

**ROBOT, DRONE AIR WAR Newsletter #2, July 20, 2011** Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace (Newsletter #1 , Dec. 29, 2010.) See Newsletters on Killing Civilians and Air War. ((If you have a special interest in stopping robot killing, OMNI needs an editor to focus on the subject. Here is the link to all the newsletters archived in the OMNI web site, each subject ideally compiled by a separate editor: <http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/>

The newsletters cover the fields of pje. )

## KNOWLEDGE THEN ACTION

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### Contents of #2

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### “US Drone Strikes Killing and Harming Many Civilians”

[D: More than admitted by US and Pak]Saeed Shah and Peter Beaumont, Guardian UK

Saeed Shah and Peter Beaumont report: "For the past three years, Noor Behram has hurried to the site of drone strikes in his native Waziristan. His purpose: to photograph and document the impact of missiles controlled by a joystick thousands of miles away, on US air force bases in Nevada and elsewhere. The drones are America's only weapon for hunting al-Qaida and the Taliban in what is supposed to be the most dangerous place in the world."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/news-section2/309-13/6651-us-drone-strikes-killing-and-harming-many-civilians>

### “Former CIA Legal Chief Wanted for Murder by Drone”

Peter Beaumont, Guardian UK July 16, 2011

Intro: "Campaigners against US drone strikes in Pakistan are calling for the CIA's former legal chief to be arrested and charged with murder for approving attacks that killed hundreds of people."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/news-section2/321-85/6635-former-cia-legal-chief-wanted-for-murder-by-drone>

## “US Expands Its Drone War Into Somalia”

Mark Mazzetti, Eric Schmitt and Souad Mekhennet, *The New York Times* July 2, 2011

Intro: "The clandestine American military campaign to combat Al Qaeda's franchise in Yemen is expanding to fight the Islamist militancy in Somalia, as new evidence indicates that insurgents in the two countries are forging closer ties and possibly plotting attacks against the United States, American officials say."

READ MORE <http://www.readersupportednews.org/news-section2/306-10/6462-us-expands-its-drone-war-into-somalia>

[Dick: Only US officials were interviewed, but at least the possibility of the attacks causing more harm (creation of more terrorists) than good was mentioned at the end.]

## “Bad guys and good guys”

**The Anti-Empire Report, June 10th, 2010**

by William Blum [www.killinghope.org](http://www.killinghope.org)

In Lahore, Pakistan, reported the *Washington Post* on May 29, "Militants staged coordinated attacks ... on two mosques of a minority Muslim sect, taking hostages and killing at least 80 people. ... At least seven men armed with grenades, high-powered rifles and suicide vests stormed the mosques as Friday prayers ended."

Nice, really nice, very civilized. It's no wonder that decent Americans think that this is what the United States is fighting against — Islamic fanatics, homicidal maniacs, who kill their own kind over some esoteric piece of religious dogma, who want to kill Americans over some other imagined holy sin, because we're "infidels". How can we reason with such people? Where is the common humanity the naive pacifists and anti-war activists would like us to honor?

And then we come to the very last paragraph of the story: "Elsewhere in Pakistan on Friday, a suspected U.S. drone-fired missile struck a Taliban compound in the South Waziristan tribal area, killing eight, according to two officials in the region." This, we are asked to believe by our leaders, is a higher level of humanity. The United States does this every other day, sending robotic death machines called Predators flying over Afghanistan and Pakistan, to send Hellfire missiles screaming into wedding parties, funerals, homes, not knowing who the victims are, not caring who the victims are, many hundreds of them by now, as long as Washington can claim each time — whether correctly or not — that amongst their number was a prominent infidel, call him Taliban, or al Qaeda, or insurgent, or militant. How can one reason with such people, the ones in the CIA who operate the drone flights? What is the difference between them and a suicide bomber? The suicide bomber becomes one of the victims himself and sees his victims up close before killing them. The CIA murderer bomber sits safely in a room in Nevada or California and pretends he's playing a video game, then goes out to dinner while his victims lay dying. The suicide bomber believes passionately in something called paradise. The murderer bomber believes passionately in something called flag and country.

The State Department's Legal Advisor justifies the Predator bombings as ... yes, "self-defense".<sup>5</sup> Try reasoning with that.

These American drone bombings are of course the height of aggression, the ultimate international crime. They were used over Iraq as well beginning in the 1990s. In December 2002, shortly before the US invasion in March, the Iraqis finally managed to shoot one down. This prompted a spokesman for the US Central Command, which oversees US military operations in the Middle East, to call it another

sign of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's "campaign of military aggression." <sup>6</sup>

This particular piece of hypocrisy may have actually been outdone by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's comment about the US flights and bombings over Iraq during that period: "It bothers the dickens out of me that US and British pilots are getting fired at day after day after day, with impunity."

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### **Assassinating US Citizens: Anwar al-Awlaki Protesters Rally at Hancock Air Base, Arrested**

“Yemen Drone Strike Was Assassination Attempt on American Cleric”

Margaret Coker, Adam Entous and Julian E. Barnes, *The Wall Street Journal*

Intro: "The US launched a drone strike in Yemen on Thursday aimed at killing Anwar al-Awlaki, the American-born radical cleric suspected of orchestrating terrorist attacks in the US but he evaded the missile, Yemeni and US officials said."

READ MORE <http://www.readersupportednews.org/off-site-news-section/46-46/5854-yemen-drone-strike-was-assassination-attempt-on-american-cleric>

### **“37 Arrested at Hancock Air Base Protesting Use of Drones “**

#### **Dave Tobin, The Post-Standard**

Intro: "Dozens of war protesters were arrested Friday afternoon outside the main entrance of the New York Air National Guard's base at Hancock Field. Thirty seven protesters, draped with red-spattered sheets, had lain themselves in the main entrance roads to the base, off East Molly Road. They were arrested by Onondaga County Sheriff's deputies on charges of trespassing and obstruction of justice."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-news-section/44-44/5721-37-arrested-at-hancock-air-base-protesting-use-of-drones>

**Anti-drone rally** Friday, April 22, 2011 at Hancock Air Force Base near Syracuse

Jim O'Brien to haw-info, HAW: Historians Against the War

The Upstate New York Coalition to Ground the Drones & End the Wars is planning a series of events next week climaxing in a 3pm anti-drone rally on Friday, April 22 at Hancock Air Force Base, near Syracuse. Information, including maps, directions, and contact information, is at <http://upstatedroneaction.peaceworksrochester.org/> .

Why Friday, April 22?

Friday, April 22 is Good Friday. It is Earth Day. It falls on Jumuah, the Muslim day of Worship, and during Passover. Friday April 22 is a work day, a holiday, a day of commemoration and a special day of contemplation.

#### **Why Protest?**

**Drones are unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) used by the military for surveillance, targeted assassinations, and bombings. Drones used in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Yemen have killed hundreds of innocent civilians. Drones violate international and U.S. law on political assassinations. Intelligence used in drone target selection is notoriously unreliable. Domestic Drone use has begun on U.S./Canadian/ and U.S. /Mexican borders.**

Hancock Air National Guard Base is a drone center, and if Sen. Schumer has his way, drone activity will increase. Currently operations include missions in Afghanistan as well as operator training, and maintenance of Reaper Drones. Accidents could occur in civilian air space, and the operation also brings Syracuse into “the War on Terror,” making it a potential target. The jobs generated are few, and drone operators suffer high rates of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder).

I hope to meet up with many fellow HAW members at Hancock Field on Good Friday, 22 April 2011.

Peace, James (Jim) Swarts

[Dick: List of Sponsors omitted]: [haw-nfo@stopthewars.org](mailto:haw-nfo@stopthewars.org) ,  
[http://stopthewars.org/mailman/listinfo/haw-info\\_stopthewars.org](http://stopthewars.org/mailman/listinfo/haw-info_stopthewars.org)

## Imperial Priorities: Obedience First, Character Last

by William Norman Grigg July 19, 2011

Recently by William Norman Grigg: *'For the Good of the Party'*

*"We want to live pure, we want to live clean – we  
want to do our best;  
Sweetly submitting to authority, leaving to God the rest...."*

~ "The Obedience Song," as sung every week in American Sunday School classes

*"It is with pride that we see that one man is kept above all criticism – the Fuhrer. The reason is that everyone feels and knows he was always right and will always be right. The National Socialism of us all is anchored in the uncritical loyalty, in the devotion to the Fuhrer that does not ask for the wherefore in the individual case. We believe that the Fuhrer is fulfilling a divine mission to the German destiny! This belief is beyond all challenge."*

~ Rudolf Hess, June 25, 1934, as cited in an appendix to the official transcripts of the Nuremberg Tribunal

In preparation for the Iraq war, the Pentagon's war planners devised a computer modeling program called "Bugsplat" to estimate the percentage of civilian casualties that would result in a given bombing raid. Just before the "Shock and Awe" assault on Baghdad began, Gen. Tommy Franks was informed of twenty-two proposed bombing attacks that would result in what was described as "heavy bugsplat." He approved all twenty-two raids.

The term "bugsplat" has become commonplace now that missile-equipped remote-controlled drones have become the Regime's weapon of choice for prosecuting wars in at least a half-dozen countries. That's assuming that the term "war" applies to a campaign of state terrorism in which thousands of helpless and entirely innocent people have been slaughtered in unexpected aerial bombardments waged by "warriors" who manipulate drones from the safety of climate-controlled offices in Nevada. The only combat-related risks those valiant cushion-crushers confront is the possibility of chronic diseases attendant to a sedentary lifestyle.

The same lexicon of long-distance mass murder that gave us the term "bugsplat" offers another newly minted term to describe the terrified civilians who can be seen frantically running for cover: "Squirters." The vaguely pornographic overtones of that expression are appropriate, given the ubiquity of what Dr. P.W. Singer of the Brookings Institution calls "predator porn" – footage of drone attacks proudly circulated by the purported heroes responsible for the carnage.

In a 2009 U.S. Naval Academy lecture, Singer described how "the ability to download a video clip of combat is turning war into a form of entertainment." This repellent new genre includes a modern variety of snuff film: "A Hellfire missile drops, goes in, and hits the target, followed by an explosion and bodies tossed into the air." Singer described one clip of that kind, sent to him by a joystick-wielding assassin, that "was set to music, the pop song 'I Just Want to Fly' by the band Sugar Ray."

Singer recalls asking a drone pilot "what it was like to fight insurgents in Iraq while based in Nevada. He said, 'You are going to war for 12 hours, shooting weapons at targets, directing kills on enemy

combatants, and then you get in the car and you drive home. And within 20 minutes, you're sitting at the dinner table talking to your kids about their homework." Meanwhile, somewhere in Iraq (or Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Somalia, Yemen, or another country yet to be identified), families are picking through the rubble of their homes in the rapidly evaporating hope that their own children have somehow survived this most recent act of imperial generosity.

Do such keyboard bombardiers ever experience misgivings about what they do? Perhaps – but the perverse fun is simply irresistible.

"It's like a videogame," one cyber-samurai told Singer. "It can get a little bloodthirsty. But it's f\*\*\*\*g cool."

Oh. Well, alrighty then.

But what happens when the novelty wears off, and conscience starts to press its claims? When "coolness" loses its allure, conformity – displayed by obedience to "authority" – will fill the void. "If his cause be wrong," insisted one of Henry V's soldiers in Shakespeare's rendering, "our obedience to the king wipes the crime of it out of us" – even if this means waging aggressive war, murdering disarmed prisoners, and using the threat of mass rape and the slaughter of children to compel cities to surrender.

For those on the delivering end, drone-facilitated atrocities seem utterly antiseptic. One scientist employed by the Pentagon to refine and expand the technology of remote-controlled mass murder "said that no ethical or legal issues arise from robots in war," Singer recalls. "That is, unless the machine kills the wrong people repeatedly," interjected the Strangelovian bureaucrat. "Then it's just a product recall issue."

Of course, the specific tool doesn't kill anyone; it is an instrument employed by a morally accountable human being to accomplish that end. We're not discussing Colossus, or Skynet, the Cylons, or any of the other variations on the Golem legend that are common in science fiction. The Regime's apparatus of state slaughter is proudly described by retired Lt. Col. John Nagle as "an almost industrial-scale ... killing machine." Its most important components are individual Americans who have been taught that "submitting to authority" validates any action, no matter how abhorrent, and sanctifies the indulgence of any appetite, nor matter how depraved.

In the imperial hierarchy of values, obedience ranks much higher than moral integrity, particularly for those employed as agents of state-licensed violence. The Regime, both the federal level and through its state and local franchises at the state and municipal levels, has spent a great deal of money on subsidized "character" instruction, paying special attention to the military and law enforcement. The most influential contractor in this field is "Character First," an Oklahoma City-based "leadership development" company. Predictably, its teachings emphasize obedience and "teamwork" at the expense of individual moral initiative.

Read more on Bill Gothard, obedience, Bradley Manning, Hitler, Bonhoeffer:  
<http://lewrockwell.com/grigg/grigg-w223.html>

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**END OF AIR WAR/ROBOT WARFARE NEWSLETTER #2**