

Letter to German Parliament, re: Military Drones

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Re weaponized drones

Member of Parliament

Federal Republic of Germany

Dear Sir or Ms:

I write hoping you will do all you can to stop the plan of the German government to make Germany into a killer-drone nation like the United States. I understand that this plan, to be voted on in the Bundestag by the end of June, includes immediately leasing weaponized drones from Israel...while at the same time developing a European killer drone.

I also hope that you will do all you can within the Bundestag to remove the U.S. military from bases in Germany. My particular concern is with the base at Ramstein. Ramstein plays a key role in facilitating the U.S. drone war on so many peoples to your east, including in Afghanistan.

Admittedly I know little about political practice and reality in Germany (a country I have fond memories of, having lived on the U.S. military Caserne at Garmisch-Partenkirchen in the early eighties). But I do know that Germany, thanks to its hospitable spirit has become a beacon to many abroad who have lost their homes and land and livelihood. Like many U.S.

citizens I am grateful that the Bundestag has been investigating the U.S. drone program in Germany that fuels the global refugee crisis.

We know that the U.S. weaponized drone program afflicting several Mideast and West Asian countries is leading to many non-combatant fatalities. Further, the MQ9 Reaper drone, triumphantly called "Hunter/Killer" by the Pentagon, terrorizes whole communities in the Islamic oil lands. Surely such terror contributes to the flood of refugees from those nations now desperately pressing on the gates of Germany and other nations near and far.

Further I believe that the U.S. drone war, while tactically clever, is strategically counterproductive. Not only is it leading to what I call "defensive proliferation," but it almost inevitably must lead to enormous ill will toward the U.S. and to the West generally. That hostility will have consequential reverberations -- blowback -- for any nation perceived as a U.S. ally.

Surely a German killer/drone program would also cause untold non-combatant fatalities and would generate hatred for Germany in the targeted regions.

You may well ask: who is this Ed Kinane who presumes to address you? In 2003 I spent five months in Iraq with Voices in the Wilderness (a mostly-U.S. NGO, now suppressed). I was in Baghdad before, during and after the several weeks of "Shock and Awe." I know firsthand the *aerial terrorism* of the Pentagon's overseas interventions and invasions.

In 2009 when I learned that Hancock Air Force Base -- almost within walking distance of my home in Syracuse, New York -- was becoming a hub for the MQ9 Reaper drone attacks in Afghanistan, I was shaken. Along with others here in Upstate New York I felt that if we (who live nearby this hub for the 174th Attack Wing of the New York National Guard) don't speak

out against this shameful, cowardly, illegal, inhumane way of waging warfare, who else would?

In its public relations efforts to win over the local civilian community, the then Hancock commander bragged in our local daily newspaper (the Syracuse *Post-Standard*, www.syracuse.com) that Hancock remotely pilots weaponized Reapers over Afghanistan "24/7." It's likely that the Hancock Reaper may also attack targets in North Waziristan (if not elsewhere) as well.

In 2010 here in New York State grassroots activists formed the Upstate Drone Action (sometimes also known as Ground the Drones and End the Wars Coalition). We were keenly aware that, according to the post-World War Two Nuremberg Principles, we each – especially those among us who paid federal taxes – bore responsibility for the actions of our government. Hardly being in a position to physically impede the Pentagon's predations on other countries, we realized that at least here we could help expose those actions to the general public...and help awaken the consciences of Hancock personnel. These personnel typically are very young and live within a military cocoon, cut off from direct communication with us.

Via conventional activist tactics – rallies, leafleting, letter and article writing, street theater, vigiling, lobbying our Congressional representatives, multi-day marches, etc. – Upstate Drone Action has sought to share our distress with the public. Since 2010 a handful of us have vigiled across the road from Hancock's main entrance at the afternoon shift change on the first and third Tuesday of every month. In the years since 2010 we have also blocked Hancock's main gate a dozen or so times. Our scrupulously nonviolent blockades have led to my own and roughly 200 other arrests. These have led to many trials and some incarcerations.

Upstate Drone Action has not been the only grassroots group protesting U.S. drone warfare. Similar, mutually inspiring

campaigns have been mounted at Beale Airbase in California, Creech Airbase in Nevada, and other bases across the U.S. With a kind of relentless persistence these direct actions keep recurring despite police and judicial attempts to deter us.

Let's be clear: what we do isn't civil disobedience, but rather *civil resistance*. After all, we aren't *disobeying* the law; we seek to *enforce* the law. In many of our direct actions we attempt to present "People's Indictments" to the base. In these documents we cite not only the Nuremburg Principles, but also the U.N. Charter and other international law and treaties that the U.S. has signed. We also cite Article Six of the U.S. Constitution which declares that these treaties are the highest law of our land. Those among us religiously motivated also cite the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill."

Having lived and worked in Islamic lands, I am also motivated by what I perceive is the Islamophobia of U.S. military policy – akin to the racism that so plagues our civilian society. Currently, the primary target of U.S. aerial terrorism is the people and communities and regions identified as Islamic.

I could cite statistics regarding the untold victims of drone attacks. I could cite the number of those attacks – steeply escalating with each new U.S. president (Bush/Obama/Trump). I could provide estimates of the millions of refugees displaced from not only their communities, but from their nations. Frankly such numbers leave me numbed. I cannot fathom them.

Instead, with apologies for not writing to you in German, let me cite just one text among many (see attached bibliography of English language sources) that have helped shape my understanding of the drone scourge: the Stanford and New York Universities' 165-page, "Living Under Drones: Death, Injury, and Trauma to Civilians from US Drone Practices in Pakistan" (2012). I encourage you to seek out this deeply human yet rigorously documented report at <http://livingunderdrones.org/>.

I write to you today, not only with urgency, but with desperation. Too many U.S. people – and their Congressional representatives, regardless of party – see the U.S. drone wars as somehow making the U.S. safer. In fact the opposite is true. My hope is that Germany will not follow the Pentagon's lead and that Germany will end its current collaboration with that entity's global war of terror. Any nation, especially a highly nuclearized superpower, possessing the means to assassinate any person and any leader anytime, anywhere only increases global precarity and undermines its own national soul. That nation does not need allies who facilitate its barbarity.

Sincerely,

Ed Kinane

Member, Upstate Drone Action

[Hancock Drones and Grass Roots Street Heat](#)

Why Street Heat?

Back in the eighties when the U.S. anti-apartheid movement was at a boil, "Doonesbury" had a sequence satirizing the "activists" who spent all their time at their computers. At the time I thought those geeks were a pretty odd bunch.

Though I've yet to succumb to Facebook, etc., now as an

activist I too have become computer-domesticated. I spend lots of time generating or responding to email or chasing after links. For better or worse, on-line is now one of my comfort zones. Maybe too comfortable.

Historically and currently, here and abroad, much, maybe most, necessary grassroots change only really begins when people join in solidarity and indignation in the “street.”

What is this thing we here in Central New York call “street heat”?

It’s a way of making it easy to start getting out into the street. It’s a way to get off our duffs, to break out of our cocoons – overcoming that seemingly deep hesitation about going public.

Since 2010 at 4:15 p.m. every first and third Tuesday of the month a handful of us have been going out to the main entrance of Hancock Air Base, the hunter/killer Reaper drone hub in our back yard, on East Molloy Road in the Syracuse suburb of DeWitt. There for 45 minutes we stand facing the traffic with our anti-militarism signs. This time slot is the civilian rush hour on East Molloy and shift change at the base.

From early November through the end of March, our cold and dark season, we’re only out there on first Tuesdays. That day has its macabre significance: each Tuesday Mr. Obama and his advisors choose the targets for the next six months for drone assassination in the Islamic oil lands – assassinations which are immoral, illegal and, while tactically clever, are probably strategically stupid.

We place ourselves across the road from those Reaper drone robots remotely operated over Afghanistan by 174th Attack Wing of the NY National Guard based at Hancock.

We seek to prick the conscience of the Hancock personnel, cogs in Hancock’s criminal role in the war machine. We also seek to

reach the public driving by. Our signs declare variously,

*"DRONES FLY,
CHILDREN DIE"*



and

"BAN WEAPONIZED DRONES" and "STOP DRONE TERRORISM"

and

"U.S. OUT OF THE MIDDLE EAST,"

etc.

Without our persistent presence week in, week out, year in, year out, it's all too easy, given U.S. mainstream media, for folks to forget that the U.S. is engaged in perpetual war – a war not "on" terrorism, but "of" terrorism. And it's all too easy for airbase personnel, leading their classified, insulated, indoctrinated lives to forget they are part of a war machine.

[Drone Activist Responds to the NY Times OpEd on Drones](#)

On MARCH 16, 2017 the New York Times published an Editorial "[Preventing a Free-For-All With Drone Strikes](#)" where they express belated concerns about the US Drone program of Targeted Killing around the globe. Our organization has been educating people about the drones since 2010. We have engaged in a Gandhian Wave of civil resistance at Hancock Air National Guard Base, a domestic Reaper Drone hub, wherein many have been arrested many times, including Ed Kinane. Here is Ed's response to the NY Times.

"Preventing a Free-for-All With Drone Strikes"

Oh, so now that others are acquiring weaponized drone technology, it's become time for a re-think?

"For nearly a decade, drone strikes have been central to America's counterterrorism policy. Operated from remote locations,"

Or, more precisely, from U.S. military bases: both here and abroad.

"the small aircraft can hover over targets for long periods of time and kill extremists"

Allegedly kill alleged "extremists." Very slippery word. Who is "extreme" and who gets to define who they are. Funny thing, as far back as Republican Presidential hopeful Barry Goldwater, Republicans used to speak pretty highly of "extremism."

with precision without risking American casualties.

So, it's only U.S. casualties that matter? In fact, U.S. drones, violating due process, have assassinated and otherwise killed at least a handful of U.S. citizens. And, let's not forget that some U.S. drone operators, seeing the dirty work they're caught up in, suffer from PTSD. Seeing the aftermath of their drone strikes (demolished homes, incinerated bodies) can get old...and even deeply disturbing.

"President Barack Obama found drones so effective and useful that over two terms, he approved 542 strikes that killed 3,797 people"

3,797 "high value" targets? Using these Pseudos-tats in this way perpetuates the legend that weaponized drones are "precise" and that we somehow know how many and who are killed in drone strikes.

"in non-battlefield areas where American forces were not directly engaged, including Pakistan, Yemen and"

The NY Times is perpetuating the notion tht U.S. forces – JSOC for example – weren't operating on the ground in these target areas.

"But this seductive tool of modern warfare has a dark side. Seemingly bloodless"

Oh really?

"and distant, drone strikes can tempt presidents and military commanders to inflict grave damage without sufficient forethought, violating sovereign rights"

. . . .not to mention violating the U.N. Charter, other International Law and Article 6 of the U.S. Constitution –

which makes International Law the “Highest Law of our land”.

“and killing innocent civilians.”

. . . not to mention armed others who can be said to be resisting attacks on their land. Whether or not this is a fair characterization of their motives, it’s clear that they aren’t invading the U.S., and that they aren’t being killed in “self-defense”.

“Civilian deaths during Mr. Obama’s tenure undermined American counterterrorism operations”

Such operations are themselves – like aerial warfare generally – terrorism. The so-called “War on Terrorism” is a War of Terrorism.

“and became a recruiting tool for more extremists. Mr. Obama was persuaded to impose sensible constraints on the use of drone strikes between 2013 and 2016.”

It’s not clear that Mr. Obama had the power to “impose” on the war machine. It’s certainly not clear that during his administration drones were deployed with “sensible constraint”. At what point beyond “3797” do the killings begin to lack “constraint”? At what point beyond “3797” are killings no longer “sensible”? Does the NY Times realize the key role U.S. drones play in swelling the flood of refugees fleeing the killing fields?

“The White House would decide which individuals outside of the traditional”

To use “traditional” so blithely is to normalize illegality.

“war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan could be targeted, and there had to be

“near certainty” that no civilians would be killed.”

But apart from administration assertions, there’s no evidence of such “near certainty”.

In traditional war zones, military commanders make these decisions without interagency review, and the threshold for acceptable civilian casualties is less strict.

Now comes disturbing news: President Trump and his administration are moving to dilute or circumvent the Obama rules. This could have disastrous outcomes,

“Could have”???!

not least because Mr. Trump seems even more enticed by drone warfare than Mr. Obama was. In the days since his inauguration, the tempo of airstrikes has increased significantly.

Yes.

“Mr. Trump has already granted a Pentagon request to declare parts of three provinces in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia is fighting Iranian-backed Houthis rebels, to be an “area of active hostilities.” This, The Times has reported, would enable more permissive battlefield rules to apply.

The president is also expected to soon approve a Pentagon proposal to do the same for parts of Somalia, where militants of the Shabab who are linked to Al Qaeda threaten regional stability.”

Could it be that the U.S. imperial presence in the region is what threatens “regional stability”?

“Both designations are supposed to be temporary, giving the administration time to decide whether to rescind or relax the Obama rules more broadly.

Military commanders often chafe at civilian oversight. But there is no evidence that the Obama rules have slowed counterterrorism efforts, and there are good reasons to keep them in place, including the fact that the legal basis for such strikes lacks credibility because Congress never updated the 2001 authorization for war in Afghanistan to take account of America’s expanded military action against terrorists in Syria, Yemen and Libya.”

So, if only the Congress attends to the bureaucratic detail of “updating” the rules, all will be Okay?

“Mr. Trump should heed the advice of national security experts who have urged the retention of strict standards”

As if under Mr. Obama, “strict standards” have been retained?! Have the NY times editors not read Jeremy Scahill’s “Dirty Wars”?

“for using force in non-battlefield areas and warned how even a small number of civilian deaths or injuries can “cause significant strategic setbacks” to American interests.”

“The mind-deadening phrase “American Interests,””

The mind-deadening phrase "American Interests," like "Terrorism," is seldom defined by pundits or main stream media. They seldom acknowledge, if ever, that "American Interests" = The Interests of U.S. corporations (i.e. not those of enlisted people or U.S. taxpayers).

He has already seen how a badly executed mission can have disastrous results: the raid in Yemen in January that resulted in the deaths of a member of the Navy's SEAL Team 6 and numerous civilians, including children.

And what were U.S. Seals doing there in the first place?! The U.S. is somehow entitled to send its warriors anywhere it wants?

"And as most experts agree, killing terrorists does not by itself solve the threat from extremists."

There's that slippery, normalizing NY Times language again.

"For that, Mr. Trump will need a comprehensive policy that also deals with improved governance"

Is the NY Times suggesting that Mr. Trump and those that put him in power should get to impose their notion of "improved governance"?!

"in the countries where terrorists thrive and with ways to counter their violent messages on social media."

Right.

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Pre Analysis of “Big Books”

Trial #1

Our three-day Hancock trial in De Witt ended around midnight Thursday (3/2) and, exhausted, we scattered to the winds – some of us with long trips home. Hence only minimal debriefing or analysis. but here I’ll mention some of what I think are relevant factors in our acquittals.

~ First, obviously our cause is essential – not that that usually guarantees anti-drone activists victories in court...

~ One of our four defendants (JR) is African American with Native American ancestry.

~ The trial began last fall, but – at our insistence – was postponed til February 28 in order to get a new jury pool that wasn’t drawn only from the almost-lily white suburb of De Witt. our sense was that this time we got a sympathetic jury (mostly women) – perhaps drawn from a population newly awakened to the trump horror.

~ We also were blessed with two dedicated, political, savvy pro bono attorneys (JW, DI) who have made multiple trips from afar (Long Island and Buffalo) to defend us in previous Hancock drone trials – they knew us, the issue, the charges and the judge (DG). They were skilled in voir dire; their presence served as a check on an unfriendly judge. The judge knows that, given our skillful legal support, abridgements of our rights might well be reversed on appeal.

~ The defendants are seasoned activists, each having been tried before in the De Witt court (as well as in other courts for other issues over the years). Our goal was not

necessarily to “win” or to avoid prison, but rather to put weaponized drones on trial. Maybe our action and our defense radiated a certain integrity.

~ Three of the defendants (JR, DB, BH) went pro se; this gave our defense added flexibility and allowed the jury to see us as human beings. one of us (EK), who usually goes pro se, deliberately allowed JW to represent him, which allowed that attorney to play key roles in the defense.

~ The defendants acted and spoke more or less with unanimity both during the trial and during our planning sessions before each trial session.

~ Although Hancock AFB and the town of De Witt are in Greater Syracuse, local media and even many local liberal activists – being in denial about how pivotal militarism and the pentagon budget are to the issues they work on – pretty much ignore our coalition’s scrupulously nonviolent and protracted (since 2010) civil resistance campaign. Nonetheless we got valuable support from other locals providing food and lodging to sustain the defense.

~ I can single out here such support, typical of all our trials, of Friends of Dorothy, the local catholic worker house. [in previous trials another catholic worker house, Slocum House, has played a key hospitality role...and we expect it will continue to do so in the future. Also, former Hancock Defendants (AT, RK) provided key lodging and logistical support.

~ While no mainstream media attended the trial (despite our pre-trial press releases), we had our own videographers (CB, EG, ER) who will be getting out footage of opening and closing statements. We were also fortunate in having our videographers (JA, CB, ER) on hand on march 19, 2015, when we did our “big books” action. they soon circulated footage on YouTube. this was helpful in court, showing not only our

“books”, but our obviously *un*-disorderly deportment throughout the action and the arrest.

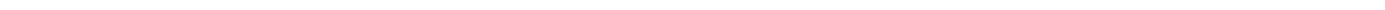
~ Each evening of the trial there were dozens of supporters. they came from NYC, Ithaca, Buffalo, Albany, Rochester, New England and points in between. The jury might well have been favorably impressed by the community there on our behalf. not to mention the presence in court of JR’s six-year old grandson and DB’s two youngsters – all cute as a button.

~ A word about the prosecutor: unlike some of the past De Witt prosecutors, ADA Albert played fair. He indulged in neither cheap tricks nor pandering rhetoric, nor was he obstructionist or hostile. He even allowed us to show the jury ten oversize color photos of the “big books” action and of victims and relatives of drone victims.

~ ADA Albert’s only witness was Hancock Master Sergeant Ramsey who has been a prosecution witness at probably all of our trials. Ramsey seems to be a pretty straight shooter; we’ve remained on good terms with him over the years. Even after he testifies, he generally stays to watch the rest of our trial. Who knows? Maybe this career military man has been able to hear our testimony.

~ Others were arrested with us on march 19, 2015. but JO and BR, with the additional charge of violating their Order of Protection, a bogus misdemeanor, still await a trial date. it’ll be interesting to see if this jury’s verdict will dispose the DA and Hancock to drop that charge. Their next court hearing is march 9.

. stay tuned.



Weaponized Drones And The Endless “War on Terror”

Ed Kinane at Left Forum

Session 7, 3:40 to 5:40 p.m., Sunday, May 22, 2016

Room 1,127

John Jay College of Criminal Justice, NYC

Panel with Ed K., Nick Mottern, Debra Sweet, Shelby Sullivan-Bennis

Moderator: Amanda Bass

Like the phony “war on drugs,” the phony “war on terrorism” promotes economic interests, serves political agendas, entrenches militarism. Neither war reduces drug use or violence. Nor are they designed to.

Terrorism – past and present – pervades the U.S. psyche and economy. Terrorism, so-called, and the fear thereof, blunts our minds, shrinks our hearts. This contrived national obsession gives the Pentagon and NSA/Homeland Security their ever-expanding powers. It tightens their grip. It swells their coffers.

Their bloated budgets, like the Congress that funds them, march to corporate drummers. Since World War II, terrorism/militarism has been exceedingly profitable for the so-called “defense” industry (think, for example, Lockheed Martin). U.S. corporations thrive on the export of weapons and weapon systems. Peace kills the war economy. Why seek peace?

The high-tech war industry – the U.S. economy’s warped backbone – enriches the rich, deprives the poor. Military spending sucks the life out of civil society. That military spree, barely monitored, finances death-dealing projects; these profit-intensive projects preempt job-intensive, life-serving ones.

Pentagon budgets assure grossly underfunded housing, schooling, health and infrastructure development. Along with the nuke industry – now in its eighth decade – the perpetuated terrorism/militarism nexus drives economic disparity, propping up this nation's class structure.

Patriots and propagandists endlessly invoke, but seldom define, "terrorism." Now, I'll do the unusual – I'll define "terrorism." Terrorism is the use, or threat, of violence against civilians for military, political or economic ends. This definition cuts to the chase, cuts through the layers of jingoism and obfuscation perpetrated by the patriots and propagandists.

The definition has four corollaries:

~ First. Contrary to U.S. mainstream media usage, terrorists aren't inevitably people of color. Nor are they primarily swarthy or sallow. Here in the U.S. the term "terrorism" somehow only applies to what they – non-whites – do, not to what whites or the U.S. does.

~ Second. In the 20th and 21st centuries, it's fascism and capitalism that have colonized the skies. Hence most terrorism has been aerial: V-2 rockets, Cruise missiles, Hellfire missiles, napalm, white phosphorus, cluster bombs, depleted uranium, weaponized drones....

~ Third. Most terrorism is wholesale, not retail; most is state terrorism. Most terrorism is perpetrated by uniformed military. In these centuries most war casualties – in their tens of millions are civilian.

~ Last. Since at least August 6, 1945 the Pentagon has been the world's most relentless single purveyor of terrorism.

Bottom line: the so-called "war on terror" is a racist war, a war for hegemony, a war for profit. It's a war its perpetrators and its perpetuators have no desire to see end.

Terror is nothing new; it's built into this nation's DNA. Consider the continent-wide armed robbery of indigenous lands. Thanks to their higher tech weaponry, European invaders ethnically cleansed Native Americans – mostly non-combatants. Like our counterparts in Israel and other colonial settler states, U.S. Americans militarily occupy stolen land.

Yes, we are occupiers – and by a curious inversion or dialectic, now it is U.S. Americans who are finding ourselves occupied. The occupation is so incremental, so normalized, it's barely visible to us.

If the U.S.-as-occupied-nation notion seems outlandish, consider the following:

- why was the interstate highway system built to military specification by a general,
- or why does the NSA so comprehensively monitor our phones and email,
- or why is every effort is made to keep the U.S. people distracted and dumbed down,
- or why does the judiciary neglect the First Amendment and why, despite Article Six of the Constitution, does the judiciary ignore International Law (*much as Southern judges ignored lynching*),
- or why are the police so heavily armed and drilled in military shoot-to-kill tactics,
- or why does the U.S. have such a vast prison system,
- or why do military bases, in all their redundancy, proliferate throughout the land,
- or – and this brings us directly back to today's panel – why are surveillance and weaponized drones, so deadly overseas, increasingly flying over the U.S.?

Further, regarding our national DNA, consider the centuries-long wholesale abduction and displacement of Africans – robbing them of their labor, liberty, languages, dignity and their offspring. Ask: how did such a regime last so long?

Without a whip at her back, a noose around his neck, no human endures such rape and servitude. See the film "12 Years a Slave."

That terror regime in full force lives on today with mass incarceration and what author Michelle Alexander calls "The New Jim Crow." Police assassinating young black men channel Ku Klux Klan castration. Both are seldom prosecuted. (Note the enduring intersection of impunity and racism.)

We've been conditioned to believe terrorism is violence perpetrated by the "other"– the non-white other. Blind to the origins of white supremacy and privilege, we are the legatees of our previous – and ongoing – terrorisms. Only when terrorism is defined do we see Manifest Destiny and slavery for what they were. Only when terrorism is defined do we see that today's "War on Terrorism" for what it is: a war of, for and by terrorism.

Today's so-called "War on Terrorism" – quotation marks are a must – features aerial bombing of tribal people and people of color who can barely shoot back: the Anglosphere globalizing its centuries-long terror track.

Since August 6, 1945 the world has been chilled by U.S. nuclear blackmail. Since the grotesquely one-sided air war on Viet Nam and since the 2003 "shock and awe" terror attacks on Baghdad, the world knows it resists the Imperium at its peril. The world knows the U.S. mostly and more readily targets people of color – whether Japanese, Southeast Asian, West Asian, or...American. The dark-skinned world waits, defiantly, wondering who will be next.

Aerial terror can't neutralize, but it does provoke, non-state resistance – a resistance sporadically erupting as terrorism. How convenient for the propagandists! The hunter/killer MQ9 Reaper drone and its cowardly ilk seem for now to be just the thing for taking out so-called "bad guys." However, for each

“bad guy” assassinated, many civilians are killed or maimed. More are recruited to resist. Not smart. While drones can be tactically clever, recruiting your enemy is strategically stupid...unless, of course, you profit from keeping the pot boiling.

Up our way in Central New York the local mainstream media normalizes the hunter/killer Reaper drone remotely piloted from Hancock Air Force Base on the outskirts of Syracuse. The Reaper, a former Hancock commandant boasts, operates over Afghanistan 24/7. These robots are deployed to kill with impunity. The media downplay, if not ignore, drone war illegality, its evasion of due process, its violating others' sovereignty, and the government lies surrounding its terror. The media sanitize Reaper transgression against human bodies and human rights. The media ignore Reaper indecency, Reaper cowardice.

The Syracuse Post-Standard ignores the back story behind any blowback – always called “terrorism” – of those avenging and resisting U.S. aggression. Further, perhaps sensing instinctively what a boon to business drones and arms races are, the Post ignores the deadly prospect of weaponized drone proliferation.

U.S. media has little to say about drone “collateral damage” incinerating and dismembering women and children and other noncombatants, whether within or beyond so-called “legal” war zones. But our local media surely typify U.S. mainstream media. So, let me ask: how many in this room heard much about the killing of 150 unknown human beings by U.S. drones and manned aircraft on a single day, March 7, 2016, in Somalia – Somalia, a desperately poor tribal nation the U.S. isn't even at war with? This massacre, noted in the New York Times, didn't rate a blip in the Post-Standard.

The December 17 Post-Standard reported that the Reaper now is actually flying – not just being remotely controlled – out of

Hancock Air Force Base and from Syracuse's civilian international airport. The page 1 story, festooned with color photos, is headlined "REAPER DRONE MAKES HISTORY IN SYRACUSE."

With no pretense to journalistic balance, such stories fail to note that since 2010 our grassroots group, Upstate Drone Action, has been continually protesting the Hancock Reaper and its operating unit, the 174th Attack Wing of the New York State National Guard. The increasingly militarized local police, at Hancock's bidding, arrest us as we block Hancock's main gate and exercise our First Amendment right to petition the government for redress of grievance. Maximum fines and multiple incarcerations ensue.

But the Post-Standard doesn't acknowledge such erosion of civil liberty. Nor does it investigate or even mention our allegations of Hancock war crime. Further, the Post has been eerily silent about the role that domestic drones are beginning to play in policing and intimidating dissidents and minorities.

Like the 1950s' "Atoms for Peace" hype masking the dark side of the then-emerging nuclear industry, mainstream media downplay the drone dark side. The Post, it seems, doesn't want to jinx upstate New York's becoming the Silicon Valley of an emerging domestic drone money machine. Over the next several years Governor Cuomo will be subsidizing that industry with tens of millions of taxpayer dollars.

What does domestic drone development and deployment have to do with terrorism? Plenty. Like the government-subsidized nuclear industry, the domestic drone industry (again think Lockheed Martin) will maintain the facilities, research, engineering expertise, skilled labor, and operators – i.e. the industrial base – that the Pentagon draws on for its terror wars.

As long as perpetual war keeps yielding corporate profit, state terrorism will keep "making history." If we let it. ###

[[drone terrorism remarks for 2016 left forum]]

[Exposing the Killer Drones of Hancock Airbase's 174th Attack Wing](#)

by Ed Kinane, Reprinted from Truthout.org Speakout, November 18, 2015

Every first Tuesday of the month since 2010 a handful of us have been protesting the weaponized Reaper drone at Hancock Air Base. In milder weather – from April to November – we also protest on third Tuesdays. We call this work, “street heat.”

Why such persistence? Hancock AFB, near Syracuse, our home town, hosts the 174th Attack Wing of the New York Air National Guard. Although its operations and the identities of its drone personnel are classified, several years ago in our local daily the then-base commander bragged that Hancock's hunter/killer Reaper drones operate over Afghanistan “24/7.” (And we must wonder where else.)

Hancock seems to know that its operations are both illegal and reprehensible. The base, closed to the public, bristles with armed guards. Its commanders have ignored our repeated attempts to communicate with them. Given its attack identify and its attack role, Hancock may be a legitimate target for those whom it attacks. That means those living near the base risk being “collateral damage.”

While seldom thought of as such in the US, abroad the Reaper is seen as an instrument of terror – maiming, assassinating

and displacing human beings – mostly in the Middle East and west Asia, mostly in or near the Islamic oil lands. Drone terror contributes to the refugee crisis now convulsing those regions.

Often the drone assassins – or their chain of command – don't know the names and affiliations of their defenseless targets. It seems the intelligence – whether derived from signals or from client governments and paid informants with their own axes to grind – is often faulty. Sometimes the targets are combatants, offensive or defensive; often however the victims are far from any combat zone. Some are armed males; far too often they are children and women. Frequently these innocents are in the wrong place at the wrong time – sharing with the target the same vehicle or compound or wedding party.

Sometimes when the Reaper's Hellfire missiles – missiles that dismember and incinerate – strike, the intended target is no longer present or never has been. In a tactic called "double tapping," those killed are first responders arriving shortly after the attack to aid the wounded or recover the corpses and body parts. Sometimes the missiles are deliberately aimed at those attending the funerals of the casualties of the two earlier strikes – "triple tapping."

Such drone strikes may be tactically clever; but – as even some high-ranking US militarists argue – strategically they are stupid. Although these pragmatic warriors may or may not respect international law, drone assassination violates and erodes such law. Generally the killing promotes hostility among the survivors toward the US (Can anyone – as in the wake of 9/11 – still wonder, "Why do they hate us?") And the killing also generates hostility among the victims' fellow tribespeople... and even among those in other nations horrified by the carnage, cowardice and iniquity of it all.

The killing undermines any efforts by our boots on the ground to win "hearts and minds." Some other nations and entities are

building or importing (usually from Israel) their own drones. Proliferation makes no one safer; one day proliferation will endanger our own leaders and armed forces. US drones are already targeting US citizens overseas. As we keep getting desensitized to drone lawlessness and that lawlessness keeps getting normalized, domestic police and Homeland Security may be tempted to target demonstrators, dissenters and minorities.)

We demonstrate outside Hancock on Tuesdays from 4:15 to 5 pm – rush hour. Our handheld signs, in bold, block letters, declare: DRONES FLY, CHILDREN DIE; or TO END TERROR, STOP TERRORIZING; or REAPER DRONES ARE INSTRUMENTS OF TERROR; or STOP HANCOCK WAR CRIME... Hundreds of vehicles drive past – some drivers and their passengers avert their eyes, some make rude gestures, others honk in support.

But we're not trying to reach only the public. We especially want those driving on or off the base at shift change to see us. In their controlled environment Hancock personnel surely have little exposure to criticism of drone killing, but our signs are hard to avoid. Maybe our steadfast – year in and year out – presence get drone operators thinking. We're all about sowing seeds, pricking consciences. We hope that eventually some base personnel will – as the post-World War II Nuremberg Principles require – refuse to follow their illegal orders. Ideally they'll go public with what they know.

The Pentagon seems to be having a tough time recruiting enough personnel to maintain and operate all the killer and surveillance drones it hopes to deploy. The Pentagon dreams of expanding its drone fleet well beyond its current capacity; it dreams of achieving full spectrum dominance over the world's skies. Every state or non-state leader, friend or foe, can then feel their vulnerability, thereby muting resistance to the imperium's demands.

At our monthly and twice-monthly demos we stand directly across East Molloy Road from Hancock's main entrance and exit. In doing so we exercise our First Amendment right of expression and assembly (which, if unexercised, tends to wither). Once several years ago, exasperated with our presence, Hancock summoned the sheriffs (who seem to know little about the First Amendment). A couple of us were arrested, but even in the hostile DeWitt Town court the charges were dismissed "in the interests of justice." Since then, during these demos, the police have left us alone – though scores of us have been arrested at other times when, in separate nonviolent actions, we've ventured across Molloy Road closer to Hancock's main gate onto what the base claims is its property. But that's a whole other story.

Our Tuesdays at Hancock help get us out of our armchairs and "into the street." Our demos tell the war machine that, whether or not it's in our name or with our tax money, we don't tolerate the killing. Arguably, world-wide it's the street, in crisis after crisis, that might correct regimes straying too far from decency and democracy.

Street heat is one kind of voting that may make a difference. Certainly there would be more impact if more of us participated, whether at Hancock or at other killer drone bases. But even if there were only one of us, s/he would send an essential message. However, if no one is ever there, that absence sends its own – fatal – message: that drone terror is somehow normal (and not cowardly and vile); that the US public is indifferent to killing, indifferent to international law.

Sadly the Hancock drone operatives, some barely out of their teens, allow themselves to become robots – deadly, amoral robots – in a vast imperial, oil-soaked enterprise. Hancock itself is only one of many hundreds of US military bases throughout the US and the planet. Fortunately, though generally ignored by the mainstream media (which rarely dare apply the phrase "war crime" to US military policy), protests

like ours occur at various bases operating weaponized drones. Inshallah, such resistance will go viral.

Given that most US Congressional districts have military contracts – whether linked to drone research and development and operations or to other weapons systems – there usually are sites (bases, research centers, factories) nearby to protest. These are opportunities for more of us to get out of our armchairs and into the street.

If our demonstrating can help de-glamorize the drone and diminish drone operator recruitment and re-enlistment, the souls and lives we save will surely be worth the few hours a month we spend exposing the operators' often naïve complicity.

[Exposing Drone Terrorism: Remarks at the 2015 Left Forum](#)

Exposing Drone Terrorism: Remarks at the 2015 Left Forum
by Ed Kinane. *Republished from Truthout.org Speakout*

I'll begin by noting that most terrorism *has not* been perpetrated by Islamic-identified people. In fact, despite the relentless deluge of publicity to the contrary, Islamic-identified people commit only a fraction of the world's terrorism.

Most terrorism is large scale. In the 20th and 21st centuries most terrorism is high tech and airborne...whether over Guernica or Dresden or Nagasaki or Hiroshima or Tokyo or Laos or Viet Nam or Baghdad or Gaza. Airborne violence primarily murders

civilians. Airborne terror is shooting fish in a barrel.

In the 21st century weaponized drones are the favored instrument of this airborne terrorism. Drones are the darling of the planet's major terrorist power, the CIA/Pentagon. As yet only two nations – one Christian-identified and one Jewish-identified – deploy weaponized drones and they do so massively.

That may be obvious to many in this room, but it's a reality monolithically obscured in US corporate media. Hence it's a reality totally *not* grasped by mainstream USA.

Drone terror is not just about the maiming and killing of civilians or about assassinations and extrajudicial executions. Nor the violation of national sovereignty nor about a superpower's contempt for international law. Nor about the deceit, clandestinity or suppression of domestic civil rights that accompany drone terror. Drone terror is also about the enduring *fear* drones generate – whether in Waziristan or rural Afghanistan or Yemen or wherever. A fear that leads *hundreds of thousands* to flee their homes and villages...except in Gaza, where, trapped in their open-air prison, few can flee. People in Gaza, living daily under the gaze of Israeli drones, endure years of trembling and despair.

The politicians and mainstream media pull off the Big Lie about who the terrorists really are when they incessantly invoke the terrorist boogiemán and virtually never define the word. They never come clean about what terrorism really is. They never explain that terrorism isn't a function one's color of skin or of one's cultural identity, but that *terrorism is none other than violence – or the threat of violence – directed at civilians for political or military ends.*

The politicians and mainstream media would convince us that terrorism is exclusively what others do, never what US forces do. These media pimps ignore the intent and effects of such US

high tech terror devices as Cruise missiles or Agent Orange or landmines or depleted uranium or napalm or white phosphorus or cluster bombs...or the US nuclear arsenal.

The media don't tell us that drones, with their Hellfire missiles and 500 lb. bombs, dismember and incinerate human beings with far less "precision" than any ISIS beheading.

I mention *fear*. The corollary of fear is *cowardice*. Terrorism, especially airborne terrorism, is cowardly. In those demolished cities and besieged regions I cited above, there's little or no capacity to shoot back. The killer/victim ratio is obscene. For example, in the Gaza invasions, the kill ratio is about 100 to one. Gaza is the barrel; Gazans are the fish.

Drone operators, whether in Israel or in the US, are totally safe; totally riskless, doing their dirty work tens or hundreds or thousands of miles away from those they incinerate or dismember. The drone crew – godlike – stands outside the barrel, killing in comfort, in ergonomic chairs, on shift, during precise hours, a daily commute from their spouses and kids, a few miles along paved roads from their TVs, their refrigerators, their air conditioning, their plumbing.

In Central New York where I hail from, the Hancock killer drone base hosts the 174th *Attack Wing* of the New York State National Guard. At Hancock, the drone operators and their chain of command are enclosed by a high barbed wire fence and heavily armed guards. As if such force protection isn't enough, the base commanders have somehow gotten both DeWitt Town judges to issue *Orders of Protection* against scrupulously nonviolent anti-drone activists. Such Orders of Protection forbid us to even approach those fences or those guards.

The irony is that these Orders of Protection – a legal device designed to protect abused spouses and kids – facilitate the slaughter of innocents in Afghanistan. Those Orders choke our First Amendment right to petition the Government for a redress

of our grievance re the war crime done in our name and with our tax dollars.

Over the years in various articles and in various forums, my mantra has been: *Drones are tactically clever, but strategically stupid*. Typically I go on to discuss the blowback that weaponized drones generate. And I note the proliferation thanks, in part, to US and Israeli export of drones. I point out that the day may not be far off when drone terror is also used against domestic foes of the US power structure, the likely victims being minorities or dissidents or legal demonstrators or simply those out of favor with the reigning party or security apparatus. Drones, like chickens, are coming home to roost. (The White House ought not to forget that one day it too may become a drone target. That prospect might keep any reluctant president doing the industrial/military complex's bidding.)

But now I realize that my mantra, Drones are tactically clever, but strategically stupid, is over-simple. It fails to tell us who suffers and who gains from strategic stupidity. For those currently monopolizing drone weaponry, drones are a kind of miracle...at least in the short term.

When it deploys weaponized drones, alienating whole swaths of humanity, the Pentagon surely loses any battle for "hearts and minds." But there's method to the madness. All that drone-inspired hatred toward the US serves a useful purpose: like US arms sales and arms transfers to volatile regions, drones keep the pot boiling. This keeping-the-pot-boiling disaster capitalism is gravy for corporations seeking overseas resources, cheaper labor or international markets. And especially so for those – like Bechtel or Boeing or Lockheed or General Atomics – who buy Congress and suck up lucrative Pentagon contracts. For many, drones are exciting and miraculous. After all, drones promise to promote US capitalist world dominance.

And to do so on the cheap.

Now, our panel this morning seeks to generate discussion on how we might expose and oppose drone terrorism. What I bring to the conversation is several years' experience of resistance to one specific weaponized drone base just outside my hometown, Syracuse, New York, but Hancock is only one of several US drone bases attracting persistent anti-drone resistance. Others include Beale in California, Creech in Nevada and Whiteman in Missouri. And now there's the campaign against the US drone signal relay station at Ramstein AFB, Germany, heating up.

Hancock, a former F-16 airbase, now is an MQ9 Reaper hub. Since 2010, Hancock has been operating the Reaper hunter/killer drone over Afghanistan 24/7. We suspect Hancock targets other countries as well.

In 2009, our grassroots group, the Upstate Drone Action Coalition – also sometimes called Ground the Drones and End the Wars – began demonstrating there at least twice a month. Our campaign – inspired by Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King and by Fr. Roy Bourgeois of School of the Americas Watch – uses an ensemble of tactics. These include actions at the base that risk, and thus far have always resulted in, arrest. As of 2015, we've had over 160 arrests.

Upstate Drone Action perpetrates a range of direct actions right outside Hancock's main gate. Beforehand all participants read out loud together and sign our Nonviolent Pledge. So far there have been ten or a dozen such actions with ensuing trials. On one occasion, 31 of us were arrested, and on another, 38.

With each action we go to the gate and try to deliver to the chain of command our People's Indictment of Hancock War Crimes – co-authored by former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark. More

recently we have also tried to submit to the guards a People's Order of Protection on behalf of Afghan children.

Our documents being rebuffed by the guards, [we then "die-in"](#) – sometimes wrapped in bloody shrouds – blocking the base entrance. In October 2012, we blocked all three Hancock entrances. Last March 19, to block the entrance, we used several seven-foot high, three-dimensional cardboard “big books” (including the UN Charter; the NYU/Stanford report, *Living Under Drones*; and Jeremy Scahill's *Dirty Wars*).

Uniformed DeWitt Town police, Onondaga County sheriffs and New York State troopers arrive and arrest us. No soldiers perform arrests, nor have there been any federal charges. So far there's been no rough stuff.

We're charged in the DeWitt Town court variously with trespass, disturbing the peace, and obstructing government administration. Those allegedly violating their Order of Protection are charged with contempt of court – a misdemeanor allowing for a jury trial, of which we have had several. But mostly, after long delays, we have bench trials. Often we go *pro se*, i.e. defend ourselves, the better to speak from our hearts and put drone terrorism itself on trial.

The two DeWitt Town judges – defying international law and the Sixth Article of the US Constitution making such law the supreme law of the land – are determined to deter us from further actions at Hancock. So, for recidivists – some of us having been arrested five and six times – the judges multiply hoops and escalate penalties. At arraignments, the judges have imposed \$10,000 bail on a couple of our people – a punitive absurdity since none of us miss an opportunity to return to court.

Mostly we've been fined \$375 – the max for trespass – which some us refuse to pay and instead divert to a peace group in Afghanistan. Some of us are sentenced to 15 days in the local

slammer. One 79 year-old spent two months in prison; one grandmother, now out on appeal, got a year's sentence – which, happily, led to a spate of publicity...at least overseas and in movement media.

We call our trials “court witness”; we call doing time “prison witness.” Our actions aren't civil disobedience, but rather *civil resistance* – because we're not disobeying law, but trying to enforce law. As we see it, doing time is a trifle compared to the price paid by those living – and dying – under drones.

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The Shortcomings of Washington Policy Recommendations

Drone Warriors and Warfare: The Shortcomings of Washington Policy Recommendations

by **Ed Kinane**, RePublished from Truthout.org

The author examines a recently-released study from the US Government Accountability Office, titled: “[Unmanned Aerial Systems: Actions Needed to Improve DOD Pilot Training](#).” Below is a summary of his conclusions.

- This two-page document is bloodless. It fails to acknowledge the sheer shamelessness and cowardice of

- drone assassination and other such robotic killing.
- The document fails to indicate real world consequences of insufficient training (accident rate, pilot PTSD, trigger happy strikes, illegal killings, maimings, etc.).
 - The document fails to indicate reasons for drone pilot shortage. These include:
 1. The expanded drone use under President Obama in Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan, etc. beyond “legitimate” declared wars, and
 2. although the document fails to mention it, according to some reports, there are low drone operator re-enlistment rates. It might be useful to compare such re-enlistment rates with (say) that of manned aircraft pilots.
 - Reasons for low re-enlistment and turnover of experienced drone operators include:
 1. Poor working conditions (long hours, staff shortages, isolated, clandestine work environment).
 2. The lack of glory, adventure, prestige and “sexiness” of operating drones, as compared to piloting manned aircraft.
 3. PTSD and “moral injury” – the sheer immorality and cowardice of assassination – especially remote and riskless assassination.
 4. Although military training generally, and drone training specifically, “robotizes” military personnel, many recruits retain their humanity and many surely listen to their consciences. Unlike (say) F-16 pilots, weaponized drone operators see the dismemberment and incineration of their targets (and non-targets) up close.
 - Another reason for low re-enlistment may be the persistent anti-drone civil resistance at Creech Air

Force Base, Whiteman Air Force Base, Beale Air Force Base, Hancock Air Force Base and elsewhere. Such nonviolent resistance has led to many arrests, trials and even incarcerations, to say nothing of publicity, both local and international. Here in central New York (near Syracuse), Upstate Drone Action, a grassroots coalition, has been persistently demonstrating outside the Hancock main gate since 2010. We demonstrate from 4:15pm to 5pm at shift change on the first and third Tuesdays of every month. Our signs have messages like "DRONES = TERRORISM," "DRONES FLY, CHILDREN DIE," "STOP HANCOCK WAR CRIME," "ABOLISH WEAPONIZED DRONES," etc. We may never know what impact seeing such signs has on drone personnel (and family members) who drive in and out of the base.

- Besides the expansion of weaponized drone use beyond declared wars, there is the seemingly inevitable expansion of surveillance drone use throughout the US and elsewhere. US police departments (already increasingly militarized) and intelligence agencies have begun to deploy surveillance and crowd control drones, but the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requires that their operators be licensed and have some minimum training, which, typically, the US military would provide.
- [*On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*](#), points out that 98 percent of humans are repelled by having to kill, and so need to be trained and de-sensitized to do so. Is "insufficient training" a euphemism for the problem of insufficient indoctrination and de-sensitization? Does the "insufficient training" problem lead to the drone operators being insufficiently robotized, so that when they kill, they have moral qualms leading to PTSD and to refusal to re-enlist?
- Lastly, what should be done about the "problem?"
 1. Demand that the US military use lethal drones only

- in “legal” declared wars.
2. Demand that the US prohibit the use warrant-less drones domestically for general, systematized, NSA-like surveillance.
 3. Work to ultimately abolish lethal drones worldwide.

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Letter to the Editor of the Syracuse Post Standard

letters@syracuse.com

Friends,

“Is the US winning the drone war?” Doyle McManus poses this question in his April 30 Post-Standard syndicated column. It’s a question every U.S. taxpayer and policy maker might ask.

But let’s first define the terms.

What do we mean by “war”? There was a time when war was declared, and mutually visible forces clashed. A time when war entailed risk, sacrifice, and courage. A time when war might entail ideals.

What does it mean to “win” a war? That we get the greater body count? That we demolish the most cities? That we terrorize more of their citizens? That we get to maintain or install their puppet government? That we grab precious resources (oil!) or control more markets, pipe lines, trade routes or cheap labor? That our war machine creates more – otherwise unnecessary and toxic – jobs? That our corporations pile up even more outlandish profit?

There was a time, not so long ago, when winning a war meant foiling the invader, the conqueror, the imperialist, the bully. It meant defending our shores. It meant winning hearts and minds and securing the peace. There was a time when war wasn't so conveniently "global" or "perpetual."

McManus tells us drones are "precise," but fails to resolve the paradox of how it happens that drones incinerate and dismember so many civilians and non-combatants. And he fails to note the hundreds of thousands of tribal people in Afghanistan and Pakistan forced to flee their homes and villages, dreading sudden death from the skies.

McManus tells us that in this drone war, "There's a lot to like about lethal drones...." But goes on, "as long as you're the owner, not the target." Exactly. Not so astutely he claims the lethal drones are "less costly than many of the alternatives including manned bombers and boots on the ground." He ignores life-serving and more economical alternatives: humanitarian aid; negotiation; discontinuing arms sales – especially to war-torn regions; no longer propping up tyrants and rogue governments; respecting U.N. resolutions and treaties that would reduce hatred toward the U.S. And embracing treaties to significantly reduce the climate change generating global disruption, migration and strife.

Perhaps McManus's column is just part 1 of two parts. In part 2 he might define what he means by "terrorist." This is so readers won't be left thinking the word only refers to anyone opposing the U.S. war machine, whether foreign or domestic. And in part 2 McManus could tell us about the threat lethal – as well as non-weaponized surveillance – drones pose to civil liberties here in the United States.

Ed Kinane

Kinane is a co-founder of the Upstate Drone Action Coalition.

Commercial Drones and the Slippery Slope

Ed Kinane's latest Op Ed, originally published on Truthout.org as: [The FAA's Broadening Regulations: Commercial Drones and the Slippery Slope](#)

The Federal Aviation Administration, bowing to persistent corporate and congressional drone caucus pressure, on February 15 issued "A Notice of Proposed Rulemaking" seeking public input. The proposed rules seek to regulate the commercial and government flight of small (under 55 lbs.) domestic drones. The FAA, charged with keeping our airways safe, is opening wider the door to the multi-billion domestic drone industry...impairing both our safety and our civil liberties.

The drone industry is drooling.

Like their military counterparts, commercial drones are being rushed off assembly lines with insufficient quality control. With drones crowding the air, crashes and collisions – accidental and otherwise – can and will happen. And not only on the White House lawn.

While commercial drone operators will have to pay some fees (about \$300) and pass a written test to be certified, there can be no guarantee that they will conform to the discipline of keeping their airborne vehicle within sight (as currently required) or below the newly expanded height (500 ft.) or far from airports (five miles). There is no guarantee that drone operators, even when sober, will be prudent. Boys love their toys. And who will be keeping track?

Given drone surveillance capabilities, normalizing much denser

drone traffic will further erode civil liberties. The new regs help consolidate "1984." The newly legalized commercial drone will be a terrific FBI, NSA, Homeland Security, etc. front for both retail and wholesale surveillance on all of us – and on some of us in particular. These agencies have already demonstrated their contempt for the Fourth Amendment – which Amendment forbids search and seizure without specific cause or warrants. Already when Congressional hearings or other investigators challenge them, some agency spokespeople and Bush/Obama administration appointees readily lie about their overseas drone crimes. (Think John Brennan.) Will they be any more candid about their domestic dirty work?

The more commercial drones become a visible fixture in our skies, the less we will question them. This normalizing will provide cover for those drone operators up to no good. On February 15, according to the New York Times, President Obama signed a memorandum requiring government agencies "to report publicly each year a 'general summary' on their drone use..." The Times goes on to note that "the order includes a loophole allowing secrecy for operations involving national security or *law enforcement*." [italics mine]

With their dandy new tools, police and intelligence agency drones will step up surveillance of citizens engaged in Constitutionally-protected First Amendment activity. This can chill such activity, eroding democratic space and leading to more heavy-handed prosecutions. Uppity and organizing people of color will be profiled and made more vulnerable. Already those of us nonviolently protesting US Reaper drone assassination and civilian killing in Afghanistan and elsewhere are subject to imprisonment by retrograde local and federal courts. (Think Hancock and Whiteman air force bases.)

Mission creep: Some surveillance drones are designed with bigger things in mind. Some can be converted to weaponized drones, whether lethal or "non-lethal": with license plate and facial recognition technology, crippling lasers, bean bags,

rubber bullets, etc...Such devices can be deployed by night (not permitted by those new regs) by criminal, insurgent, terrorist or police elements.

Drone technology is developing rapidly. The projected quantum leap in domestic commercial development will cross-fertilize and boost military drone research – making the police state/empire all the mightier. The commercial leap will contribute to proliferation as other nations and entities scramble for their own regional or global dominance...if only in self-defense. The tinder keeps accumulating. The planet keeps getting less safe.

Dozens of other lesser powers are now importing (mostly from the US or Israel), or looking to develop their own, weaponized drones. This dronification of domestic and foreign policy bodes ill. Not only do drones make the violation of other nations' sovereignty easier, they tempt militarists – state-sponsored and otherwise – to make mini-war. As drones proliferate, assassinations, whether extra-territorial or domestic, thanks to US (and Israeli) precedent, will multiply.

The Pentagon, the CIA, and their ilk, in undermining others' sovereignty, can more blatantly encroach on our own. With drones, the distinction between "over there" and "here" dissolves. What goes around comes around. The drone is altering the power ratio, already lopsided, between we, the citizens, and the US power structure. The drone gives government elements more power than it's prudent to let them have.

Returning to the FAA: That agency, now struggling to keep up with drone developments, may, with time, publish tested, prudent, responsible, democratic regulations. But like the drone regs thus far, these will be difficult, if not impossible to enforce – even if the FAA were somehow to

acquire the will, expertise, political clout and budget to do so.