



CIA Wants More Drones to Do in N. Africa What It's Done in Pakistan

[The Washington Post is reporting](#) that CIA officials are leaning on President Obama to green light the expansion of the intelligence agency's fleet of drones. The increasing militarization of the CIA has accelerated its "decade-long transformation into a paramilitary force" according to a government official quoted in the *Post* article.



CIA Director and retired Gen. [David Petraeus](#) (a member of the internationalist Council on Foreign Relations) claims that a beefed up drone presence would help his agents keep up with the "threats in North Africa," a region the government insists is attracting al-Qaeda militants fleeing from the constant barrage of Hellfire missiles fired from drones patrolling the skies over Pakistan and Yemen.

It's not like North Africa hasn't seen its share of drone sorties. On July 24, [the Washington Post published an article](#) describing the congestion of the skies over Somalia caused by drone traffic. The situation is so bad, says the *Post*, that there is a "danger to air traffic" in the area.

An additional problem posed by the proliferation of the unmanned aircraft above the east African nation is that their presence might be evidence of a violation of a [1992 United Nations Security Council arms embargo](#) still in effect.

The article in the *Post* cites a UN report in which officials of the international body recount several instances where collisions between drones and commercial aircraft or objects on the ground were "narrowly averted." One such incident involved a drone and a passenger plane flying above Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia.

The authors of the report of the investigation did not directly implicate the United States. That said, the report indicated that "at least two of the unmanned aircraft appeared to be U.S.-manufactured and suggested that Washington has been less than forthcoming about its drone operations in Somalia."

According to the report, there have been 64 unauthorized drone deployments, fighter jet missions, or attack helicopter flights recorded in Somalia since June 2011. At least 10 of the documented flights involved drones.

While the U.S. military keeps mum about its use of drones around the world, it is known that drones are deployed and launched from American military bases in Djibouti, the Seychelles, and Ethiopia. In fact, in a statement released in June, the Obama administration admitted that it "is engaged in a robust range of operations to target Al-Qaeda and associated forces, including in Somalia." In 2011, the



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military acknowledged that as part of that operation a drone strike was launched against two suspected leaders of al-Shabaab, an alleged al-Qaeda affiliate based in Somalia. Again, the use of these drones and the firing of missiles at militants seemingly violates the 1992 embargo, as drones carrying Hellfire missiles are inarguably deployed for uses that are “exclusively military,” in direct contravention of the terms of the embargo.

The story in the *Post* indicates that the Pentagon is not bothered by accusations of breaking the embargo. To the contrary, the article claims that the U.S. military intends to deploy additional drones in the region, including the supplying of eight hand-launched Raven drones to Kenyan forces stationed in Somalia as part of the African Union mission.

While the overlords at the UN are aware and approve of the sale of small low-flying drones to the African Union troops, the reports of high-altitude large Predator and Reaper drones are not covered by any exception to the embargo. While the U.S. military should take no orders from the United Nations, it is curious that the global body will deign to permit the United States to supply drones to the armed forces operating under the blue UN flag, while forbidding their use by the American military.

The documented increase in the use of drones in Somalia — many, if not most, of which are believed to belong to the United States — coincides with the missions being carried out in the area by Special Operations units and their CIA cohorts. The *Post* reports that these operatives “have gradually stepped up secret missions inside Somalia to rescue hostages and hunt for al-Shabaab leaders.”

While the leaders of al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda, and other suspected militant groups will undoubtedly be the announced target of the expanded CIA drone fleet (is there any doubt the request will be granted?), figures reported by Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik and research compiled by New York and Stanford Universities, cast serious doubt on the success of these future sorties to eliminate the alleged threat posed by these alleged terrorists.

Last week, [reports Digital Journal](#), Malik said that up to 80 percent of those killed in Pakistan by U.S. drones were innocent civilians.

Further proof of the indiscriminate destruction caused by these drone attacks was provided by data published by the [Bureau for Investigative Journalism](#). According to this London-based advocacy group, there have been at least 350 U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan since 2004. Nearly 300 of these have occurred after the inauguration of President Barack Obama. As many as 885 innocent civilians — including 176 children — have been needlessly, summarily, and callously killed in drone strikes ordered by the White House and the CIA.

And as we have reported, the NYU/Stanford report entitled *Living Under Drones: Death, Injury and Trauma to Civilians From US Drone Practices in Pakistan* contains tragic details of the myriad ways that President Obama’s death-by-drone program is devastating the lives of ordinary Pakistanis who have no connection to terror other than the fact that they are being constantly terrorized by the government of the United States.

Information contained in that report indicate that only two percent of drone strikes result in the death of known leaders of terrorist organizations.

What has the United States’ drone war wrought? Peace? A reduction in the number of suspected militants formulating plans to attack the United States, its people, or its interests at home or overseas? No.



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Beyond the effect the winnowing of the president's kill list is having on domestic politics in countries in the Middle East, there is a larger threat to American security from blowback.

Blowback is defined as violent counter-attacks carried out as revenge for covert operations.

After a drone attack killed 13 Yemenis by "[mistake](#)" in September, relatives of those killed in the strike spoke with the clarity and carelessness that comes from the mixture of mourning with rage.

"You want us to stay quiet while our wives and brothers are being killed for no reason. This attack is the real terrorism," declared Mansoor al-Maweri, whom [CNN reports](#) as being "near the scene of the strike."

Then there was this from "an activist" who lives near the site of the September massacre: "I would not be surprised if a hundred tribesmen joined the lines of al Qaeda as a result of the latest drone mistake," said Nasr Abdullah. "This part of Yemen takes revenge very seriously."

Reuters explains that "Western diplomats in Sanaa say al Qaeda is a threat to Yemen and the rest of the world." An argument can be made that a bigger threat to the world is the United States' daily drone attacks that destroy our own dedication to the rule of law and serve as an effective recruiting tool for those seeking revenge for the killings.

The former CIA Pakistan station chief agrees. Speaking of the rapid expansion of the drone war in Yemen, [Robert Grenier told the Guardian \(U.K.\)](#):

That brings you to a place where young men, who are typically armed, are in the same area and may hold these militants in a certain form of high regard. If you strike them indiscriminately you are running the risk of creating a terrific amount of popular anger. They have tribes and clans and large families. Now all of a sudden you have a big problem.... I am very concerned about the creation of a larger terrorist safe haven in Yemen.

And:

We have gone a long way down the road of creating a situation where we are creating more enemies than we are removing from the battlefield. We are already there with regards to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Ultimately, the decision of whether to ship additional drones to the CIA will be made by "a group led by President Obama's counterterrorism adviser, John O. Brennan," according to officials cited in the *Washington Post* article.

This group is reportedly the same powerful cabal that decides which names get added to the president's infamous "kill list" and how soon those targets are erased from the list by way of a presidential order of summary execution. No charges. No trial. No problem.



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