



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on April 27, 2015

Smaller, Deadlier Drones Being Launched Despite Killing Innocents

Despite admitting to [killing three American citizens](#), at least one of whom was absolutely innocent and the victim of a drone strike, President Obama has no intention of dialing back on the deadly attacks that are the prime tactic in the “War on Terror.”

Not only will the airstrikes not be called off, but the Obama administration is committed to continuing to carry out these airborne assaults on alleged “enemy combatants” wherever they are found.



In an article published on April 24, the Daily Beast quotes unnamed sources within the Pentagon as saying that the [deadly drone program will not be scaled back](#). The story says:

Defense officials told The Daily Beast there was no immediate discussion to suspend their drone program, including the use of “signature strikes,” which target people based on patterns of behavior, even if their identity is unclear. American contractor [Warren Weinstein](#) and Italian hostage Giovanni Lo Porto were killed in one such signature strike in January.

Officials said that the military conducts far fewer signature strikes than the CIA, which attacked the compound in Pakistan where the two men were being held. But while acknowledging that Weinstein and Lo Porto’s deaths were tragic, defense officials described them as unavoidable.

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“It’s a war. Tragedies unfortunately happen,” one U.S. official said.

For years, *The New American* has [chronicled the drone war](#), the numerous “accidental” deaths it has caused, the effrontery the policy represents to centuries of the Anglo-American system of justice, as well as the global proliferation of the policy.

Now, several reports indicate that the drones are not only going to continue their sorties, but they are getting deadlier, more autonomous, and capable of being deployed by soldiers on the ground.

On April 17 the *Washington Post* reported:

The Marines tested a small unmanned aircraft known as the Switchblade recently at Twentynine Palms, Calif., flying it directly at targets from both the ground and the back of the Osprey, a long-range aircraft that has rotors like a helicopter, but can fly like a plane once they rotate forward. They were “inert,” with no explosives on board, but the mission went off without a hitch, said Col. James Adams, commanding officer of Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1.

These are the same soldier-launched drones that the U.S. Army took possession of some four years ago. In 2011, *Popular Science* reported:

Now, the U.S. Army is taking the idea to the next level, ordering its [first batch of weaponized drones](#) capable of launching from small, portable tube and suicide bombing a target from



above.

The drone aircraft are made by Aerovironment, the same California company that makes the Nano Hummingbird surveillance drone (the one regular readers know as a PopSci favorite). Their “Switchblade” drone packs neatly into its launch tube, which then packs easily into a backpack. When it’s time to deploy, soldiers quickly set up the launch tube and send Switchblade skyward, where its wings deploy and its quiet electric engine fires up.

From there a pilot can operate the Switchblade remotely, using a video feed from the drone to pilot it and make observations of a potential target. If the target is confirmed, the pilot can arm the on-board munition and fly the drone straight into the target. The drone can fly piloted or autonomously (though naturally it has to receive human commands before arming and attacking). It can even power down its motor and glide in for the kill, offering mission operators a stealthy means of approach.

While the constant buzz of drones has created a generation of traumatized Yemenis, Pakistanis, and Afghanis, the Switchblade drones bring a “fresh hell” to this already harrowing situation.

Again, from *Popular Science*:

While a weaponized robotic aerial kill vehicle sounds cool enough on its own, what Switchblade really offers is a capability — it can loiter overhead and observe a situation on the ground, confirm that a target is indeed a legitimate target and not a civilian or some other non-threat, and then deliver a strike without the soldier who deployed the aircraft ever having to stick his head out. Such a capability trumps calling in airstrikes or artillery fire for small targets, and perhaps best of all it’s a capability available at soldier level.

Marine commanders report that the Switchblades have proven very accurate in the field and plan to deploy them throughout the wider theatre in the “war on terror.” The Army has used the weapon in Afghanistan since 2011.

Aerovironment, the manufacturer of the Switchblade, has received millions in defense contracts over the past four years, company officials say.

Consider the impact that these “kamikaze” drones will make, particularly when paired with the microdrones currently being manufactured. These miniature unmanned vehicles could be sent surreptitiously into the homes of Americans. And unless the warrantless electronic surveillance already being conducted by government-run-amok is brought to a halt, this new form of home invasion will also be warrantless.

DARPA, the military’s research and development arm, has announced its intent to sponsor development of a new category of these tiny monitors.

In [a press release soliciting bids](#) for manufacture of the microdrones, DARPA doesn’t define the potential target theatre, but any promise of foreign focus is illusory in a world where the Constitution’s prohibition on warrantless searches is seen as nothing more than a quaint parchment barrier to those determined to keep an eye (and ear) on every person in the world.

Of course, in the present climate of near-constant urban unrest, it isn’t a stretch to see the deployment of these drones justified by the urgent need to restore peace and order.

The existence of soldier-launched drones and their insect-sized cousins casts a new, frightening light on the potential devastation of actual military operations such as those being practiced in [Operation Jade](#)



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[Helm](#), currently underway in urban areas around the country.

Day by day, the dossier of dictatorship being compiled by President Obama grows thicker and thicker. From Jade Helm to the assumption of authority to draw “First Amendment Zones” to the supposed right to capture and indefinitely detain American citizens in violation of the Fourth and Fifth Amendments and the capacity to send self-directing miniature drones into homes and buildings and slightly larger and much more deadly soldier-launched Switchblade drones, President Obama and his congressional co-conspirators are attacking the constitutional barriers protecting the people from tyrants.

But the complete shredding of the U.S. Constitution protecting us from tyranny is not inevitable, and the damage already inflicted on history’s greatest experiment in human liberty can be reversed over time — if enough citizens become informed and then work with others to force the federal government back into its constitutional restraints.



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