. Oakhanger, Bordon, Hampshire, GU35 9HU.

4 - Paradigm Secure Communications - Control centre for Skynet 5 military satellite system which enables communication with UK drones over Afghanistan. 1001 Skynet Drive, Corsham, Wiltshire, SN13 9NP.

5 - Boscombe Down - Field testing and evaluation of Watchkeeper drones. Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP4 0JF.

6 - RAF Waddington - RAF pilots will control Reaper drones over Afghanistan from RAF Waddington from 2012. Lincoln, LN5 9NB.

7 - Parc Aberporth - is the test facility for Watchkeeper drones. Parc Aberporth, Ceredigion, SA43 2BS.

8 - U-TacS - Manufacture/assembly of Watchkeeper. Company jointly owned by Elbit Systems and Thales UK. Scudamore Road, Leicester, LE3 1UA.

9 - UAV Engines Ltd. - UAV engine manufacturer, A subsidiary of Israeli defence company, Elbit Systems. Lynn Lane, Shenstone, Lichfield, WS14 0DT.

10 - BAE Systems Warton - Production and development of drones: Taranis, Herti, Mantis. Warton, Preston, Lancashire PR4 1AX.

University research & military drones

Many universities will have some connection with ongoing research related to military drones. The following ten universities however have a specific relationship with BAE Systems and drone research through FLAVIIR research programme::

11 - Cranfield University

12 - Imperial College

13 - Warwick University

14 - Leicester University

15 - Liverpool University

16 - Manchester University

17 - Nottingham University

18 - Southampton University

19 - Swansea University

20 - York University

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.

The use of drones has grown quickly in recent years because unlike manned aircraft they can stay aloft for many hours, they are much cheaper than military aircraft and they are flown remotely so there is no danger to the flight crew. While the British and US Reaper and Predator drones are physically in Afghanistan and Iraq, they are controlled via satellite from Nellis and Creech USAF base outside Las Vegas, Nevada. British Reapers will be controlled from RAF Waddington in Lincs when RAF pilots move back from the US in 2012.

Ground crews launch drones near the conflict zone, then control is handed over to pilots sitting at video screens in specially designed trailers in the Nevada desert. One person 'flies' the drone, another operates and monitors the cameras and sensors, while a third person is in contact with the "customers", ground troops and commanders in the war zone. While armed drones were first used in the Balkans war, their use has dramatically escalated in Afghanistan, Iraq and in the CIA's undeclared war in Pakistan. The US has two separate 'squadron' of armed drones – one run by the US Air Force and one run by the CIA. Former CIA Director (now US Defence Secretary) Leon Panetta called drones are "the only game in town."



Drones UK

The UK has several different types of armed and surveillance drones in Iraq and Afghanistan and others in the production or development stage. The UK began using armed drones in Afghanistan in Oct 2007 after purchasing three Reapers from General Atomics in 2007 at a cost of £6m each. The MoD confirmed in June 2008 that a British Reaper UAV had fired its weapons for the first time, but refused to give any details.

In July 2011 the UK MoD reported that British Reapers had undertaken 178 armed attacks in Afghanistan since 2008. The MoD was forced to admit for the first time in July 2011 that Afghan civilians had been killed in a British drone strike. They continue to maintain however that this was a one-off due to "intelligence failures on the ground."



Watchkeeper

As well as armed drones, the UK has several types of surveillance and targeting drones, most notably Watchkeeper, a drone jointly

produced by Israeli company Ebit and Thales UK. The UK is purchasing 54 Watchkeeper drones and ground stations at a cost of £860m. The first ten have been built in Israel and production will now be transferring

to a specially built facility in Leicester at the Thales factory. Testing is taking place at Aberporth in Wales and Watchkeeper is due to enter service in December 2011.

Increased Surveillance

Manufacturers are also looking for civilian uses for drones to expand their markets and this includes the use of drones for domestic surveillance. Drones will no doubt make possible the dramatic expansion of the surveillance state. With the convergence of other technologies it may even make possible machine recognition of faces, behaviours, and the monitoring of individual conversations. The sky, so to speak, is the limit.



Organised by Drones Campaign Network

c/o Peace House, 19 Paradise Street, Oxford OX4 2HX

Part of International 'Keep Space for Peace' Week

www.dronecampaignnetwork.org.uk

What you can do during the week

Protest Vigil at Drone Sites

If you live near one of the sites on our Drone Wars UK map, you may want to organise a vigil or protest at the site during the week of action. Please get in touch and we can either put you in touch with what is already happening there or help you organise something. Check the website for details:

dronecampaignnetwork.org.uk/WOA

Useful resources and information on drones

Convenient Killing: Armed Drones and the Playstation Mentality (Fellowship of Reconciliation)

A 20 page full-colour briefing providing in-depth research and a summary of current knowledge on the subject of unmanned aerial vehicles. Available to order or download from www.for.org.uk/resources

Precisely Wrong: Gaza Civilians Killed by Israeli Drone-Launched Missiles

A 40 page briefing from Human Rights Watch examining six case studies of Israeli drone strikes in Gaza resulting in civilian deaths. <http://www.hrw.org>

The UK Approach to Unmanned Aircraft Systems (JDN 2/11)

An examination of the UK's use of UAVs by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) examining the legal, moral and ethical issues. See: <http://bit.ly/nYEGPO>

Drone Wars UK website: www.droneWars.net

Regularly updated website providing background information, comment and campaign material on drones

Raise Awareness

Organise a street stall to raise awareness about the use of armed drones. We can provide draft letters for people to write to the MoD, the Prime Minister or to their local MP. We can provide leaflets and information to use for a display

Press Work

If you live in an area with a drone connection (see map) you may want to write to your local paper expressing opposition, or contact a local radio talk show. How about calling for a 'drone free zone'? It is likely that most people in your area will be completely unaware of a connection to the 'drone wars'.



Let's talk

Could you or a local group help to organise a speaker meeting in your local town. We have several people who would be willing to come and speak about drones during the week. All you have to do is book a room and publicise locally. Please give us as much notice as you can if you would like a speaker. Contact the **Drones Campaign Network**: c/o Peace House, 19 Paradise Street, Oxford OX4 2HX Telephone: 07960 811437 Email: info@dronecampaignnetwork.org.uk www.dronecampaignnetwork.org.uk



Local contact:

Drone Week of Action is organised by the Drone Campaign Network

Network members include:

Bro Emlyn for Peace and Justice

Campaign Against Arms Trade

Child Victims of War

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

CND Cymru

Conscience

Cymdeithas y Cymod

Drone Wars UK

Fellowship of Reconciliation, England

Pax Christi

Peace News

Quaker Peace and Social Witness

Scientists for Global Responsibility

SPEAK

Stewardship

War on Want

War Resisters International

www.dronecampaignnetwork.org.uk