

Letter to German Bundestag, re: Military Drones

To the members of the German Bundestag:

I understand that there is a proposal before the Bundestag that will lead to the German government leasing from Israel unmanned aerial vehicles, commonly known as drones, which could be weaponized.

I understand further that Germany may use these drones in Afghanistan.

I am writing you as the Coordinator of the United States website and organizing center KnowDrones.com to urge the defeat of any measure that would authorize the German government to purchase, lease or develop drones that have the capability of carrying weapons of any kind, for the following reasons:

1) Drone stalking and assassination, as undertaken most widely in the world by the United States, violates international human rights law because these practices violate privacy and long-held principles of due process. While Germany might not initially decide to arm its drones, the possession of drones with the capability to be armed will expose Germany to international criticism for being willing to participate in drone killing and will almost inevitably lead to the arming of the drones given the likely pressure by the United States to join it in drone killing.

I say likely pressure because, as you know, the United States is having difficulty keeping drone operators and so is having a hard time meeting the demand for drone attacks in the various theaters in which it has chosen to be at war, now covering at least seven nations.

Even if the German drones do not carry weapons Germany will be under suspicion of drone killing because it will be participating with the United States in drone activities, and the United States is notorious for its failure to tell the truth about its drone operations.

2) The United States first started drone killing in 2001 in Afghanistan. Afghanistan appears to have experienced more U.S. drone attacks than any other nation, according to statistics provided by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism. The Bureau reports that, as of the date of this letter, the minimum number of confirmed U.S. drone attacks there was 2,214 with a total death toll of up to 3,551.

This is a dramatic underestimate of U.S. drone killing in Afghanistan, however, since the Bureau only began keeping these statistics in January of 2015. The German television service ZDF estimated in their 2015 Webstory "Drohnen: Tod aus der Luft" that between 2001 and 2013 no less than 13,026 people were killed by drones in Afghanistan (based on data provided by U.S. Central Command, CENTCOM, and the book "Sudden Justice" by Chris Woods).

3) The United States is presumably conducting drone killings to suppress opposition to the government it has established in Afghanistan. However, judging from the announcement yesterday that the United States will be sending thousands of more troops to Afghanistan, it appears that the military effectiveness of the United States drone surveillance and killing campaign in Afghanistan must be reevaluated. Indeed, it is quite likely that the United States drone attacks have led to an increase in the size of the force opposing it, a concern expressed by the former commander of United States and NATO forces in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal.
<https://www.dawn.com/news/784919/mcchrysal-opposes-drone-strikes>

Germany's use of drones of any kind in Afghanistan will expose it to charges that, rather than simply training Afghan police and troops, it is joining the new United States offensive.

Germany's use of drones, in and of itself, is likely to increase Afghan anger over German presence and increase risk to German soldiers.

4) The United States drone attack campaign, in which Germany will inevitably be seen as participating, is a particularly unsavory part of a larger military campaign to subdue an indigenous force comprised of extremely poor, Muslim people. I respectfully suggest that the German people may not want to increase their level of participation in this ignominious endeavor.

You will find supporting material for the points above at KnowDrones.com.

Thank you very much for considering this letter.

Sincerely,

Nick Mottern – Coordinator – KnowDrones.com
38 Jefferson Avenue
Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706

Confronting Senator Schumer on his Position on Drones

**Report to Upstate Coalition to Ground Drones and End the Wars
on a Visit to Charles Schumer's Peekskill Office – February**

10, 2015

On the afternoon of February 10, after three snow postponements, Kwame Madden and I met in the Peekskill, NY office of Senator Charles Schumer with Cody Peluso, his Regional Director, and Brandon Graham, a staff assistant.

In addition to providing Cody and Brandon with the ample background information from the Coalition, *we gave them a letter to Senator Schumer that listed campaign contributions totaling \$639,300 that he has received between 2009 and 2014 from makers of military drones and from financial firms that are invested in military drone makers.* The letter asked the senator to:

"...explain why you accepted these contributions and specifically what you think these firms hope to gain from their support."

Before getting to Cody's responses to this letter (attached), here is a brief summary of our visit.

The meeting was very cordial. We talked exclusively with Cody; Brandon listened. Cody seemed to take a genuine interest in what we were saying and evinced considerable concern at what we were telling him about the impact of drone attacks on those under surveillance and attack.

He said that in presenting our information to his superiors, one question that would come up is whether it is not true that drones have been effective in countering terrorism. I responded that if one measures success by whether drone attacks have reduced violence and created a more stable, healthy environment for people in and outside drone attack zones, one can say only that drone war has been a total failure.

Another point he said is also raised is that drones protect

U.S. soldiers and save their lives. I told him that the air force is having a hard time keeping drone pilots and that if they felt they were saving lives of their comrades it is hard to believe they would be dropping out of drone piloting. I noted the April 2014 report from the Government Accountability Office describing the problem of drone pilot dropout.

With respect to the campaign finance letter, Cody first said that the companies listed all have a major economic role in New York and hence gave contributions. I responded that if they have this role, it is obvious they are important to the state, and there is no need to contribute. Further, I pointed out that one should not be voting on issues of war and peace and at the same time accepting money from weapons makers and banks deeply invested in weapons makers.

Kwame asked whether or not Senator Schumer has "certain standards on who you take money from." I said this was a key point and one that is faced by religious and other institutions when they decide what investment they will make.

Cody agreed that "the optics of it (the contributions) are an issue."

He said that Senator Schumer had never, in any conversation that he, Cody, had been privy to, said something was being done in relation to a campaign contribution.

I explained to Cody that we definitely wanted a response to the questions in the letter, quoted above, and he said he would let that be known to his bosses.

We intend to follow up on this.

At the end of the meeting, I asked Cody what Senator Schumer's position on drone attacks is.

"He does think they (drones) have a place in our military," he said, and that the senator thinks of President Obama's drone

attacks that "some are beneficial and helpful."

He said that the senator had also been an advocate for drone training being done at Hancock air base.

Nevertheless, he said he would carry our message forward.

We provided a great deal more information and perspective than what is noted here, but these are the key points.

ATTACHMENT A

February 5, 2015

Senator Charles Schumer
1 Park Place, Suite 100
Peekskill, New York 10566

Dear Senator Schumer:

In reviewing information provided in OpenSecrets.org, it appears that between 2009 and 2014 you received campaign contributions from military drone manufacturers and financial institutions invested in military drone manufacture, as follows:

Military Drone Manufacture – \$143,900.

- Lockheed \$60,000
- Harris \$45,300
- Carlyle \$38,100

Financial Institutions Invested in Military Drone Manufacture – \$495,400.

- Lazard \$184,200
- Citi \$98,900
- BlackRock \$77,600
- Goldman \$74,300
- JP Morgan \$60,400

We would appreciate it if you would explain why you accepted these contributions and specifically what you think these firms hope to gain from their support.

Sincerely,

Nick Mottern Kwame Madden

KnowDrones.com

38 Jefferson Avenue

Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706

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NOTE TO ORGANIZERS – (The following was not included in Schumer letter.)

In addition to the listing of campaign contributions found at Open Secrets.org, the information in the letter on financial institutions invested in military drone makers is derived from DontBankontheBomb.com

Don't Bank on the Bomb is a very valuable, highly detailed report on which financial institutions are invested in firms that are producing nuclear weapons. Many of these weapons firms, like Honeywell, Lockheed, Boeing and Raytheon are also involved in work on military drones.

Financial institutions will obviously move to protect and enhance their investments, so those with weapons investments are obviously critical players in war politics, and in this case, drone war politics.

Drone damage causes pilot's to quit

Drone damage causes pilot's to quit:

"Killing during the day and going home at night"

Nick Mottern on "In the Now on RT, January 21, 2015

Hancock Air Base and Orders of Protection

Reprinted from the Syracuse Peace Council Newsletter.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the above defendant, [name] observe the following conditions of behavior:

Stay away from Earl A. Evans; the home of Earl A. Evans; the school of Earl A. Evans; the business of Earl A. Evans; the place of employment of Earl A. Evans;

Refrain from communication or any other contact by mail, telephone, e-mail, voice-mail, or other electronic or any other means with Earl A. Evans;

Refrain from assault, stalking, harassment, aggravated harassment, menacing, reckless endangerment, strangulation, criminal obstruction of breathing or circulation, disorderly conduct, criminal mischief, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, forcible touching, intimidation, threats or any criminal offense or interference with the victim...

From the order of protection issued by Town of DeWitt Justices

to all nonviolent civil resisters arrested at Hancock Air Base since October, 2012. Beginning in May, 2014, new language was added to allow those with orders to participate in legally permitted activities at the base. About 50 activists are currently subject to orders of protection. Col. Evans was Hancock's mission support group commander.

MQ-9 Reaper drones (weaponized, unmanned aerial vehicles) came to Hancock Air National Guard Base near Syracuse in late 2009. The base quickly became a hub of Reaper activity, piloting Reapers flying over Afghanistan, and training drone pilots, sensor operators and maintenance technicians. Protests at Hancock began almost immediately. April, 2011 saw the first mass nonviolent civil resistance action, resulting in 38 arrests.

The First OOPs

In 2012, the number of smaller actions stepped up and in October, the Hancock 17 were issued temporary Orders of Protection (OOPs). While being arraigned, the nonviolent activists were each read the order to protect Col. Evans and were stunned. No one knew him, what he looked like, or where he lived, and certainly no one had ever stalked or threatened him.

It was clear that the goal was to keep them away from Evans' "place of business," aka Hancock Air Base. In a perversion of justice, the commander of the base, inside miles of fencing defended by armed guards, obtained an order of protection against nonviolent activists, while families in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen and elsewhere remain unprotected against US drone strikes.

Since then, everyone arrested at Hancock actions has received a temporary order of protection – temporary in that it is in effect until trial. Since a few trials have been scheduled two years after an action, those temporary orders will have been

in effect for two years. Then, if the resister is found guilty, he/she may receive a permanent OOP for another two years.

Challenging the OOP

It is critical to challenge this use of OOPs to suppress dissent, with the threat of one year in prison if the order is violated. There is grave concern that this technique may spread. For example, an Ithaca area anti-fracking activist was issued an OOP to stay away from Inergy's local manager (someone he's never met), and his place of business (a proposed gas storage facility).

A March, 2014, ruling by Acting Justice of the Supreme Court Brunetti vacated the OOP of Hancock drone resister Dan Finlay. While the District Attorney's office appeals the ruling, OOPs continue to be reissued, including to Dan.

Meanwhile, Ithacan Mary Ann Grady-Flores was recently found guilty of violating her OOP. She was sentenced to one year in prison and a \$1000 fine for unintentionally violating it while photographing an action at the base, whose participants, ironically, were all acquitted. She is appealing her case.

People's Order of Protection

As important as it is to challenge the use of OOPs to suppress dissent, we cannot forget the reason for protesting at the base. Upstate Drone Action's recent march called "Peoples' Orders of Protection Against Drone Terror" focused on who really needs an OOP. Raz Mohammad sent this plea from Afghanistan:

On Friday the 30th of May, 2008, my brother-in-law was killed by a drone along with four of his friends. My brother-in-law was a student and he was innocent. Accountability from the US Military for this incident was non-existent.

The Incident created a situation which was beyond imagination. It affected the minds of my sister and all

members of my family. When my nephew was 5 years old, he asked his mother "Where is father?" My sister replied "He was killed by a computer." These negative effects persist on all of us to this day.

I am worried for my family and for the people of Maidan Shahr. I request that the United States courts protect my family and my village.

If the courts won't do it, all of us working together will.

Carol is active with SPC's Ground the Drones Committee and Upstate Drone Action. She is grateful to the many who helped with the article. To learn more about the orders, upcoming trial dates and other events, see upstatedroneaction.org.