

Rallies at BAE, Endicott and Lockheed Martin, Owego

by **Jack Gilroy**, VFP Chapter 90 Broome County NY

We had two good events to expose war merchants yesterday, September 9. First, at BAE in Endicott, NY followed by our action at Lockheed Martin in Owego, NY. We congratulated both companies for taking tiny baby steps to convert from systems that destroy to systems that improve mankind and our fragile earth. (electric buses at BAE and a Post Office improvement system by Lockheed Martin)

Certified letters were sent to the CEO's of both BAE and Lockheed earlier in the week. Our attempt to hand deliver letters to BAE and Lockheed were halted by security. At BAE by men who said they were not employees of BAE. They were defenders of private property and not even a shoe tip was to touch the property of BAE. all security at BAE wore shoulder patches identifying them as Black Rhino. At BAE, thirty six people held banners or signs, our VFP flag flew with VFP members from Syracuse, Corning, Albany and Binghamton who joined in solidarity with UpState Drone Action and Peace Action.

Following our sidewalk demonstration and comments broadcasted via our public address system to BAE employees asking them to demand work that gives them purpose to help not harm the earth; we drove twelve miles down the road from BAE (which has claimed on their website to be the #3 arms producer in the world) to the undisputed #1 weapons maker, Lockheed Martin. We stood with our banners before the signs and logos of this giant Pentagon contractor knowing that elevated cameras would soon alert the people inside. This time, it was not a private security team that was dispatched but rather Tioga County Sheriff Department deputies who gently and diplomatically said

we would have to get off the private property of Lockheed Martin. We had time to slowly speak to the young officer as our cameras photographed our folks and banners with Lockheed Martin as the backdrop.

When we drove into Lockheed Martin to try to deliver our letter, their own security team stopped us and called the Tioga Sheriff's Department to turn us around and escort us back to our staging area across the road. Likely a letter of warning will be sent to the three of us, including the TV cameraman who was in the car as we attempted to deliver a letter to the tightly guarded officials at Owego NY Lockheed Martin.

Both events were exhilarating as we exposed the war makers. Good TV coverage and lots of photographs to circulate.

This is the TV coverage (Vera Sdroggins will have her YouTube piece available soon) offered on two national affiliate channels locally Veterans for Peace holds protests at BAE and Lockheed Martin

<https://www.binghamtonhomepage.com/news/veterans-for-peace-holds-protests-at-bae-and-lockheed-martin/>

I had to wait about five seconds to play this link first covered by an ad.

The Weapons Industry

Transformed

by **Jack Gilroy**, September 3, 2022

Locally, we have two of the top ten weapons makers in the world, BAE Systems (#3 according to their website) and Lockheed Martin, the indisputable #1 weapons maker in the world.

No other world culture comes close to our eagerness to dominate other cultures. We have over 800 military bases around the world and have embraced terror over diplomacy. Terror has failed miserably.

Our greed to dominate other lands and people has been a colossal failure. Militarism backed by our firepower has not subdued Vietnamese, Iraqis, nor Afghans. Yet, the cleverness and plotting of the Pentagon and its contractors each year win increases not decreases in weapons making.

Much has been said about the \$739 billion to be spent over the next ten years under the *Inflation Reduction Act*. *We spend more than that figure each year on weapons of mass killing.*

BAE and Lockheed Martin years ago took baby steps to transform a tiny part of their annual revenue into sustainable products or services such as electric bus production at BAE Endicott while Lockheed Martin received a contract to enhance postal packaging at its Owego facility. \$221 million given to Lockheed for postal work amounts to about three tenths of one percent of the \$78 billion given to them by the US government in fiscal year 2022.

The major arms industry uses these tidbit nonmilitary expenditures to claim they are doing economic conversion from military to real needs. It's a sham and they know it.

If workers in the weapons industry were told their jobs would now focus on systems research and production to make our world more livable a sense of joy and purpose would sweep through the arms industry. They would know they were doing work to save our planet from climate disasters. If workers awoke each morning with a resolve to get to work and find ways to

get pure water to people around the world (including our own native and poor people who have to live with contaminated water) they would have renewed purpose to help others, not with daily plans for more destruction and blood letting.

Lockheed Hellfire missiles and BAE laser systems to kill do not address the existential danger of climate crisis. The work of the arms industry could transform to work to cure diseases, to stopping the next pandemic before it starts, to ensuring clean soil and air, to ending malnutrition and hunger, to saving our plant and animal life.

Waking up each day with a zest to do good must be difficult for employees whose job is to design and produce weapons of death and destruction. Yet, our strange culture each year allocates 54% of our discretionary federal spending to our war industry.

Arms industry workers need to demand a sense of moral purpose in their work. Making electric buses and organizing mail distribution is a start to celebrate. The tasks to improve our nation and world are endless, economically profitable and morally joyous.

CEO letter supporters September 9th War Merchants Exposure Day

Veterans for Peace: veteransforpeaceusa.org

World Beyond War: worldbeyondwar.org

Code Pink: Codepink.org

Peace Action: Peaceaction.org

Upstate Drone Action: upstatedroneaction.org

United National Antiwar Coalition: UNACPeace.org

Catholic Worker: Catholicworker.org

Pax Christi USA: Paxchristiusa.org

Pax Christi DC-Baltimore: www.PaxChristiMDCB.org

Nevada Desert Experience: NevadaDesertexperience.org

Brandywine Peace Community: BrandwinePeace.com

Friends of Franz & Ben: bensalmon.org

Broome County NY Peace Action: BCPeaceAction.org

Association of United States Catholic Priests

Pax Christi NYC: PaxChristiNYC.org

Pittsburgh Anti-War Committee

Florida Peace Network

After Israel Invades Nablus, Palestine Action Invades Israeli Drone Factory

by Days of Palestine, published on Popular Resistance, July 25, 2022

On Saturday night, Israeli military forces raided Nablus, armed with stun grenades and ammunition and killing two Palestinians and injuring 9 others. On Sunday, members of Palestine Action descended upon Israeli weapons company Elbit Systems' factory in Shenstone, smashing and striking at the site exterior, throwing red paint, a message to the Israeli occupation and those who uphold it – the day has passed where your violence will go unchecked, prepare to be met with resistance every step of the way. Activists took action seeking to dismantle an industry built on occupation, dispossession and warfare across the globe.

BREAKING: Palestine Action have descended upon drone factory UAV Engines LTD, wreaking havoc for Israel's largest weapons company, Elbit Systems #ShutElbitDown pic.twitter.com/RFjwbTn6HW

– Palestine Action (@Pal_action) July 24, 2022

A Palestine Action spokesperson said:

“Elbit drones are made in Britain, tested on Palestine then sold back to the British military, amongst others. The British military hold deep ties with Elbit – Britain is an accomplice in an international industry built on occupation, one where technology is suited not to meet human needs, but to further repression and terror. We can only cut these ties with direct action taken by the masses – ordinary people, willing to make sacrifices in order to end our collective complicity.”

The site in question is UAV Engines LTD. and has faced extensive action in the past, owing to its manufacture of components used in Elbit military drones such as the Watchkeeper UAV. A direct action campaign for site closure has been fought for nearly two years under the #ShutElbitDown banner, and longer by activists taking sporadic action. It has been waged by dozens of activists who have faced arrest and loss of liberty, alongside mass support from locals who wish to see an end to a brutal industry that starts on our doorsteps. After huge successes for the broader campaign, its use of direct action and community organising culminating in the closure of two of Elbit's sites in London and Manchester, Palestine Action is working to permanently close UAV Engines LTD.

Elbit's clientele spans much of the world – its military goods are sold on and used for anything from violent repression en

masse, to the surveillance of both sky and sea. For many years, the Hermes 450/900 drones have been a staple of life in Gaza. They hold a constant presence in the skies, made ever known by their distinct buzzing, the threat of bombing always lurking. As Elbit themselves have said, the drones are “battle-tested” on Palestine – inaugurated through testing on Palestine’s captive populations, then sold back to militaries across the world.

Elbit drones are sold on to Israel in huge numbers (Elbit drones make up 85% of Israel’s drone fleet) and used to keep entire populations living in fear, under permanent siege-mentality – 91% of children in Gaza suffering from PTSD. Today’s action has been taken in their name, with a promise of resistance until victory – an end to Britain’s complicity, and a Palestine free from the horrors of occupation and state terror.

Peace and Social Justice Groups Call for Diversion of Military Spending to Human Needs in the U.S.

*by Scott Willis, published on WAER, March 3, 2022
(Press clippings from a sibling group with much overlap)*



Activists protest war and military spending in front of the federal building.

About a dozen activists from religious, peace, and justice groups marked the occasion of the Christian holy day of Ash Wednesday to promote diplomacy and non-violence between Russia and Ukraine. They also called for the diversion of military spending to address housing, hunger, and education needs in the U.S.

The gathering greeted parishioners attending Ash Wednesday services at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, then moved to the federal building, where they burned contracts of various weapons manufacturers...

"...General Electric Company, contract with the U.S. government \$4.4 billion. We hereby burn this contract and divert funds for housing for all Americans."

Jack Gilroy is events coordinator for local chapter Pax Christi Upstate, which supports the need to proclaim the non-violence teachings of Christ. He's also with Peace Action and Veterans for Peace in the Southern Tier.

"We're trying to bring attention not only to the federal government that this is an unbelievable waste, but also to the churches who we believe have a strong reason to take a

moral and ethical stance. And, we're not hearing that from them,"

Gilroy said.

"I've seen a fair number of people in the streets here in Syracuse who are homeless, yet we're spending money on hellfire missiles made by Lockheed Martin, which receives \$79 billion every year from the federal government."

Lockheed Martin has a presence here, of course, with a facility in Salina. The activists gathered at the federal building to urge Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand to transform what they call the use of funds for killing to funds for living, such as the environment, health care, education, and addressing poverty and disease. John Amidon says studies show how the U.S. is perpetuating a war mentality with its more than \$700 billion dollar budget.

"The United States is involved, in one way or another, 85 conflicts right now in the world. Sometimes it's as advisors. Sometimes it's training troops. Sometimes it's supplying arms. But we are fueling conflicts all over the world in one fashion or another,"

Amidon said.



Protestors gather outside the Federal Building in Syracuse NY protesting the United States Military Industrial Complex. Mar. 2, 2022, Syracuse, NY. (Photo by Max Mimaroglu)

Jack Gilroy says that includes the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

"We are here for sure to recognize the terrible leadership of Vladimir Putin. But we're also here to remind people that if we had spent much of our funds that we spent on weapon making for diplomacy and improving conditions in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Ukraine, etc., then we wouldn't be here today with a crazed individual who has us on the precipice of possible atomic use."

The activists also denounced the ongoing use of military drones, which they say has cost innocent lives in Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq.

***Featured Image:** Protestors gather outside the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Syracuse NY protesting the United States Military Industrial Complex. Mar. 2, 2022, Syracuse, NY. (Photo by Max Mimaroglu)

Scott Willis covers politics, local government,

transportation, and arts and culture for WAER. He came to Syracuse from Detroit in 2001, where he began his career in radio as an intern and freelance reporter. Scott is honored and privileged to bring the day's news and in-depth feature reporting to WAER's dedicated and generous listeners. You can find him on twitter @swilllisWAER and email him at srwilllis@syr.edu.

FAA Pays General Atomics \$1.5 Million to Fly Newest Military Killer/Surveillance Drone in U.S. Domestic Airspace

by *Barry Summers*, published on *CovertAction Magazine*, May 17, 2022

April 1st was a good news/bad news kind of day for U.S. military drone-maker General Atomics. First, it was reported that the government of Australia had revealed that they were canceling the planned purchase of 12 MQ-9B SkyGuardian drones, made by General Atomics (GA). Since the deal would have been worth a cool **one billion dollars** to GA, this was definitely the bad news.

Aussies 'secretly cancel' \$1.3B AUD drone deal; Nixing French subs may cost \$5B

"Basically we have a five-and-a-half billion dollar budget provision, including about \$3 billion spent to date, and potential costs within that envelope. So taxpayers will be up for five-and-a-half billion dollars and submarines that don't exist?" asked Sen. Penny Wong.

By COLIN CLARK on April 01, 2022 at 10:22 AM

Luckily, GA

had a good news story in the works. And as luck would have it, it would run on the same day as the bad news story.

AI & Autonomy, Unmanned

GA-ASI's SkyGuardian UAS Completes Detect-and-Avoid Flights for the FAA

By Jessica Reed | April 1, 2022

Back in January, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) handed GA \$1.5 million to fly the 79-ft. 12,000 lbs SkyGuardian over North Dakota for 10 hours. (GA apparently didn't feel the need for a press release and the resulting news article until the day *before* some bad news from down under was in the pipeline.)

The stated purpose of the FAA grant to GA was "to research Detect and Avoid (DAA) capabilities." (DAA, the ability for an unmanned aircraft to 'detect' another aircraft, and 'avoid' it, is the Holy Grail of drone integration. "*Integration*" is the process of removing restrictions against drones operating in domestic U.S. airspace.)

That's right—the FAA was PAYING a U.S. arms manufacturer \$1.5 million in public monies to demonstrate their newest military surveillance drone over domestic U.S. territory.

If this is all a surprise to you, you're not alone. The program to integrate military drones into U.S. domestic airspace has been operating for 10 years. It involves various federal agencies—DoD, FAA, NASA, Commerce, Energy, DHS, etc. But it hasn't been reported on in any major news venue since the day before the bill creating it was signed into law in 2012 by then-President Barack Obama.

Los Angeles Times

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Pentagon working with FAA to open U.S. airspace to combat drones

BY W.J. HENNIGAN, LOS ANGELES TIMES
FEB. 13, 2012 12 AM PT

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Of course, the military has been preparing to operate their drones in U.S. domestic airspace since long before that. Here, a U.S. Air Force officer briefs FAA officials on the plans to fly Reaper drones in-and-out of Hancock Field in Syracuse, all the way back in January of 2010.



[Source: 174attackwing.ang.af.mil]

And then, wouldn't you know, when the FAA designated six drone integration test sites around the country in 2014 (supposedly after a rigorous competition), one of them was based in New York state. And that USAF officer from 2010 was put on staff to direct the very operation that he had described nine years earlier. Here's a screengrab of his 2019 presentation on the operation (which has since disappeared from the NUAIR website.)



[Source: nuair.com]

Less than a year after THAT “*Success Story*” of Reapers flying over populated areas of New York, one of them crashed upon takeoff at the Syracuse-Hancock Int. Airport. The drone with up to two tons of aviation fuel went down mere seconds from a densely-populated residential and commercial part of Syracuse. It took almost a year before the Air Force released that information to the public.

Military, Hancock were wrong to keep Reaper drone crash a secret (Editorial)

Updated: Apr. 18, 2021, 7:30 a.m. | Published: Apr. 18, 2021, 7:30 a.m.



An MQ-9 Reaper drone operated by the NY Air National Guard's 174th Attack Wing is shown after crashing June 25, 2020 at Syracuse Hancock International Airport. U.S. Air Force photo

Advertisement

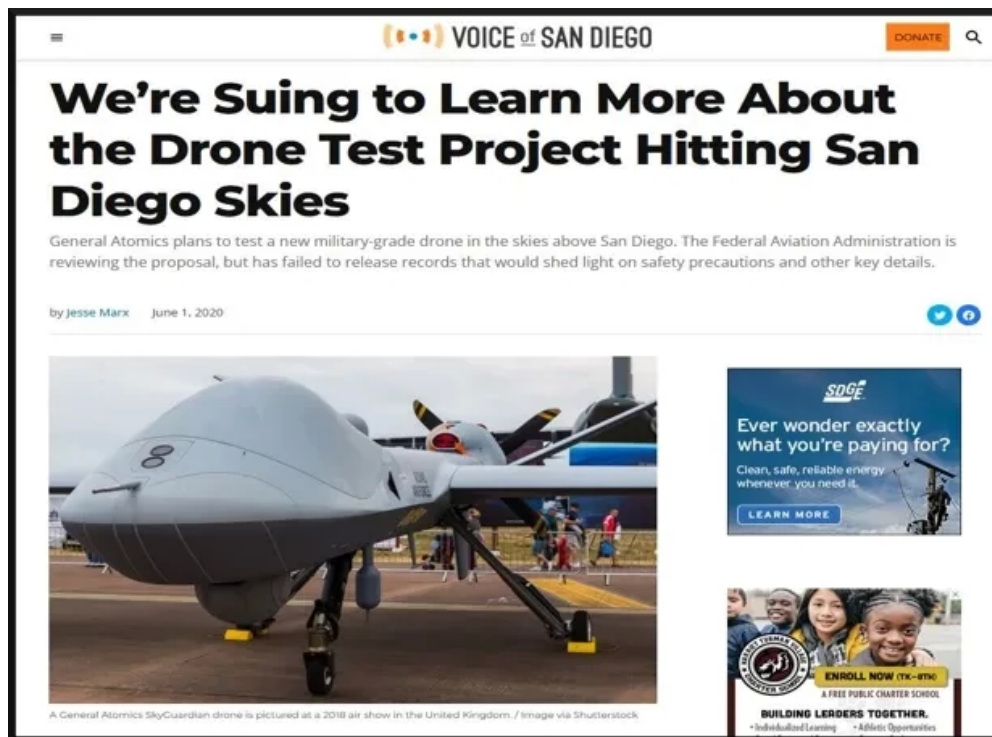
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[Source: [syracuse.com](https://www.syracuse.com)]

Why would they be so secretive about one of their drones nearly causing a catastrophe in a U.S. city? Maybe because it was the second Reaper crash in as many days. One had gone down somewhere in Africa just the day before, because of a maintenance problem GA had known about for months but hadn't fixed.

More likely, it might have been because at the time, GA was trying to fly the Reaper's big brother, the new MQ-9B SkyGuardian, over the City of San Diego, supposedly to demonstrate the commercial applications of large military-grade drones. Three weeks before the Syracuse crash, the Voice of San Diego had announced that they were suing the FAA and GA over the secrecy surrounding *that* attempt.



[Source: voiceofsandiego.org]

That proposed flight was eventually rejected by the professionals at FAA, but FAA leadership still fought tooth and nail in court to not reveal the reasons why. Whatever the reason, that rejection turns out to have been well-justified. GA was forced to take a consolation flight over the desert, and because the project was supported by NASA, they had to issue a report. That report clearly shows that the crucial DAA system (which Australia had said was the basis for choosing the MQ-9B), had failed repeatedly during the flight.

During the 9.5 hour flight, there were a few instances where the DAA traffic display experienced a brief (30-40 second) loss of data, then returned to normal operation. During these drops, TCAS alerts on the pilot's Head-up Display, including resolution advisories (RAs), remained operational. GA-ASI's investigation into the root cause concluded that these events were related to a brief data bandwidth conflict on the SATCOM downlink between the DAS-4 camera system and the DAA system, which has since been corrected by updating payload configuration settings to ensure DAA system messages remain prioritized during any unexpected data conflict situations. Section 2.1.4 below provides an overview of these observations and the results of the investigation.

Don't bother looking for that overview. Somehow, it never made it into the report...

With all that failure, General Atomics and the federal government are still moving ahead with plans to open U.S. domestic airspace to routine operation of military

surveillance drones. In fact, GA is already previewing the opportunity (to commercial AND government customers) to **lease** their drones for surveillance flights in domestic or international airspace. They're even considering a *“pay by the hour” scenario*.

The Leasing page on the General Atomics website ends with this odd signoff: *“-ISR/24/7/365-”*.

“Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.” Over the United States... Coming soon?

Military-Industrial Complex Is Itching to Send “Hunter-Killer” Drones to Ukraine

by **Sara Sirota**, published on *The Intercept*, May 18, 2022

After failing to convince the Biden administration to ship NATO fighter jets to Ukraine, the military-industrial complex is now trying to coax the White House into sending what are, essentially, unmanned fighter jets to counter Russia's invasion. Kyiv reportedly met with the major defense contractor General Atomics about obtaining the *“Hunter-Killer”* MQ-9 Reaper drone, armed with Hellfire missiles, which the U.S. has infamously used in botched airstrikes that killed and maimed civilians in Afghanistan, Somalia, and other countries around the world. The company and Kyiv's allies in Washington are appealing to policymakers to greenlight the export,

despite the high risk of escalation that could turn the devastating war nuclear.

Take retired Air Force Lt. Gen. David Deptula, dean of the influential and General Atomics-funded Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies, who penned an op-ed in Forbes advocating for the U.S. to give Ukraine Reapers in March, before Kyiv's interest was publicly known. He blasted skeptics who voiced concern about offering Poland's MiG-29 fighter jets to Ukraine, saying they're "*being cowed by Putin*," the Russian president.

In a phone call with The Intercept, Deptula reiterated his hawkish stance, arguing concern about conflict escalation "*is being fed by the Russians through a very sophisticated information operations campaign to deter U.S. and NATO actions to assist the Ukrainians. Anything's fair up to, but not including, the use of NATO forces in the conduct of hostile operations against the Russians.*"

"*Approve this, US Govt.,*" Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., tweeted last month when the Washington Post reported that Ukraine's ambassador to the U.S. met with General Atomics. Notorious for calling on the U.S. to enforce a dangerous no-fly zone over Ukraine, Kinzinger, along with Reps. Ted Lieu, D-Calif., and Chrissy Houlahan, D-Penn., also asked the Defense Department to report on how long it would take to train a Ukrainian pilot to fly the MQ-9. This week, senior fellows from the General Atomics-funded Hudson Institute wrote an op-ed in The Dispatch endorsing sending Ukraine Reapers as well. And General Atomics sends lobbyists to Washington specifically to influence the strict export policy that the U.S. has enforced to limit the global proliferation of such dangerous drones.

The White House has shown an increased willingness to give Ukraine weapons as the war in Ukraine has dragged on and U.S. aims shift toward seeing a "*weakened*" Russia. Initially, it was only willing to give shoulder-fired missiles; backpack-

sized drones called Switchblades strapped with grenades; and encrypted communications equipment. More recently, the administration has greenlighted heavy artillery weapons, armored personnel carriers, and longer-flying experimental drones called Phoenix Ghosts. Last week, President Joe Biden signed into law the first “lend-lease” program to accelerate military shipments since World War II, and this week, Democrats are trying to fast-track \$40 billion to supply Ukraine with more arms and replenish the U.S.’s depleted stockpiles, at the expense of new Covid-19 relief spending.

Along the way, Kyiv and the U.S. defense industry have had a strong ally in the American media, which is constantly asking the administration why it’s not getting more involved. After the Washington Post reported on Ukraine’s discussions with General Atomics, Politico beckoned: *“Ukraine wants armed drones. Is the U.S. ready to deliver?”*

“It’s not every day that the United States approves the sale or transfer of armed drones to a foreign country – but Ukraine is hoping the Biden administration will heed the call of soldiers on the ground to do just that,” the story led.

If the government approves a deal, Ukraine would be one of only a few countries to receive Gray Eagles or Reapers. Unlike fighter jets such as the F-16, the U.S. hasn’t widely provided them because of an international agreement known as the Missile Technology Control Regime. Aiming to curb the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the nonbinding regime calls on exporters to use a *“strong presumption of denial”* standard when considering giving advanced drones like the MQ-9 to other countries.

However, following pressure from the defense industry, former President Donald Trump eased that burden in July 2020 as part of a broader effort to expand U.S. arms sales globally, opening the door for the State Department to authorize Reaper

exports to the United Arab Emirates and Taiwan. The policy shift drew strong rebuke from members of Congress, who may now be tested with a transfer to Ukraine.

Describing the Trump administration's policy shift, Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., now chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said at the time, *"This reckless decision once again makes it more likely that we will export some of our most deadly weaponry to human rights abusers around the world."* Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., quickly teamed up with Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., and other Democratic and Republican senators on legislation to ban exports of advanced drones, except to NATO members and a handful of other close allies. Ukraine was not on the list.

Asked their positions on giving Ukraine the Reaper now, both Menendez and Murphy said they'd have to review the proposed deal first before taking a position.

"I have to look at that. I have to see what their ability to use it [is]. I have to see how they use it," Menendez told The Intercept.

General Atomics has already tried to clear up such questions. A company spokesperson told Forbes last month that motivated Ukrainian forces could undergo an expedited training period much shorter than the U.S. Air Force's mandatory one-year lessons for drone pilots.

Paul, the Senate's strongest critic of U.S. military assistance to Ukraine, warned about the risk of NATO getting drawn in further. *"I do understand that there is a danger, and I haven't fully concluded where I am on this, but you know, there is always the danger of escalation,"* he said in an interview. (He added that he would be more comfortable if Ukraine paid for the weapons, but since MQ-9s cost tens of millions of dollars each, that is not likely.)

Bill Hartung, senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute

for Responsible Statecraft, warned in an email to The Intercept that giving Ukraine armed Reapers would be a major step up from what the U.S. has already supplied.

"In my view, Ukraine has the right to defend itself, and some weapons supplies are warranted on that basis," Hartung wrote. "But supplying large, long-range drones would be a significant escalation in the types of systems supplied to Ukraine, and as such shouldn't go forward without significant scrutiny by Congress."

Members of Congress do have the authority to block an export, like when Paul introduced a motion to halt a missile sale to Saudi Arabia in November, which was voted down in the Senate. He distinguished that case from Ukraine, though. *"Most of the battles that I've chosen on selling arms have been to countries where there's a lot of people ... who've talked about their human rights abuses,"* Paul said, noting he hasn't objected to deals with NATO allies. *"Ukraine's not NATO and I'm not a supporter of them being in NATO, but at the same time, I am sympathetic to their plight."*

Meanwhile, Ukrainian forces have reportedly used internationally banned cluster munitions during the current war, and have a sizable neo-Nazi faction. Ukraine is also home to one of the largest arms trafficking markets in Europe, meaning weapons sent to Kyiv could end up with unintended militias or in other conflicts abroad.

Meanwhile, it's not clear whether the State Department has made any formal moves toward a possible Reaper deal. Reporter Michael Peck, writing about the meeting between Ukraine and General Atomics, speculated in Forbes:

"[I]t is unlikely that such talks between Ukraine and a U.S. defense contractor would have happened without a green light from the Biden administration."

A State Department official who requested anonymity said it cannot comment on possible arms transfers before formal notification to Congress. General Atomics spokesperson C. Mark Brinkley told The Intercept Tuesday that the company remains in close contact with Ukraine and U.S. government representatives.

Hartung warned that giving Reapers to Ukraine in service of weakening Russia, as stated by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, can especially be dangerous.

“A policy of trying to weaken Russia risks pushing Putin into a corner and increasing the risks of escalation of the conflict to a direct U.S.-Russia war, with all the risks that entails, including the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons,” he said.

Hancock AFB Drone Resisters' Charges Dismissed “In the Interest of Justice”

Sunday, May 1st, 2022

Press Release:

Contact: Tom Joyce 607.277.7426 tomjoyce51@aim.com

Mark Scibilia-Carver 607-387-3916 marksc112@yahoo.com

Mary Anne Grady Flores 607-280-8797 gradyflores08@gmail.com
(interviews available)

On April 28, 2022, in DeWitt, NY night court, Judge David

Gideon presiding, pro se defendants Mark Scibilia-Carver and Tom Joyce of the Ithaca Catholic Worker and the Upstate Drone Action Coalition, had their 2019 violation charges for blocking, with several others, the main entrance of Hancock drone base, home of the 174th Attack Wing of the NYS Air National Guard. dismissed *"in the interests of justice."*

According to Sujata Gibson, stand-by counsel and Cornell Law School faculty, the dismissal *"was significant, not just to this movement but to our collective conversation about the role of non-violent peaceful action in our democracy."* Gibson continued, *"It was an honor to witness the thought that Judge Gideon put into his decision and deeply moving to hear the words of those who put themselves on the line to bring attention to these issues."*

Mark Scibilia-Carver, addressing the court, noted that, as we warned in court several years ago, *"The US has developed 'low-yield' nuclear weapons that can be delivered by MQ-9 drones"* like those piloted robotically from Hancock AFB. According to drone pilot whistle-blower, Daniel Hale, serving 4 years in prison for revealing truths about US drone warfare, 90% of drone kills were not the intended targets. On August 29, 2021, 10 Ahmadi family members were killed after the father was mistakenly targeted as a Taliban operative. A recent NYT article about the PTSD suicide of drone pilot Kevin Larson noted that *"Drone crews have launched more missiles and killed more people than nearly anyone else in the military in the last decade."* There have been well over 30,000 cases of PTSD suicide in the US military since 9/11/01."

Longtime Hancock drone resister Ed Kinane, declared, *"After his ruling, Judge Gideon, talked about how his views have changed regarding our civil resistance campaign at Hancock. Given the increasing perilousness of the world these days, he acknowledged that he had 'learned from Upstate Drone Action's decade-long series of DeWitt court trials."* During Upstate Drone Action's 13-year civil resistance campaign to expose

Hancock's lethal role in drone terrorism in Afghanistan and elsewhere, 148+ have been arrested with scores of trials and many jail sentences.

###

Will the U.S. Send Reaper Drones Into the Ukraine Whirlwind?

by Nick Mottern, published on Common Dreams, April 27, 2022

Two retired U.S. Air Force generals who were deeply involved in the early development of the U.S. drone war program have suggested introducing the notorious MQ-9 Reaper, the most powerful U.S. killer drone, into the skies over Ukraine.

Such a move would open a new, even more dangerous phase in Ukraine's war in which Reapers, and MQ-1 Gray Eagle drones, both widely used in Afghanistan, might be put at the service of the Ukrainian military to attack Russian forces in Ukraine and, quite possibly, to conduct assassination and bombardment inside Russia.

These drone operations, which would almost certainly be reliant on U.S. military personnel, could lead to a nuclear response from Russia if they are seen to further signal a determination by the United States to fragment Russia's central government and turn Russia into a failed state like Iraq, Libya, Syria and Afghanistan. The United States and western Europe waged wars of choice in these countries, presumably because the countries had not subordinated their

national interests to the national interests of the United States and Western Europe.

TANK BUSTERS

On March 16, 2022, retired U.S. Air Force Lieutenant General David Deptula, writing in Forbes, called for the introduction of the Reaper and Gray Eagle drones into the Ukraine war for “defensive operations” against Russian tanks and other military equipment. He argued that these American drones can greatly expand on the success that smaller Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones have had against Russian equipment:

“Ukrainians can be trained to operate these (U.S. drone) systems in a relatively short period of time, thus avoiding valid concerns regarding U.S. personnel directly engaging Russian forces. Given U.S. use of this equipment over the past 20 years, they are rapidly available in high numbers, as is all the supporting infrastructure. The MQ-1 can be operated from a ruggedized laptop computer instead of a traditional ground control station thus simplifying basing logistics, and it takes-off and lands automatically reducing the need for highly skilled pilots.”

General Deptula’s advocacy for introducing Reaper and Grey Eagle drones into the Ukraine war might be dismissed because he is currently Dean of the Mitchell Institute of Aerospace Power Studies, which is, as noted with the Forbes column, supported by the maker of these drones, General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc. However, his Air Force experience in developing the U.S. drone war program was taken seriously enough by Defense Daily to ask the Pentagon for comment, which was not immediately received.

General Deptula told Defense Daily that Ukrainians could be trained to operate the U.S. drones in two or three weeks and that the drones could be controlled “from positions far from areas of direct combat.”

Although the general makes it seem that the use of the Reapers and Gray Eagles would be a strictly Ukrainian operation, realistically it appears that while Ukrainians might symbolically be present, or be trained in U.S. drone control centers, it is unlikely that they will actually control either type aircraft for months. Training time for a U.S. Air Force drone pilot is a minimum of one year, and the U.S. Army, which operates the Grey Eagle, says that an unmanned aerial systems operator receives “more than 23 weeks” of training.

In addition, operation of both U.S. drone types requires substantial support contingents. In 2013, retired U.S. Air Force Colonel Martha McSally, who had experience with U.S. drone operations in Africa, and elsewhere, testified before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights:

“It actually takes about 200 individuals to keep one of these aircraft airborne for a 24-hour orbit. And, that 200 individuals includes the operators, the intelligence personnel, the maintenance personnel, the equipment people, the lawyers, and also as part of the process, you have literally hundreds of other personnel that are involved in the process on the military side when you’re actually conducting one of these operations.”

The Reaper drone control centers closest to Ukraine for the missions that General Deptula advocates would be at Campia Turzii Air Base in Romania and Miroslawiec Air Base in Poland. Clearly, this direct involvement in attacks against Russian forces would mean greater danger for these nations.

Although the Gray Eagle drone is built to be “flown” by troops in the field of combat, and laptop computer control of the Gray Eagle is being developed, its operating system involves complex ground-based and satellite systems that can require a team of more than 100 trained soldiers, as described by the

U.S. Army:

"The system is fielded in platoon sets consisting of four unmanned aircraft, two Universal Ground Control Stations, seven Ground Data Terminals, one Mobile Ground Control Station, one Satellite Ground Data Terminal, an automated takeoff and landing system, Light Medium Tactical Vehicles (LMTVs) and other ground-support equipment operated and maintained by a company of 128 Soldiers within the Combat Aviation Brigade. U.S. Army Special Operations Forces and Intelligence and Security Command have two Gray Eagle Extended Range (ER) systems which include 12 unmanned aircraft, six Universal Ground Control Stations, nine Ground Data Terminals, three Mobile Ground Control Stations, one Satellite Ground Data Terminal, an automated takeoff and landing system, LMTVs, and other ground-support equipment operated and maintained by a company of 165 Soldiers."

In addition, it is likely that if Gray Eagle drone control equipment were sent into Ukraine, the U.S. would protect it from capture, which would likely require U.S. troops to accompany the deployment of such equipment.

PILOTLESS NO FLY-ZONE

On March 30, 2022, retired U.S. Air Force Major General James Poss published a column in Inside Unmanned Systems in which he described a complex system using Reaper drones and manned surveillance aircraft to monitor a no-fly zone over Ukraine. The plan also would require Reaper drones to attack Russian anti-aircraft weapons in Ukraine and to fire on Russian aircraft.

The general acknowledged at the end of his column that using Reaper drones to enforce his no-fly zone, in the absence of a new generation of air combat drones, would be very hard and perhaps might not work:

“An unmanned no-fly zone is possible in 2022 but would involve a lot of MQ-9 losses and the MQ-9 would struggle to engage Russian aircraft violating the no-fly zone. The coalition could handle the losses. The USAF alone has over 250 MQ-9s in its inventory and a further several hundred MQ-1A Predators in storage. I’m sure every one of these drones would relish the opportunity to die in glory instead of rotting in storage. However, the ineffectiveness of today’s drones in air-to-air combat would make an unmanned-only no-fly zone very difficult to execute.”

NO CONSEQUENCES?

The generals’ recommendations to send in the drones appear to be based on the idea that this would enable the U.S. to support Ukraine without risking American pilots’ lives and without putting Americans into direct combat with Russians. In General Deptula’s scheme, the United States is further protected by a veil of faux Ukrainian control of Reaper and Gray Eagle attacks.

But, the primary impetus for their initiative appears to be the surprising failure of Russian anti-aircraft weapons to knock down the low-flying, propeller-driven, 125 mph maximum, Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones

“Given the performance of the Russian Aerospace Forces to date over Ukraine,” General Deptula said in Defense News, “there is little concern of interception/shoot down of these UAVs (Reaper and Gray Eagle drones).”
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/01/russia-belgorod-fire-helicopter-ukraine/>

The Russian Pantsir S1 anti-aircraft system was “trounced” by Turkish drone attacks in Libya in 2020, according to Real Clear Defense, and it apparently has not been as successful as anticipated in Ukraine. The same can be said for the Russian

9S932-1 anti-aircraft weapon, which is considered highly advanced technologically.

Ukrainian forces have captured units of both these systems, and, as noted in The Drive, assuredly this equipment is being studied by the U.S. to determine its vulnerabilities and countermeasures.

“Altogether, for every system like the 9S932-1 that Ukrainian forces capture, they are not only hampering Russian forces’ ability to operate in the country, they are also potentially exposing new details and providing new insights about some of their most advanced capabilities.”

FATAL ATTRACTION

When one considers the apparent failures of Russia’s anti-aircraft systems against relatively slow, low-flying aircraft, like drones, and that Russia shares a 1,200-mile land border with Ukraine, it is apparent that Russia may be extremely vulnerable to armed Reapers that might fly by night carrying electronic jamming systems and artificial intelligence targeting assistance.

The Reaper drone, therefore, offers an extremely tempting weapon to be flown into Russia, flying the Ukrainian flag, for assassination and bombardment. These drones have already been used in a number of nations around the world as a key part of a strategy to disable central governments.

Precedent for Ukrainian attacks within Russia, was established on April 1, 2022, when, according to The Washington Post, two Ukrainian helicopters, flying at a low altitude, appeared to have attacked a fuel storage area in the Russian city of Belgorod, 22 miles from the Ukrainian border.

On April 1, 2022, Jeremy Scahill wrote in The Intercept:

“The White House smells Putin’s blood in the waters of his

disastrous invasion. The flow of weapons, the sweeping sanctions, and other acts of economic warfare are ultimately aimed not just at defending Ukraine and making the regime pay for the invasion in the immediate present, but also setting in motion its downfall."

On March 22, 2021, Kremlin press secretary Dmitry Peskov told CNN:

"Well, we have a concept of domestic security, and it's public," Peskov said. "You can read all the reasons for nuclear arms to be used. So, if it is an existential threat, a threat for our country, then it can be used in accordance with our concept."

At this moment, decisions about whether and how to use Reaper and Grey Eagle drones in Ukraine can have profound consequences for humanity.

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***Featured Image:** *Armed U.S. General Atomics MQ-9 Reaper drone heading for take-off at Kandahar Air Base. (Photo: Franz J. Marty/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images)*

Nick Mottern has worked as a reporter, researcher, writer, and political organizer over the last 50 years. He manages KnowDrones.com, a website devoted to education and organizing to stop drone warfare and surveillance.

US Special Operations Command Picks Anduril to Lead Counter-Drone Integration Work in \$1B Deal

by **Jen Judson**, published on **Defense News**, January 24, 2022

WASHINGTON — U.S. Special Operations Command has picked California-based Anduril Industries to lead its counter-drone systems integration work in a \$1 billion deal, according to a contract announcement and company statement.

As the integration partner, “Anduril will deliver, advance and sustain [counter-unmanned systems] capabilities for special operations forces wherever they operate,” the Jan. 24 company statement read.

Anduril’s family of systems designed to counter drone threats is run by the Lattice operating system and includes its Sentry tower and the small unmanned aerial system Anvil. The system also brings in “best-of-breed” third-party sensors and effectors “for a layered defensive approach,” according to the company.

The Lattice system is able to provide autonomous detection, classification and tracking of targets at the edge of the battlefield and alerts users to the detected threats. It also prompts users with solutions to engage and destroy the threats, the company described.

The Sentry tower is comprised of an onboard radar and optical sensors within embedded computing cores that can process data through machine-learning algorithms to detect, identify and track threats.

Anduril said it will deliver capability through “*traditional means*,” but will also deploy the capability as a service and configure the system to carry out specific missions as threats evolve or new threats emerge. And under the contract, it must design, prototype and develop new counter-UAS technology.

“Anduril’s software-first approach and its open and interoperable Lattice operating system enables sensor modularity and massive scalability,” the statement said. “As the SIP, Anduril will maintain continuous system updates, develop and deploy new capability, and integrate best-in-class third-party sensors and effectors, future-proofing deployed systems at no additional cost to the customer.”

Under the SOCOM contract, Anduril will perform the work both within and outside of the continental United States. The contract is expected to be completed by Jan. 19, 2032, according to the Defense Department contract announcement.

Eleven other proposals were received in response to a publicly posted SIP, or system integration partner, prototype opportunity notice.

The company has other contracts within the Defense Department and with other national security-related customers.

Anduril has also adapted existing technology developed for base and border protection over the course of 11 months so it could detect another major threat: cruise missiles. The company demonstrated the capability at the Air Force’s Advanced Battle Management System demonstration in 2021 using autonomous Cruise Missile Defense Sentry Towers. The towers were integrated into the company’s Lattice open-platform command-and-control system like they are for the c-UAS capability

Anduril also grew its capability portfolio in April 2021 with the acquisition of Area-I, a Georgia-based, air-launched

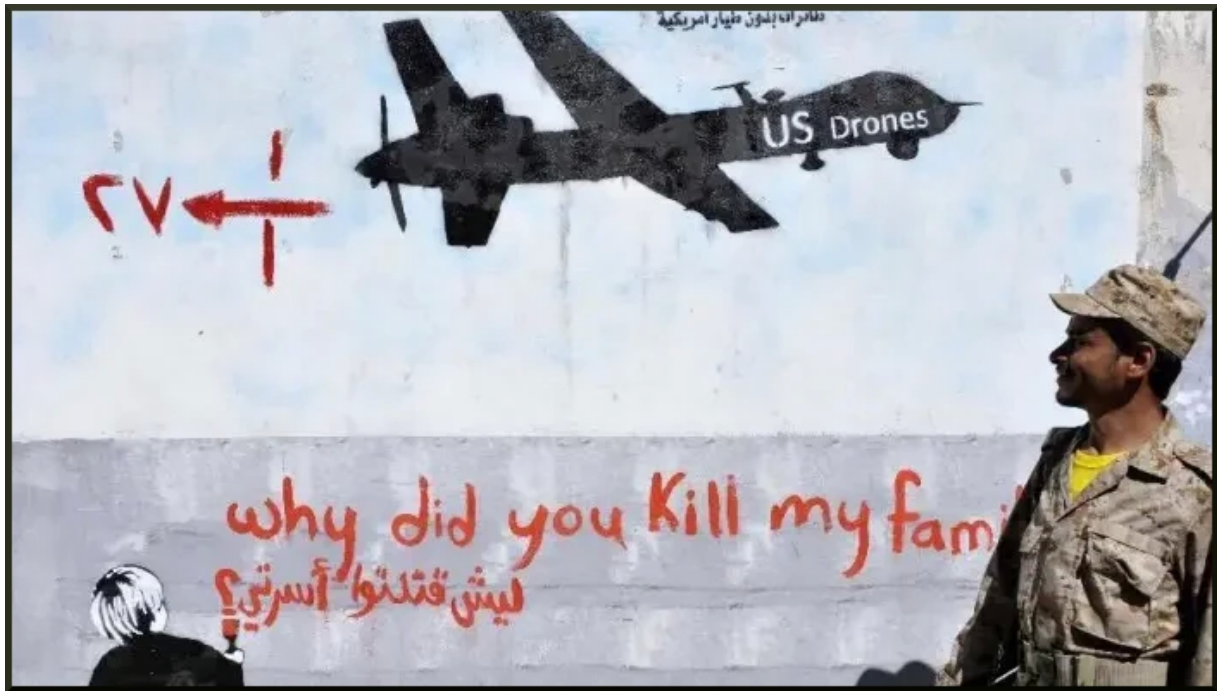
effects company, with plans to incorporate its mission autonomy and intelligent teaming technology into Area-I's unmanned systems.

Jen Judson is an award-winning journalist covering land warfare for Defense News. She has also worked for Politico and Inside Defense. She holds a Master of Science in journalism from Boston University and a Bachelor of Arts from Kenyon College.

Can the Drone War Be Made More Humane?

by John Kiriakou, published on Covert Action Magazine, January 23, 2022

An article in the latest issue of Foreign Affairs magazine, widely seen as the official mouthpiece of the neoliberal foreign policy establishment, posits that the U.S. government's drone program could be made more humane, killing "*fewer innocent civilians*," while still targeting the bad guys who find themselves on the White House "*Kill List*".



Billboard in Sana, Yemen pointing to human costs of U.S. drone war there. [Source: peoplesdispatch.org]

The authors, three professors from Cornell University^[1], point to a recent *New York Times* article that said,

"Airstrikes (during the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts) allowed America to wage war with minimal risk to its troops. But for civilians on the ground, they brought terror and tragedy."

They write that the Pentagon admitted to 188 civilian deaths by drone since 2018, but that the real total *"is likely hundreds more than that."* My own educated guess is that civilian deaths by drone number well into the thousands. But that's not the only problem with the drone program.

Any drone program, whether it's run by Americans at the Pentagon or the CIA, Saudis in Yemen, or any other combatant anywhere in the world, is illegal, immoral, and unethical.

Lamenting the loss of civilian lives, promising to make drones more precise, and paying off the families of dead civilians doesn't make it right. And the mainstream media seem either unable or unwilling to recognize this.

The New York Times published an interview with a spokesman for the U.S. Central Command, in which he said without any challenge from the journalists,

“Mistakes do happen, whether based upon incomplete information or misinterpretation of the information available. We try to learn from those mistakes.”

That’s simply not true.

Did the Pentagon learn anything when it bombed an innocent family in Afghanistan while the father was loading bottled water into the trunk of his car, killing 10 people, including seven children?



Innocent family killed in the last U.S. drone strike in the long Afghan War. [Source: cnn.com]

Did it learn anything when it launched an attack on “*ISIS headquarters*,” targeting “*white bags of ammonium nitrate*” and a “*homemade explosives factory*,” which turned out to be the longtime home of two brothers and their wives and children; the white bags turned out to be bags of cotton. And a “*heavy object being dragged into a building*” was a child. What was the lesson learned there?

What *The New York Times* and other outlets won’t tell you is

that many drone strikes are specifically meant to attack civilians.



Image of a mosque that was destroyed by a U.S. drone strike in Jinah Syria in March 2017 that killed 46 civilians. [Source: chicagotribune.com]

Just look at what's happening in Yemen, where the Saudi and Emirati governments are using U.S.-made drones to terrorize the civilian population under the guise of fighting the Shia Muslim Houthi "*rebels*." The U.S. and its allies deem the latter to be Iranian proxies.

Even the pro-Pentagon Military Times reported that in 2018 fully one-third of all drone strikes in Yemen were against civilian targets.



People are seen near a bus destroyed by an airstrike that killed dozens of children, in a photograph taken on August 12, 2018 in Saada, Yemen.

People are seen near a bus destroyed by an airstrike that killed dozens of children, in a photograph taken on August 12, 2018 in Yemen.
[Source: hrw.org]

In one such incident in August 2018, the Saudi military, using U.S. drones and U.S. missiles, blew up a school bus in Dhahyan, Yemen, killing 26 children and wounding another 19, a clear war crime.

In 2019, a Saudi drone strike on a Yemeni vegetable market killed 13 people, including children, and wounded another 23. Also in 2019, the U.S. rocketed a wedding in Afghanistan, killing at least 40 civilians. (The Pentagon had claimed that it was an attack on the Taliban and bragged that a "*foreign fighter*" from Bangladesh also had been killed.)



Afghans wheel victim of wedding attack to their grave. [Source: cnn.com]

The truth of the matter is that the drone program makes Americans less, rather than more, safe. I can tell you from first-hand experience that nearly every al-Qaeda fighter that I captured or interviewed when I headed counterterrorist operations for the CIA in Pakistan told me that he had never had any problem with the United States, *until we launched drone attacks on his village.*

It had never occurred to most young al-Qaeda fighters to take up arms against the United States until they heard the sound of "*the dragonfly*," as they call the drones, until the drone fired rockets indiscriminately at their homes, until the drone killed their fathers, brothers, cousins, uncles, and friends.

What else, then, would we expect them to do? I would probably seek revenge, too.

There is a way to change this situation, of course.

It's not to "*learn from the mistakes of the past*," as the CENTCOM spokesman maintains. It's to end the drone program permanently.

Has nobody at the White House, the Pentagon, or the CIA ever thought that perhaps wars are supposed to be difficult to fight?

Perhaps there should be a danger to soldiers. That might make policymakers think twice before putting U.S. lives on the line.

Drones aren't better for warfighting. They're worse. They put our country in long-term danger.

Every patriot should oppose them.

1. Paul Lusehanko, Sarah Kreps, and Shyam Raman. ↑

****Featured Image:** Billboard in Sana, Yemen pointing to human costs of U.S. drone war there. [Source: peoplesdispatch.org]*

John Kiriakou is a CIA whistleblower. Since he left prison, he has worked as a writer and commentator in the alternative press.