

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,

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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

Are We the Terrorists?

Are we the terrorists? This is the subject of Ed Kinane and Dave Kashmer's informative Workshop on Drone Warfare at SUNY Cortland. Students were informed about the actions of military drones around the world then engaged on the subject of 'Are We the Terrorists'. Very interesting result. A good model for introducing the subject to those who have not had an opportunity to see things as we do.

War Crimes Indictment for Good Friday

WAR CRIMES INDICTMENT

[WAR_CRIMES_INDICTMENT_Good_Friday_2017.pdf](#)

Indictment read by Matt Ryan, recorded by Judy Bello:

http://upstatedroneaction.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/Audio/Good_Friday_Indictment-Matt_Ryan.mp3

To President Donald Trump, to Secretary of Defense Secretary James Mattis, to the full Military Chain of the Command, including Command Chief Michael Will, to all Service Members and civilian staff of Hancock Air Base, and to the local police and Sheriffs Department of the Town of Dewitt, NY:

Each one of you, when you became a public servant, serving in a government position or when you joined the United States Armed Forces or police, you publicly promised to uphold the United States Constitution. We take this opportunity to call your attention to Article VI of the US Constitution, which states:

“This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.

This clause is known as the Supremacy Clause because it provides that the Constitution and laws of the U.S., including treaties made under authority of the U.S. shall be supreme law of the land.

The Supremacy Clause provides part of the Supreme Law of the Land.

One Treaty duly ratified by the U.S. is the United Nations Charter. It was ratified by a vote of 89 to 2 in the U.S. Senate, and signed by the President in 1945. It remains in effect today. As such, it is part of supreme law of the land.

The Preamble of the U.N. Charter states that its purpose is to "save future generation from the scourge of war" and it further states, "all nations shall refrain from the use of force against another nation."

This Treaty applies both collectively and individually to all three branches of government, on all levels, U.S. federal, state and local governments, starting with the executive branch: the U.S. President and the executive staff; the judicial branch: all judges and staff members of the judiciary; the legislative branch: all members of the U.S. Armed Forces and all departments of Law Enforcement and all civilian staff, who have sworn to uphold the Constitution, which includes Article VI.

Under the U.N. Charter and long established international laws, anyone—civilian, military, government officials, or judge—who knowingly participates in or supports illegal use of force against another nation or its people is committing a war crime.

Today you must recognize that when you promised to uphold the Constitution, you promised to obey Treaties and International Law – as part of the Supreme Law of the Land and furthermore, under the Uniform Code of Military Justice of the U.S., you are required to disobey any clearly unlawful order from a superior.

Based on all the above,

WE, THE PEOPLE, CHARGE THE UNITED STATES PRESIDENT, DONALD

TRUMP AND THE FULL MILITARY CHAIN OF COMMAND

TO COMMAND CHIEF MICHAEL WILL, EVERY DRONE CREW, AND SERVICE MEMBERS AT HANCOCK AIR BASE, WITH CRIMES AGAINST PEACE & CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, WITH VIOLATIONS OF PART OF THE SUPREME LAW OF THE LAND, EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS, VIOLATION OF DUE PROCESS, WARS OF AGGRESSION, VIOLATION OF NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY, AND KILLING OF INNOCENT CIVILIANS.

We charge that the Air National Guard of the United States of America, headquartered at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base, home of the 174th Fighter Wing of the Air National Guard, under the command of the 174th Fighter Wing Commander, Command Chief Michael Will, is maintaining and deploying the MQ-9 Reaper robotic aircraft, called drones.

These drones are being used not only in combat situations for the purpose of assassinations but also for killings far removed from combat zones without military defense, to assassinate individuals and groups far removed from military action.

Extra judicial killings, such as those the U.S. carries out by drones are intentional, premeditated, and deliberate use of lethal force to commit murder in violation of U.S. and International Law.

It is a matter of public record that the US has used drones in Afghanistan and in Iraq for targeted killings to target specific individuals which has nearly always resulted in the deaths of many others.

There is no legal basis for defining the scope of area where drones can or cannot be used; no legal criteria for deciding which people can be targeted for killing, no procedural safeguards to ensure the legality of the decision to kill and the accuracy of the assassinations.

In support of this indictment, we cite the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, who has said that the use of drones creates “a highly problematic blurring and the law applicable to the use of inter-state force... The result has been the displacement of clear legal standards with a vaguely defined license to kill, and the creation of a major accountability vacuum... In terms of the legal framework, many of these practices violate straightforward applicable legal rules.”

See [United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council Study on Targeted Killings](#), 28, May 2010.

The drone attacks either originating at Hancock or supported here are a deliberate illegal use of force against another nation, and as such are a felonious violation of Article VI of the US Constitution. By giving material support to the drone program, you as individuals are violating the Constitution, dishonoring your oath, and committing war crimes. We demand that you stop participating in any part of the operations of MQ-9 drones immediately, being accountable to the people of United States and Afghanistan.

As citizens of this nation, which maintains over 700 military bases around the globe, and the largest, most deadly military arsenal in the world we believe these words of Martin Luther King still hold true, “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today is my own government”.

There is hope for a better world when WE, THE PEOPLE, hold our government accountable to the laws and treaties that govern the use of lethal force and war. To the extent that we ignore our laws and constitution and allow for the unchecked use of lethal force by our government, allowing the government to kill who ever it wants, where ever it wants, how ever it wants with no accountability, we make the world less safe for children everywhere.

We appeal to all United States citizens, military and

civilian, and to all public officials, to do as required by the Nuremburg Principles I-VII, and by Conscience, to refuse to participate in these crimes, to denounce them, and to resist them nonviolently.

Signed by: THE UPSTATE COALITION TO GROUND THE DRONES AND END THE WARS

Good Friday Statement at Hancock Base

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GOOD FRIDAY HANCOCK DRONE ACTION STATEMENT

April 14, 2017 ~ Good Friday commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Recognizing that 70% of our nation identify as Christian, we come to the gates of the Hancock drone base to make real the crucifixion today. As Jesus and others were crucified by the Roman Empire, drones are used by the U. S. Empire in a similar fashion. In Roman times, crosses loomed over a community to warn people that they could be killed whenever the Empire decided. So too, our drones fly over many countries threatening extrajudicial killings of whoever happens to be in the vicinity.

On this Good Friday, we recall Jesus' call to love and nonviolence. We're asking this air force base and this nation

to turn away from a policy which amounts to a modern-day crucifixion. Let's embrace Jesus call to build the Kingdom of God on Earth instead of killing suspected enemies and innocents, including children. In the process, we are crucifying Children, Families, Love, Peace, Community, Diplomacy, the Rule of Law, the US Constitution, the UN Charter, US Treaties and Due Process.

What if our country were constantly being spied upon by drones, with some of us killed by drones? What if many bystanders, including children, were killed in the process? If that were happening, we would hope that some people in that attacking country would speak up and try to stop the killing. We're speaking up to try and stop the illegal and immoral drone attacks on countries against which Congress has not declared war.

Those arrested today: Ex-CIA analyst of 32 yrs. Ray McGovern, Jessica Stewart, Ed Kinane, Tom Joyce, James Ricks, Joan Pleune, Mark Colville, John Amidon, Brian Hynes.

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MLK: Beyond Vietnam

Some friends of ours held an event last week to commemorate the anniversary of Martin Luther King's powerful speech at the Riverside Church in New York on April 4, 1967, exactly one year before his assassination. In that speech Dr. King makes a powerful connection between racism and war. Kings' clear vision lit a new path for us but we were not ready to follow. Now it is more relevant than ever.

In this video, you can listen to Upstate Drone Action members Jim Clune and his wife Ann, Jack Gilroy and others in Binghamton recite the portion of the speech where Dr King explains why we should oppose the Vietnam war.

Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s April 1967 Riverside Church Speech

And if you would rather listen to the original, you can watch below:

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. – Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence

War and Peace

Donald Trump moved ahead last night to bomb Syrian government facilities in retribution for an unproven claim, an event not yet investigated, with no grounded information, no warning and no discussion. He has taken his place on the tip of the spear of the war machine. But make no mistake, Mr. Trump pulled the trigger but he didn't aim the gun.

Hillary Clinton ran on a bigger version of this same scenario. The war machine has been geared up on invading Syria for years. It is so frustrating to watch the proxies muck around. And please be aware that, whatever you may read, the Russians and Chinese are taking this action very seriously. However, unlike our own government, they don't

act without intelligence, consideration and a plan.

If you think this is about a chemical gas attack, then please read Ray McGovern's prescient article, [The Sarin 'False Flag' Lesson](#), from last December. Apparently, we didn't get it.

So what can we do? Last week Doug Noble, Ted Wilcox and I met with Louise Slaughter and Kirsten Gillibrand's aides. We talked about the danger of making war on Syria and the many questions that arise from the massive propaganda campaign to support US military action there. We asked the Congress Woman and the Senator to support the Barbara Lee bill to restrain US placement of troops in Syria and the Tulsi Gabbard bill to stop US funding and arming of organizations that are affiliated with Al Qaeda in Syria.

We received the response at the end of this email from CW Slaughter's local aide, Sr. Beth, who quotes Jack, an aide in Washington DC who apparently didn't think our message was worth sharing with the Congress woman. Their response was a disrespectful brush off on all counts. The local people apparently didn't share the materials we provided and the DC aide responded without consulting our representative. The local people are good people. I've known them for years. But at this time, they have dropped the ball, and when we reminded them, they responded with tea and sympathy – not comprehension and action.

If you are as offended as I am after reading the response at the end of this post, please give Jack a call at (202) 225-3615 or call Jeff or Sr. Beth at (585) 232-4850 and let them know that you oppose US imperialist wars. Let them know that you do not support attacks on the Syrian State or any attacks on Syrian soil. Tell them if you don't support the holocausts in Yemen and Mosul Iraq in which the United States is a participant and a primary enabler.

At the same time, they wanted to know why we don't have a

movement behind us. And I wonder about that as well.

Of course we need to save the planet, so the environmental movement draws a lot of interest. We are clearly seeing the effects of environmental destruction around us. And, we are concerned about the plight of immigrants and undocumented workers in this country. America is a country of immigrants and the treatment of our most recent arrivals should concern all of us. But can we look beyond the ends of our noses?

For those who wish to focus on the environment, I would like to point out that:

- the fossil fuel industry is the immediate excuse for much of the US imperialist war mongering.
- The US military consumes more oil and gas than any other single entity
- The US military dumps untold quantities of toxins in their chosen war zones from Agent Orange to White Phosphorus to Depleted Uranium
- The US military burn toxic waste in the open when they are operating in war zones and leave behind stashes of toxic weapons and ammunition buried in the ground or pawned off on local allies
- A nuclear war would free the planet of it's human burden, and unfortunately, most of the other flora and fauna that currently inhabit it's biosphere.

If it is refugees and immigrants that are your concern:

- Like other poor people and people of color, refugees and immigrants have a difficult life in this country
- Still, they come because
 - Someone is paying terrorists to kill and maim ordinary civilians in their home countries.
 - Someone is bombing their home countries without permission and without the requisite intelligence to avoid civilian casualties

- Someone is supporting and has been supporting wars of aggression either
 - openly targeting internal political forces attempting to free the country of imperialist governance -as in Yemen;
 - disguised as as revolutions by (heavily armed) internal social movements (that are prepared to kill and maim their neighbors) - as in Syria and Ukraine;
 - using militarized chaos and misdirection on behalf of elite constituencies -as in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Honduras, Venezuela – the list goes on and on.
- Someone is:
 - Making life a living hell in their home countries;
 - Making it impossible to survive in their cherished homes;
 - Destroying their cultural roots and ethnic histories

Who might that 'Someone' be? It is the US, the exceptional imperialist. And the US is us.

Meanwhile, they come here where they can be mistreated and impoverished in many cases, patronized in some contexts, but they can't just be 'normal' until they have given up the last vestiges of their cultural and ethnic identities, until only skin color and gender identity remain. It isn't that these don't matter, but rather that diversity is so much more complex and rich in fiber than basic physical identifiers which, as we know, turn out to be not so physical in any case.

So, after a generation or so, some may prosper; they may forget and join the cardboard American consensus, while others continue struggling against racism and poverty in ghettos across the country.

So I ask you,

- Wouldn't it be nice if the the world were safe for it's inhabitants to live and prosper in their own homes?
- Wouldn't it be nice for people to be free to live in peace in their homelands and to visit others and experience the richness of diversity in some kind of context?
- Wouldn't it be nice if a civilized global political community were able to address the welfare of our planet and serve the welfare of people every where?
- Wouldn't it be nice if a predatory exceptionalist imperialist government bursting with armaments and indignant self-righteous outrage did not control the actions of all other entities with its big bad attitude problem?

Is there a "new sheriff in town" as Nikki Haley told the United Nations Security Council or is there just a new bandit at the helm of the greatest war machine ever built, a hungry machine that feeds on history, civilization, natural resources, human lives and everything those of us who love life hold dear?

And what responsibility do we bear in this context?

Letter from Louise Slaughter's Aides

Q: When might there be the emergence of bills like Barbara Lee's or others on war/peace on the congressional agenda? For example with budget and proposed amounts for military and wall versus domestic programs? We assume this will be a "hot" time? What do you think?

Jack: *Barbara Lee has been a leader on this issue for a long time and the Congresswoman has supported her efforts – I believe Rep. Lee even has a bill that would establish an Institute of Peace [apparently he doesn't know that there already is an 'Institute of Peace' in Washington DC populated*

by neocons]. In terms of the timeline, it's hard to say when you're in the minority. To move bills while in the minority, bipartisan support is key. With Republicans controlling the agenda and what comes up on the floor for consideration it's very hard for Democrats to have a say in what is considered. Also, with President Trumps "skinny budget" released and proposed increased in defense spending, we may not see an increase in domestic programs vs. defense programs in the near future. The Congresswoman stands ready to work to craft legislation that maintains important domestic programs, while preserving funding for our national defense in a reasonable, appropriate way.

Q: Who are the key people in Congress who might work on peace legislation? What chance is there for them to emerge in a leadership/spokesperson role? They spoke of Representative Barbara Lee's legislation as a plus. HR 1473. For example is she a leader on this issue, is this a good piece of legislation that might move ahead?

Jack: *I think LMS would be supportive of HR 1473 though I haven't asked her to cosign the bill [apparently you don't see it as important]. One thing Rep. Lee and some others have tried to push for is a new authorization for the use of military force (AUMF) in our fight against ISIS in the middle east. This would help clarify what kind of actions US forces could take in that conflict, including a clear answer on whether or not troops could be deployed there. However at this point I don't see HR 1473 moving anywhere fast. [since you don't feel it's worth cosigning why would it?]*

Q: What advice would you give peace groups like theirs and many others? What bills to watch, leadership to watch, what do advocate for and when?

Jack: *If they keep the pressure up I would recommend they keep looking for members and proposals that encourage a comprehensive dialogue on how the US can play a role in the*

peace process. [What 'peace process'?] Looking even at the Israeli-Palestine efforts, as well as the importance of robust international aid funding for the US worldwide so we can continue to be a leader and set an example to other countries and governments. Humanitarian and refugee issues I think are

Q: What else should they be aware of or other advice for them and their counterparts?

Jack: *Not sure I have much else for them minus what I included above. I'm always glad to chat over the phone [(202) 225-3615] as well if that would be helpful to them to talk more specifically about questions/ideas they have.*

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.

###

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]]

Multifaith Conference

Anti-Drone

I attended the Multifaith Anti-Drone Warfare Conference at Stony Point Retreat Center in the lower Hudson Valley. It was a busy event with good food, good company and interesting

discussions. The videos were made by Wilton Vought and can be found on [Other Voices Other Choices](#), along with a lot of other interesting materials including audio podcasts.

The panel Friday evening featured ex CIA officer, Ray McGovern, ex Airforce Intelligence Officer Christopher Aaron who served in Afghanistan, and Kambali Musavuli of the Friends of the Congo. Between them, they revealed the connections. . . between lethal drones flying over Africa and the ongoing theft of resources in Africa. . . between government service and service to one's country. . . between telling the redacted truth to the rest of us and joining us on the street in active resistance. Both kinds of action are necessary for democracy to thrive, good information – right action.

Saturday morning, **Arun Kundnani**, Arun Kundnani is Adjunct Professor of Media, Culture and Communication at New York University and author of “The Muslims are Coming” and most recently, “Violence Always Comes Home: Terrorism, Empire and Islamophobia” gave the first Keynote. He spoke about the misleading social and cultural distortion of our perceptions about Islam and terrorism.

Followed by **Medea Benjamin** of CodePink Women for Peace who spoke about US policies, including drone warfare, that disrespect the people in foreign lands, exacerbate misunderstandings and invite continued threats and violence.

In the afternoon, a panel of religious people discussed the place of activism in a religious context and the insight that our faith can give to the ongoing wars and terrorism that our country is engaged in.

Multifaith Perspectives on Drones, Islamophobia & Movement Building featuring Featuring: Muhammed Malik, Rabbi Michael Feinberg,

Imam Hamin Rashadah, Aaron Stauffer & Irene Siegel

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