

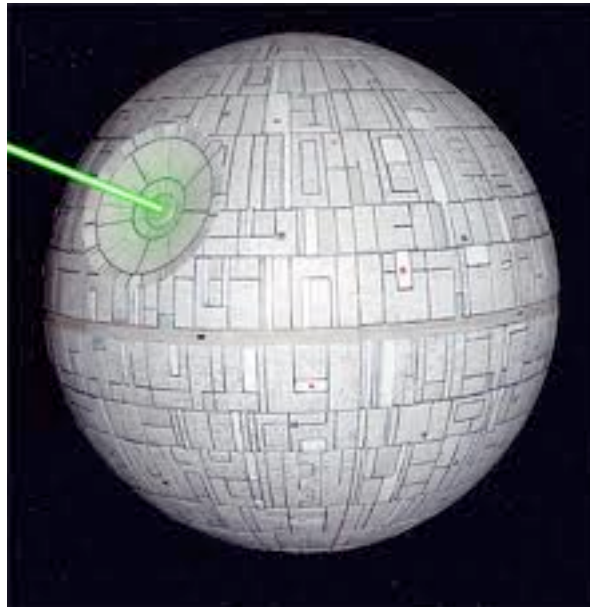


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ASSOCIATION D'ELOCUTION ET DES DEBATS DE LA SASKATCHEWAN

# Drone Warfare

**This House would condemn the use of drones in warfare.**



Research prepared by Megan Moncrief

Fall 2011

[www.saskdebate.com](http://www.saskdebate.com)

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The Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association (SEDA) is a non-profit organization that promotes speech and debate activities in English and French. The Association is active throughout the province from grade 5 through grade 12, and at the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan. The Association coordinates an annual program of speech and debate tournaments and other special activities, including a model legislature.

SEDA's staff, along with printed and audio-visual materials, are available to assist any individual or group interested in elocution and debate.

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# **This House would condemn the use of drones in warfare**

## **Introduction**

Before coming up with the arguments for your case, take the time to do a fair bit of research. Reading articles about the resolution will give you an idea about what kind of action to take. You may find that some things are already in place, while other ideas have no information on them because they are not popular topics for the media. It is important to focus on concepts that you can support with research. So above all, before you do anything, gain a good knowledge base.

This resolution is a great one for cross-examination: *“This House would condemn the use of drones in warfare.”*

Try looking at some of the big themes of the debate: which is more justified, using drones or risking soldiers' lives? Does drone warfare make government more or less likely to attack? These are just a few ideas to get you started. Try brainstorming more ideas with your partner and your club, then focus on what case you want to build – on both the affirmative and negative side.

The key to running a good affirmative argument in this debate is to remain focused. The more focused you are on what you want your plan to achieve, the harder it is for the negative team to attack you. Although it might seem easy to take every argument you can think of and build them into one case, keep in mind that this gives a lot of room to the negative team when deciding what they are going to argue against. They might be able to zero in on your weakest point and convince the judges that you should lose just because of that one point! You don't want that to happen, so pick a focused direction.

All of these cases have good arguments behind them and good evidence to support them (but there may be other approaches that you should also explore – this is your chance to solve this problem!). It would be hard to argue all the possible points in the little time you have. When developing your case, be prepared for possible negative attacks and then strengthen your case. Don't leave yourself open to attack!

It is beneficial to remember the same things as the negative team. You don't know what the affirmative team will do, so you should do a lot of research and become very knowledgeable about this subject. That way, you will be ready to deal with anything the affirmative comes up with. It might help to write down many pieces of evidence on different cards, but only plan on using a few of them, depending on how the affirmative team defines the debate. Remember, preparation is just as important, if not more important, for the negative team as it is for the affirmative team. You must have prepared evidence too!

Of course, there are a few negative points you can prepare before hand that might work against any case, although these more general and less-focused arguments will not be quite as effective. Maybe the affirmative did not make a clear link between cause and effect, so point that out. Create a strong negative case that takes an alternate but equally valid view of the problem.

Try summing up the main theme of your case in one clear statement – either for the affirmative or negative. Then, make sure you have 3 to 5 key points in your case that relate back to your theme or “caseline”. During the debate, make sure both your constructive arguments and your clash relate back to your caseline and attack the opposite team's caseline.

To win a debate, you must show the judges that you triumphed over your opponents on some key arguments and that you presented the stronger case. The evidence you collect when researching is very helpful for illustrating that. If you have done a good job as the affirmative team mentioning evidence for every point you make, and the negative team has argued against you but has failed to support themselves with articles and statistics, then show the judges that you have a more concrete case. Mentioning your superior evidence should tip the balance of the debate in your favor if both teams have done a good job of clashing. In your final rebuttal speeches, in addition to your final clash and summary, refer back to the big theme of your case and how it was proven superior to your opposition's development of their theme.

Lastly, remember that this research package is just a starter. So go to the library! Interview people! Watch the news! Surf the web! The best debater is one that knows the topic inside and out.

~ Adapted from an article written by Garrett Richards, Fall 2004

### **Understanding definitions:**

When you get a resolution, you pick out two types of key words to understand:

1. Terms specific to the topic that everyone needs to agree on to debate, like *'drones'* and *'warfare'*. You define this in the first affirmative speech.
2. Words that require a specific type of argument from debaters, like *'condem'*. You define your stance on this using your caseline and arguments.

### **Understanding the burdens:**

In a debate 'should' means that there is a moral and practical reason to make the specified change.

#### **Affirmative:**

The side that agrees with the resolution must prove the current system is in need of change. To meet your burden, prove:

- There is a moral or practical reason to condemn drone warfare

#### **Negative**

The side that disagrees with the resolution must prove that the current system is good enough. This can be done in **one** of several ways:

- Prove the current system is fine

**OR**

- Prove the problems identified by the affirmative are caused by something other than drone warfare

### **The Big Debate:**

**Each debate topic has an underlying disagreement about what way society should do something. In this case, the argument is, about the nature of war and if conducting war "from a distance" makes society more likely to engage in acts of war.**

**Position 1** –The use of drones would make governments or other factions more likely to attack and is a potential invasion of privacy.

**Position 2** – The use of drones can save lives of soldiers and civilians and provide more accurate strikes on targets while covertly gathering essential intelligence.

## **Background Articles**

[http://news.cnet.com/8301-11386\\_3-10064231-76.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-11386_3-10064231-76.html)

Link to clips from the 60 Minutes special on drones in Iraq

[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/41837647/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-science/t/wings-technology-hummingbird-drones/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/41837647/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/wings-technology-hummingbird-drones/)

The Pentagon is pouring millions of dollars into the development of tiny drones inspired by biology — such as the hummingbird — each equipped with video and audio equipment that can record sights and sounds.

They could be used to spy, but also to locate people inside earthquake-crumpled buildings and detect hazardous chemical leaks.

The smaller, the better.

Besides the hummingbird, engineers in the growing unmanned aircraft industry are working on drones that look like insects and the helicopter-like maple leaf seed.

Researchers are even exploring ways to implant surveillance and other equipment into an insect as it is undergoing metamorphosis. They want to be able to control the creature.

The devices could end up being used by police officers and firefighters.

Their potential use outside of battle zones, however, is raising questions about privacy and the dangers of the winged creatures buzzing around in the same skies as aircraft.

For now, most of these devices are just inspiring awe.

With a 6.5-inch wing span, the remote-controlled bird weighs less than a AA battery and can fly at speeds of up to 11 mph, propelled only by the flapping of its two wings. A tiny video camera sits in its belly.

The bird can climb and descend vertically, fly sideways, forward and backward. It can rotate clockwise and counterclockwise.

Most of all it can hover and perch on a window ledge while it gathers intelligence, unbeknownst to the enemy.

"We were almost laughing out of being scared because we had signed up to do this," said Matt Keennon, senior project engineer of California's AeroVironment, which built the hummingbird.

The Pentagon asked them to develop a pocket-sized aircraft for surveillance and reconnaissance that mimicked biology. It could be anything, they said, from a dragonfly to a hummingbird.

Five years and \$4 million later, the company has developed what it calls the world's first hummingbird spy plane.



AP via AeroVironment Inc.

This life-size Hummingbird-like unmanned aircraft, named Nano Hummingbird, was developed by AeroVironment Inc., for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. The prototype has a wingspan of 6.5 inches, can fly up to 11 mph and weighs just two-thirds of an ounce.

"It was very daunting up front and remained that way for quite some time into the project," he said, after the drone blew by his head and landed on his hand during a media demonstration.

The toughest challenges were building a tiny vehicle that can fly for a prolonged period and be controlled or control itself.

AeroVironment has a history of developing such aircraft.

Over the decades, the Monrovia, Calif.-based company has developed everything from a flying mechanical reptile to a hydrogen-powered plane capable of flying in the stratosphere and surveying an area larger than Afghanistan at one glance.

It has become a leader in the hand-launched drone industry.

Troops fling a four-pound plane, called the Raven, into the air. They have come to rely on the real-time video it sends back, using it to locate roadside bombs or get a glimpse of what is happening over the next hill or around a corner.

The success of the hummingbird drone, however, "paves the way for a new generation of aircraft with the agility and appearance of small birds," said Todd Hylton of the Pentagon's research arm, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.

These drones are not just birds.

Lockheed Martin has developed a fake maple leaf seed, or so-called whirly bird, loaded with navigation equipment and imaging sensors. The spy plane weighs .07 ounces.

On the far end of the research spectrum, DARPA also is exploring the possibility of implanting live insects during metamorphosis with video cameras or sensors and controlling them by applying electrical stimulation to their wings.

The idea is for the military to be able to send in a swarm of bugs loaded with spy gear.

The military is also eyeing other uses.

The drones could be sent in to search buildings in urban combat zones. Police are interested in using them, among other things, to detect a hazardous chemical leak. Firefighters could fling them out over a disaster to get better data, quickly.

It is hard to tell what, if anything, will make it out of the lab, but their emergence presents challenges and not just with physics.

What are the legal implications, especially with interest among police in using tiny drones for surveillance, and their potential to invade people's privacy, asks Peter W. Singer, author of the book "Wired for War," about robotic warfare.

Singer said these questions will be increasingly discussed as robotics become a greater part of everyday life.

"It's the equivalent to the advent of the printing press, the computer, gun powder," he said. "It's that scale of change."

\*\*\* Laws of war

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/28/world/asia/28drones.html?ref=global-home>

U.N. Official to Ask U.S. to End C.I.A. Drone Strikes

By CHARLIE SAVAGE

Published: May 27, 2010

WASHINGTON — A senior [United Nations](#) official is expected to call on the United States next week to stop [Central Intelligence Agency drone](#) strikes against people suspected of belonging to [Al Qaeda](#), complicating the Obama administration's growing reliance on that tactic in [Pakistan](#).

#### **Related**

Times Topic: [Predator Drones and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles \(UAVs\)](#)

Philip Alston, the United Nations special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, said Thursday that he would deliver a report on June 3 to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva declaring that the "life and death power" of drones should be entrusted to regular armed forces, not intelligence agencies. He contrasted how the military and the C.I.A. responded to allegations that strikes had killed civilians by mistake.

"With the Defense Department you've got maybe not perfect but quite abundant accountability as demonstrated by what happens when a bombing goes wrong in Afghanistan," he said in an interview. "The whole process that follows is very open. Whereas if the C.I.A. is doing it, by definition they are not going to answer questions, not provide any information, and not do any follow-up that we know about."

Mr. Alston's views are not legally binding, and his report will not assert that the operation of combat drones by nonmilitary personnel is a war crime, he said. But the mounting international concern over drones comes as the Obama administration legal team has been quietly struggling over how to justify such counterterrorism efforts while obeying the laws of war.

In recent months, top lawyers for the State Department and the Defense Department have tried to

square the idea that the C.I.A.'s drone program is lawful with the United States' efforts to prosecute Guantánamo Bay detainees accused of killing American soldiers in combat, according to interviews and a review of military documents.

Under the laws of war, soldiers in traditional armies cannot be prosecuted and punished for killing enemy forces in battle. The United States has argued that because Qaeda fighters do not obey the requirements laid out in the [Geneva Conventions](#) — like wearing uniforms — they are not “privileged combatants” entitled to such battlefield immunity. But C.I.A. drone operators also wear no uniforms.

Paula Weiss, a C.I.A. spokeswoman, called into question the notion that the agency lacked accountability, noting that it was overseen by the White House and Congress. “While we don’t discuss or confirm specific activities, this agency’s operations take place in a framework of both law and government oversight,” Ms. Weiss said. “It would be wrong to suggest the C.I.A. is not accountable.”

Still, the Obama administration legal team confronted the issue as the Pentagon prepared to restart military commission trials at Guantánamo Bay. The commissions began with pretrial hearings in the case of [Omar Khadr](#), a Canadian detainee accused of killing an Army sergeant during a firefight in Afghanistan in 2002, when Mr. Khadr was 15.

The Pentagon delayed issuing a 281-page manual laying out commission rules until the eve of the hearing. The reason, officials say, is that government lawyers had been scrambling to rewrite a section about murder because it has implications for the C.I.A. drone program.

An earlier version of the manual, issued in 2007 by the Bush administration, defined the charge of “murder in violation of the laws of war” as a killing by someone who did not meet “the requirements for lawful combatancy” — like being part of a regular army or otherwise wearing a uniform. Similar language was incorporated into a draft of the new manual.

But as the Khadr hearing approached, Harold Koh, the State Department legal adviser, pointed out that such a definition could be construed as a concession by the United States that C.I.A. drone operators were war criminals. Jeh Johnson, the Defense Department general counsel, and his staff ultimately agreed with that concern. They redrafted the manual so that murder by an unprivileged combatant would instead be treated like espionage — an offense under domestic law not considered a war crime.

“An accused may be convicted,” the final manual states, if he “engaged in conduct traditionally triable by military commission (e.g., spying; murder committed while the accused did not meet the requirements of privileged belligerency) even if such conduct does not violate the international law of war.”

Under that reformulation, the C.I.A. drone operators — who reportedly fly the aircraft from agency headquarters in Langley, Va. — might theoretically be subject to prosecution in a Pakistani courtroom. But regardless, the United States can argue to allies that it is not violating the laws of war.

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drones away from combat zones, also agreed with the Obama administration's legal theory in this case. She said it could provide a "small modicum" of protection for C.I.A. operatives, noting that Germany had a statute allowing it to prosecute violations of the Geneva Conventions, but it does not enforce domestic Pakistani laws against murder.

In March, Mr. Koh delivered a speech in which he argued that the drone program was lawful because of the armed conflict with Al Qaeda and the principle of self-defense. He did not address several other murky legal issues, like whether Pakistani officials had secretly consented to the strikes. Mr. Alston, who is a [New York University](#) law professor, said his report would analyze such questions in detail, which may increase pressure on the United States to discuss them.

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### **Affirmative Articles**

<http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/04/drone-pilots-could-be-tried-for-war-crimes-law-prof-says/>

#### **Drone Pilots Could Be Tried for 'War Crimes,' Law Prof Says**

By [Nathan Hodge](#) [Email](#) [Author](#) April 28, 2010 | 4:15 pm | Categories: [Drones](#)

The pilots waging America's undeclared drone war in Pakistan could be liable to criminal prosecution for "war crimes," a prominent law professor told a Congressional panel Wednesday.

[Harold Koh](#), the State Department's top legal adviser, outlined the administration's [legal case for the robotic attacks](#) last month. Now, some legal experts are taking turns to punch holes in Koh's argument.

It's part of an ongoing legal debate about the CIA and U.S. military's lethal drone operations, which have escalated in recent months — and which have [received some technological upgrades](#). Critics of the program, [including the American Civil Liberties Union](#), have argued that the campaign amounts to a program of targeted killing that may violate the laws of war.

In a hearing Wednesday before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform's national security and foreign affairs panel, several professors of national security law seemed open to that argument. But there are still plenty of caveats, and the risks to U.S. drone operators are at this point theoretical: Unless a judge in, say, Pakistan, wanted to issue a warrant, it doesn't seem likely. But that's just one of the possible legal hazards of robotic warfare.

Loyola Law School professor [David Glazier](#), a former Navy surface warfare officer, said the pilots operating the drones from afar could — in theory — be hauled into court in the countries where the attacks occur. That's because the CIA's drone pilots aren't combatants in a legal sense.

“It is my opinion, as well as that of most other law-of-war scholars I know, that those who participate in hostilities without the combatant’s privilege do not violate the law of war by doing so, they simply gain no immunity from domestic laws,” he said.

“Under this view CIA drone pilots are liable to prosecution under the law of any jurisdiction where attacks occur for any injuries, deaths or property damage they cause,” Glazier continued. “But under the legal theories adopted by our government in prosecuting Guantánamo detainees, these CIA officers as well as any higher-level government officials who have authorized or directed their attacks are committing war crimes.”

The drones themselves are a lawful tool of war; “In fact, the ability of the drones to engage in a higher level of precision and to discriminate more carefully between military and civilian targets than has existed in the past actually [suggests that they’re preferable to many older weapons](#),” Glazier added. But employing CIA personnel to carry out those armed attacks, he concluded, “clearly fall outside the scope of permissible conduct and ought to be reconsidered, particularly as the United States seeks to prosecute members of its adversaries for generally similar conduct.”

Drone attacks haven’t just become the *primary* weapon in the American bid to wipe out Al Qaeda and affiliated terrorist networks. “Very frankly, [it’s the only game in town](#) in terms of confronting or trying to disrupt the al Qaeda leadership,” CIA director Leon Panetta said.

But that “embrace of the Predator program has occurred with remarkably little public discussion, given that it represents a radical new and geographically unbounded use of state-sanctioned lethal force,” *The New Yorker’s* Jane Mayer recently observed. Before 9/11, the American government regularly condemned Israel for taking out individual terrorists. “Seven years later, there is no longer any doubt that [targeted killing has become official U.S. policy](#).”

The U.S. government has since defended the strikes as legitimate self-defense — without going into details about the operations. Kenneth Anderson, an American University law professor, said the government’s reluctance to talk about the missions — as well as its reliance on an intelligence agency to carry out military action — raises some serious questions.

In his [prepared statement](#) (.pdf), Anderson said Koh “nowhere mentions the CIA by name in his defense of drone operations. It is, of course, what is plainly intended when speaking of self-defense separate from armed conflict. One understands the hesitation of senior lawyers to name the CIA’s use of drones as lawful when the official position of the U.S. government, despite everything, is still not to confirm or deny the CIA’s operations.”

What’s more, Anderson argued, Congress has been reluctant to talk about the bigger policy issue: Why this is a CIA mission in the first place. “Why should the CIA, or any other civilian agency, ever use force (leaving aside conventional law enforcement)?” he said. “Even granting the existence of self-defense as a legal category, why ever have force used by anyone other than the uniformed military?”

Mary Ellen O’Connell, professor of law at the University of Notre Dame, was much more blunt in her statement. “Combat drones are battlefield weapons,” she told the panel. “They fire missiles or drop bombs capable of inflicting very serious damage. Drones are not lawful for use outside combat zones. Outside such zones, police are the proper law enforcement agents, and police are generally required to warn before using lethal force.”

“Restricting drones to the battlefield is the most important single rule governing their use, O’Connell continued. “Yet, the United States is failing to follow it more often than not.”

Not all of the law professors testifying today agreed. Syracuse University’s William Banks, for one, said that “the intelligence laws permit the president broad discretion to utilize the nation’s intelligence agencies to carry out national security operations, implicitly including targeted killing.” Current U.S. laws “[supply adequate – albeit not well articulated or understood – legal authority for these drone strikes.](#)”

But American laws may not be on the only ones applicable to drone strikes, critics contend. As Anderson argued, the United States may face legal challenges from what he called the “international-law community” – nongovernmental organizations, international bodies, U.N. agencies and others who view this as a program of targeted killing that falls outside the bounds of armed conflict.

Either way, this hearing will not end the controversy. As we’ve noted here before, the government has been less than forthcoming about who, exactly, authorizes drone strikes, how the targets are chosen and how many civilians may have been inadvertently killed.

– *Nathan Hodge and Noah Shachtman*

*Photo: U.S. Department of Defense*

#### **See Also:**

- [Drone Attacks Are Legit Self-Defense, Says State Dept. Lawyer](#)
  - [CIA Contemplated Human Hit Squads, Turned to Killer Drones](#)
  - [Drone Wars: The Legal Debate Continues](#)
  - [Spy Chips Guiding CIA Drone Strikes, Locals Say](#)
  - [U.S. Military Joins CIA’s Drone War in Pakistan](#)
- [Up to 320 Civilians Killed in Pakistan Drone War: Report](#)

<http://rationallyspeaking.blogspot.com/2011/09/ethics-of-drone-warfare.html>

The ethics of drone warfare

by Michael De Dora

As you probably already know, the United States has increasingly relied on drones, or [unmanned aerial vehicles](#), to carry out warfare in recent years. Drone attacks have been particularly popular under President Barack Obama’s administration. According to the [New America Foundation](#), there were 43 drone attacks between January and October 2009 (right when Obama took office), compared to just 34 in all of 2008 (when George W. Bush was still in office). The Obama administration has shown [no indication](#) that it will halt their use.

The government’s increased reliance on drones has sparked public debate: Are drone strikes legal? Are they ethical? In my reading of various news and opinion articles on the issue, those who object to drones have most often made three arguments:

1. Drones violate domestic law. Many, or even most, drone strikes take place in Pakistan or other

Middle Eastern countries where the US has not declared war against a foreign state, but is instead working with local officials to root out terrorists under some “handshake agreement.” As such, many people feel drone strikes are an unjustified use of presidential and military power. US officials defend drone strikes on the grounds that they do not target a formal state, but a small group of people that have carried out attacks on domestic soil and plan to do so again. Thus, formal warfare laws do not apply (in other words: hey, it’s just the never-ending War on Terror).

2. Drones violate [international law](#), which restricts when and how different states can engage in armed conflict. Yet, as with domestic law, there is no conflict between two formal states. Also, most drone strikes are carried out by the CIA, which as a civilian agency and a noncombatant under international law is not governed by the same laws of war that cover US military agencies.

3. Drones kill civilians. The [Wall Street Journal](#) reported via intelligence officials that since Obama took office, the CIA has used drones to kill 400 to 500 suspected militants, while only ~20 civilians have been killed. However, in 2009, Pakistani officials said the strikes had killed roughly 700 civilians and only 14 terrorist leaders. Meanwhile, a [New America Foundation analysis](#) in northwest Pakistan from between 2004 to 2010 reports that the strikes killed between 830 and 1210 individuals, of whom 550 to 850 were militants (about two-thirds of the total).

These arguments are nuanced and complex. You can read more about US arguments and other counter-arguments in [this excellent article](#) in the Wall Street Journal. But let us put these — and any discussion of [just war theory](#) — aside for a moment, for I think there is a more basic ethical point here.

Notice that the objections above do not inherently reject the use of unmanned drones. Instead, they focus on international law, domestic law, and the accuracy of drones. This raises an important question: are drone strikes inherently any more or less ethical than, say, manned aircraft strikes? Is there, or should there be, an ethical distinction between launching missiles from half a world away and sending fighter jets to carry out such an attack?

I have pondered these questions for several days now and have come to the tentative conclusion that there is no ethical distinction. In my view, the method in which war is carried out — by drone, jet, or a missile launched from a nuclear sub — is less important than the pretenses under which war is being carried out in the first place. If an act of war violates domestic or international law, it does so regardless of whether the attack was carried out by a manned or unmanned aircraft. If an act of war kills civilians, one must parse whether civilians were intentionally or knowingly put at risk, or whether it was an issue of collateral damage. But I have seen no indication that drones kill more civilians on average than manned strikes (your research is welcome). So why is there such an objection to, specifically, drone strikes?

In reading objections to drone use, I can’t help but feel an unspoken and lurking moral sentiment that drone use is wrong because it removes the human element of war. That is, people reject the use of drones because drones remove a pilot (or submarine crew) from harm’s way.

Consider these three passages. The first is from a story in the news outlet [Christian Century](#):

*With drones, operators sitting in front of computer monitors in Virginia and Nevada can target enemies halfway around the world. When their shift is done, drone operators retire to their suburban homes.*

The second is from an essay in the Catholic magazine [America](#):

*Killing with drones is made easy for operators, who often work at great distances from the scene of attack. An Air Force ‘pilot’ may be in Nevada, while C.I.A. operatives are in Langley, Va., and others, including private contractors, are in Florida, Pakistan or Afghanistan. An operator may*

*launch an attack from a trailer in Nevada viewing a computer monitor and using a joystick. The operators never see the persons they have killed. The pilot of a fighter jet flies over the place where the attack will occur and risks being shot down; a drone pilot never experiences the place where the attack occurs and knows he or she is in no personal danger. The operator can go home at the end of the shift.*

The third is from an article on [PBS.org](#):

*Missile strikes launched from the comfort of Langley, Virginia, a half a world away from Waziristan, ... to critics, remain morally problematic.*

On one hand, this seems backward to me. Drones actually remove a pilot or crew from harm's way, and so they would seem a better manner of carrying out war. Imagine being able to carry out attacks on highly dangerous terrorists and counter-insurgents without having to put your own people at risk of death. This would seem desirable.

On the other hand, perhaps there is something to the idea that warfare made easier means warfare more often; that the more we remove the human element from one side of warfare, the more that side becomes willing to commit to warfare. This does not seem necessarily true, as warfare has not increased — and [might be decreasing](#) — with increasing technology. But I am also not entirely sure it is a compelling argument against drone use. Rather, it seems an argument against any advance in military technology — from guns that allow troops to shoot their weapons from further away, to planes that allow forces to drop bombs from higher elevations, to even bulletproof vests that provide more safety to soldiers engaged in war.

But, as always, I offer my thoughts to the peer review of Rationally Speaking. What do you think?

Posted by Massimo Pigliucci at [10:30 AM](#) 

<http://www.cnn.com/2011/10/19/opinion/cortright-drones/index.html>

### **The scary prospect of global drone warfare**

By **David Cortright**, Special to CNN

updated 2:26 PM EST, Wed October 19, 2011

An Air Force "hunter-killer" drone, the Reaper, takes off on a training mission at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada,

#### **STORY HIGHLIGHTS**

David Cortright: Up to 50 nations developing, buying drones, including China, Iran, Pakistan

The prospect is a world in which every nation has drone warfare capability, he writes

Cortright: Drones give nations false impression wars can be waged with less risk, costs

Drones precise, but kill civilians: up to 775 Pakistanis. We must rethink military trend, he writes

**Editor's note:** *David Cortright is director of policy studies for the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame.*

**(CNN)** -- Drone technology is spreading rapidly. As many as 50 countries are developing or purchasing these systems, including China, Russia, India, Pakistan, and Iran.

Even non-state actors are involved. Hezbollah reportedly has deployed an Iranian-designed drone.

Iran is developing a new drone aircraft with a range of more than 600 miles. These systems are used mostly for surveillance, but it is not difficult to equip the aircraft with missiles and bombs.

Recently in Massachusetts, a man was arrested for plotting to place explosives on a drone aircraft and fly it into the Pentagon or the Capitol building. Private contractors are getting into the

business as well. We now have companies offering drones-for-hire.

What kind of a future are we creating for our children? We face the prospect of a world in which every nation will have drone warfare capability, in which terror can rain down from the sky at any moment without warning.

Military planners are developing technologies for autonomous drones, aircraft that are supposedly "intelligent" and [can make their own decisions on when to unleash lethal force](#). Will we give machines the power to kill people?

The development of drone weapons raises profound moral questions about the future of war. U.S. officials are fond of drone weapons because they are inexpensive and seem to make the waging of war less costly. They allow leaders to conduct military operations without risking the lives of U.S. soldiers or drawing public disapproval. They give the false impression that war can be waged with fewer costs and risks.

Any development that makes war appear to be easier or cheaper is dangerous and morally troubling. It lowers the political threshold of war. It threatens to weaken the moral presumption against the use of armed force.

The use of drone aircraft perpetuates the illusion that military force is an effective means of countering terrorism and resolving political differences. We should know better by now. After 10 years of combat in Afghanistan the threat of terrorist attack and insurgent violence remains as great as ever. May 2011 was the deadliest month for Afghan civilians since the U.N. began keeping records in 2007, the agency's [Assistance Mission in Afghanistan reported](#). June's death toll was almost as high.

Terrorism is essentially a political phenomenon. It cannot be defeated by military means. The [RAND Corporation's 2008 report "How Terrorist Groups End"](#) shows that the most effective tools against violent extremism are political processes and police operations.

The U.S. government claims that drone strikes are an effective tool against al Qaeda leaders, but most of those being killed are low-level militants.

Many important legal questions have been raised about drone strikes. The U.S. government arguably has legal authority to conduct military operations in Afghanistan, based on the original congressional authorization adopted after 9/11. It is questionable, however, whether this authority extends to Pakistan, a country that is supposedly an ally of the United States. Nor do we have legal authority to launch military strikes in Yemen, Somalia and other countries where the United States is not officially engaged in armed hostilities.

Force may be used by soldiers against combatants in legally authorized armed conflicts, but this right does not extend to civilians. [The U.S. covert counterterrorism drone campaign is managed and operated by the CIA](#), an agency notorious for its past policy failures and violations of the law. Those who are conducting these raids operate in secret beyond the restraints of military discipline and are not subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Drone weapons are very precise, but they do not eliminate the problem of civilian casualties.

White House counterterrorism adviser John Brennan claimed in June that no civilians have been killed in Pakistan in the last year because of drone strikes. The White House quickly backed away from that outlandish claim, but administration officials continue to insist that so-called collateral damage is very low.

Precise information about civilian casualties is impossible to obtain, but a new [report from the Bureau of Investigative Journalism](#) in the UK sheds important light on the subject. Their figures show that civilian casualties occur in about one fifth of U.S. drone attacks in Pakistan. Since the drone war began in Pakistan in 2004, more than 2,000 people have been killed in these strikes, with as few as 386 and as many as 775 civilians among the dead, including as many as 170 children.

Drone weapons raise many troubling security, legal and moral questions. Rather than pushing ahead to develop more of these systems, our government should pause to consider the consequences of this new revolution in military technology.

The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of David Cortright.

## Negative Articles

[http://news.cnet.com/8301-11386\\_3-10064231-76.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-11386_3-10064231-76.html)

### '60 Minutes' video: Drone warfare in Iraq

by Jonathan E. Skillings October 13, 2008 8:29 AM PDT

#### **Follow**

One technology more than any other has stood out as a success story for the U.S. military in Iraq: unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs.

'60 Minutes': How tech helped win Sadr City battle

The best-known of the UAVs, the MQ-1 Predator, has evolved from its early use as simply a reconnaissance and surveillance aircraft to become a [highly valued weapon](#) in its own right. Armed with Hellfire missiles, it can both track enemy combatants and fire on them. A more recent version of the Predator, called [the MQ-9 Reaper](#), was specifically put into service as a "hunter-killer" drone.

The Pentagon has been so impressed with the use of UAVs in combat zones that it has made a high priority out of training and assigning new pilots for the aircraft (though not without [some controversy](#)). While the Predators carry out missions in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, and are handled by ground crews there, the pilots generally operate from thousands of miles away, in places like Creech Air Force Base in Nevada.

In Sunday's installment of the CBS news magazine [60 Minutes](#), correspondent Lesley Stahl traveled to Iraq to [talk to Gen. Ray Odierno](#), the new top commander there, and other senior U.S. military personnel about the role of UAVs.

During last spring's fight for Sadr City, for instance, UAVs including the Predator and [the RQ-7 Shadow](#) proved instrumental in finding and destroying insurgent targets. Cameras on the aircraft help commanders on the ground see and map out a wide area of operations with their "persistent surveillance" capability.

Stahl's report shows rare footage of the weaponry in action as the military pursued "fleeting and perishable" targets.

U.S. officials credit the high-tech aerial systems as among the top reasons that violence in Iraq dropped so dramatically this year. And earlier this year, although still a young technology, the Predator and the Shadow were among the half-dozen UAVs recognized with an [exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution](#).

The Predator--with its "snowmobile" engine and unobtrusive presence--has also become a favored tool of the CIA. Take a closer look in the January 2003 video below, from the [60 Minutes](#) archives.

'60 Minutes': Predator

<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/americas/07/23/wus.warfare.remote.uav/>

(CNN) -- Barely an hour's drive from the casinos of Las Vegas, a group of unassuming buildings have become as important as the trenches were to WWI. The big difference? Today's warriors are fighting without getting in harm's way, using drones to attack targets in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Remote-controlled drones, such as the Predator, are proving increasingly popular with the U.S. military.

U.S. Air Force fighter pilot Major Morgan Andrews is one such combatant. He kisses his wife goodbye, drives to Creech, a tiny desert air force base in Nevada, and within minutes could be killing insurgents on the other side of the world.

Andrews fights not from the seat of the F16 he joined the air force to fly but from a darkened ground control station. He pilots a remote-controlled Predator, a UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) which can spy on and attack positions and personnel without risk to its controller, shooting deadly Hellfire missiles at enemy fighters in support of fellow soldiers.

"You're talking to them on the radios as if we were in a normal airplane flying overhead," says Andrews. "You see the imagery, you know what's going on, you see what you're looking at. It's very easy when something like that is happening to project yourself there and feel a part of the battle. Like I said, your heart starts racing a little bit."

Meanwhile, intelligence analysts get to see images in real time and can identify personnel on the ground.

There are now more than 7,000 UAVs ranging from the workhorse, the Predator, and its beefier, deadlier kin the Reaper, to army drones like the tiny hand-launched Raven and the larger Shadow.

The drones are dramatically tilting the war in favor of the United States. Predators, for example, played a key role in killing al Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al Zarqawi in 2006. UAVs are credited with killing more than half al Qaeda's top 20 leaders.

Now U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates wants more UAVs. Already he has said that the next generation of fighter planes -- the F-35 that took decades to develop at a cost of more than half-a-billion dollars each -- will be the last manned fighter aircraft.

Lt. Gen. David Deptula, USAF, explains that the next phase will enable a single drone to provide as many as 60 simultaneous live video feeds directly to combat troops. Some new drones will be as small as flies, others walk -- all appear destined to work with decreasing human input.

"The future of how you use these un-manned systems or remotely piloted systems is really unlimited," says Deptula, based at the Pentagon and racing to keep pace with battlefield needs as well as Gates's demands. "We need to open our minds and think more about capability and impact we are going to achieve as opposed to how we've done business in the past." [Watch how UAVs are changing the face of warfare »](#)

At Creech, frontline requests surged when weapons were first put on the Predator. In Iraq and Afghanistan drones have become so indispensable that missions are cancelled if they are not available

### **Don't Miss**

- [They circled above and watched U.S. soldiers die in front of them'](#)
- [U.S. envoy told: Pakistan drone strikes not working](#)
- [Sources: U.S. resumes Pakistan drone flights](#)
- [U.N. envoy calls for probe into U.S. drone attacks](#)

Robotic warfare expert Peter Singer, who advised President Barack Obama's campaign team and has authored "Wired for War," says that remote warfare is changing mankind's monopoly on how

conflict is fought for the first time in 5,000 years. All that limits its advance is its application, not the technology.

"The barriers of war in our society are already lowering," he says. "This tech may allow them to lower to the ground. And we might already be seeing this in the strikes being carried out on Pakistan."

He points out that raw numbers over the last year show the same number of strikes as the opening of the Kosovo war. "But we didn't debate about it in Congress, we don't talk about it daily in our media."

[Pakistani](#) officials say drones are killing [al Qaeda](#) leaders who thought they were beyond U.S. reach. But even the U.S. government admits civilians are dying in those attacks too.

Singer fears the use of drones is misunderstood as cowardice, undermining the effectiveness of attacks and ultimately losing the war UAVs are fighting.

He explains that last year one of the most popular songs in the Pakistani charts talked about America fighting without honor, adding that the U.S. is "getting better and better at targeting leaders but perhaps creating a context that gets more recruits."

The spokesman for [Taliban](#) leader Mullah Omar [recently told me](#) that it is not afraid of drones, that it doesn't fear death. Deptula disagrees and quotes recently declassified comments between two Taliban leaders: "Tanks and armor are not a big deal, the planes are the killers."

He says that of more than 600 Hellfires fired by Predators, over 95 percent hit their targets. Those that failed did so generally through mechanical fault, loss of guidance or a target moving at the last instant, Deptula says.

Singer cites other instances when a computer fault has turned robotic warfare into a mass casualty event. "Last year in South Africa an anti-aircraft had a 'software glitch' during a training exercise," he says. "It was supposed to fire upwards into the sky, instead it lowered and it fired in a circle and killed nine soldiers, all because of a software glitch."

For the U.S. military the gains more obviously outweigh the glitches. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of service men and women have had limbs and lives saved by bomb-detecting bots. Conservative estimates say that fighting from home and putting robots in to war has saved hundreds of millions of dollars.

At Creech the demand for Predator pilots is so intense that it is mobilizing Air National Guard and reservists. It has also introduced an experimental training program for air force cadets from the videogame generation.

Colonel Chris Chambliss, based at Creech, explains: "If you look at younger people right now, they multitask much better than I do. They can do a lot of things with a lot of different information, gather all that in. That's certainly a skill set we need."

Cadet Greg Groves, who is in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, has never flown a plane before -- but is well aware of his responsibilities.

He says: "It's pretty clear that it's not a video game, and it is real life and that what I do directly affects someone else halfway around the world. So I don't think that's going to be a big problem for me."

Groves' father and grandfather were both in the military: when he leaves for Creech he'll be the first in his family to go to war without fear of dying.

Some commanders, such as Colonel Baxter Swift, based at [USAF](#) Balad in Iraq, says the future has only just begun.

He says: "It's almost like what the hot air balloon was back in the Civil War for us. 'Hey, I can rise above and look around and see what the forces are doing on the battlefield.' So now we are just in the pioneering stage."

Yet if U.S. forces can have UAVs, so can other nations. An estimated 40 or more countries also are developing drones, with an Iranian UAV already shot down over Iraq a few months ago. Even Hezbollah -- a political movement, not a state --- has used them against Israel. [Watch how the demand for UAVs has increased »](#)

For his part, Singer draws another historical parallel, comparing the U.S. and the UAV to the British invention of the tank in the early 20th century.

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"There is no such thing as a permanent first maneuver advantage," Singer says. "The British came out of WWI with the most tanks, they invented the tank and yet they didn't figure out the best way to use it in the wars they would be fighting. It was the Germans that figured that out and it was the Germans that would be fighting and would win with the tank when WWII starts."

<http://www.economist.com/node/21524876>

## Drones and the man

**Although it raises difficult questions, the use of drones does not contravene the rules of war**



THE use of Unmanned Aerial Systems, as the armed forces prefer to call them, is growing. Drones have become today's weapon of choice in counter-terrorism. And over the next 40 years or so, they are expected largely to replace piloted aircraft. In nine years the Pentagon has increased its drone fleet 13-fold and the generals are spending at least \$5 billion a year adding to it. The frequency of drone strikes on al-Qaeda and other terrorists that lurk in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has risen under Barack Obama to one every four days, compared with one every 40 during George Bush's presidency. In Libya NATO commanders turned to drones when their fast jets failed to find and hit Muammar Qaddafi's mobile rocket launchers.

Not everyone feels comfortable with all this. Critics say that the legal and ethical issues surrounding the use of drones have been neglected. Some of those concerns may be exaggerated, but others need to be taken seriously, particularly if, as seems certain, armies will increasingly fight with machines, not men.

There are good reasons for using more drones. Cruise missiles and jet fighters work against fixed targets, concentrations of forces or heavy weapons on open ground. They are not as useful, however, in today's "wars among the people" fought against insurgents and terrorists. Drones such as the Predator and the Reaper can loiter, maintaining what one former CIA director described as an "unblinking stare" over a chosen area for up to 18 hours. Thanks to the drone's ability to watch and wait, its "pilot", often thousands of miles away, can patiently choose the best moment to fire its missiles, both increasing the chances of success and minimising the harm to civilians.

That makes the drone the ideal weapon for tracking down and killing terrorists, particularly in places like the FATA where other options, such as sending in special forces, are not politically feasible. Claims in Pakistan that American drone attacks have killed thousands of civilians are undermined by research (see [article](#)) carried out at the New America Foundation, a think-tank, suggesting that in the seven years since 2004, 80% of the fatalities have been militants and that last year (thanks in part to intelligence provided by the Pakistanis themselves) fully 95% of them

were. The increasing accuracy of these attacks and the evidence that they have helped to weaken al-Qaeda encourage some to believe (not least in the White House) that counter-terrorist campaigns in the future can be waged without the sacrifice of blood and treasure that goes with putting thousands of boots on the ground.

Before that happens, America must square up to some of those ticklish legal and moral questions that drones raise. The United States is surely right to seek to minimise its own casualties, but if war can be waged by one side without any risk to the life and limb of its combatants, has a vital form of restraint been removed? Is the drone “pilot” who clocks off after a day’s work a legitimate target for those he has been hunting down? If the drones of the future have the intelligence to act autonomously, who is responsible if a vital algorithm fails to distinguish between a tank and a school bus? Drones throw up a tangle of ethical questions. Only open debate will provide the answers; they cannot be assumed by button-pushers.

Yet the more fundamental argument that armed drones somehow breach the laws of war does not, at present, stand up. There are still plenty of human beings in the operational loop—it takes a team of about 180 to run and service a Predator—and it is clear that the responsibility for the decision to fire a missile rests as much with the pilot in a distant command centre as with a pilot in any cockpit. The legal defence for that missile killing people who have not been proven to be terrorists or who have not been allowed the chance to give themselves up is the same too.

America must show that the attack is within its right to self-defence and that it is proportionate. To improve accountability, control of armed drones flying over Pakistan and Yemen should be transferred from the CIA to the armed forces (which operate them in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya). The CIA can use drones to spy, but when it comes to warfare, it is less accountable than the military chain of command, less used to applying the rules of war and less inclined to pay compensation to the families of innocent civilians who have been killed. The operation of America’s new killing machines must be brought clearly within the law.

### **Useful Links**

[http://www.asil.org/files/CQ\\_DroneWarfare.pdf](http://www.asil.org/files/CQ_DroneWarfare.pdf)

Drone Warfare And The Law Of Armed Conflict, Ryan J. Vogel

<http://law.du.edu/documents/djilp/39No1/3-Vogel.pdf>

Drone Warfare: Blowback from the New American Way of War

Leila Hudson, Colin S. Owens, Matt Flannes

<http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/drone-warfare-blowback-new-american-way-war>

### **Reading List**

Peter Singer, "Wired for War"

Orson Scott Card, "Ender’s Game"