

Opposing view: Drones are unlawful and dangerous

By Hina Shamsi

Updated 1d 12h ago

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Robert Grenier, the head of the CIA's counterterrorism center during the Bush administration, said last week that "we have been seduced" by drones, and that drone killings "are creating more enemies than we are removing from the battlefield." He's right.

OUR VIEW: What's the alternative?

When our nation violates the law in the name of our national security, it gives propaganda tools to our enemies and alienates our allies. That is why the government's targeted killing program, which has resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths, is both unlawful and dangerous.

To be sure, targeted killing is not always illegal, nor is the use of drones. Under international law and our Constitution, the government can use lethal force when, for example, an individual takes up arms against the [United States](#) in an actual war, or against a person who poses an imminent threat to life and no means other than killing will prevent the threat. These are not the rules the government is following.

Today, our government is killing people in countries in which the United States is not at war. It reportedly adds suspected terrorists — including [U.S. citizens](#) — to "kill lists" for months at a time, which by definition cannot be limited to genuinely imminent threats. *The New York Times* disclosed that the government "[counts all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants](#)" unless intelligence proves them innocent — but only after they are dead.

When mistakes are made, our nation refuses to acknowledge them and does not compensate victims. The first Yemeni missile strike [President Obama](#) authorized, in December 2009, targeted alleged militants but [killed 21 children and 14 women](#). WikiLeaks revealed [a secret agreement by Yemen](#) to accept responsibility for the U.S. killing. Yemenis were enraged, but most Americans probably never heard about it.

[White House](#) counterterrorism adviser John Brennan [admits that the U.S. targeted killing program](#) sets a precedent. Russia, China or Iran may claim tomorrow, as our government does today, the power to declare

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individuals enemies of the state and kill them far from any battlefield, based on secret legal criteria, secret evidence and a secret process. That is the world we are unleashing unless the program is stopped.

Hina Shamsi is director of the ACLU's National Security Project.

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Because unmanned, precision targeting drones weren't available during World War II, there were more than 60 million casualties or 2.5 % of the world's population. Just think about it.

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**Paul Fountaine** · Top Commenter

Two problems with unmanned drones murdering people outside the US. First, we invite our enemies to return the favor - do you want unmanned drones in your neighborhood? How exactly would we stop them?

Second - it is not war, it is murder - and we cannot confirm that the "enemy" that we are shooting at from afar is in fact the one we wish to kill.

Just imagine you are an Afghan citizen. How well would you sleep when you know that your "help" from the US includes unmanned drones, and if you are of a certain age, you are automatically considered an enemy combatant, no matter if you are involved or associating with the bad guys?

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There is a reason we do not assassinate evil leaders of other nations - it simply provides our enemies with the justification to do exactly the same thing to our leaders. This is a terrible policy and must be stopped, as way too much power is being granted to way too few people with zero accountability.

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**Kenneth Sternberg** · Top Commenter · Works at Pinnacle Airlines Corp.

Our enemies attacked us first.

It is war.

We do not automatically consider anyone an enemy combatant.

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[Buy a link here](#)© 2012 USA TODAY, a division of **Gannett Co. Inc.****Erik Crudele** · Top Commenter

So you are of muslim faith I guess. Side with them or the U.S.

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**Stephan Taylor** · Top Commenter · Atlanta, Georgia

As if our enemies NEEDED justification to come after us. They hate us anyway. Oh, that is until it's time to come running with their hands out for "aid." They would still hate us if we showered them with rose petals and caviar....so that's hardly a good reason to stop using the drones. And I just love the way you arbitrarily draw the line between "war" and "murder." So if we send our troops in to risk getting themselves killed, then it's "war" and it's ok. But if we do it with drones and keep our own men and women out of harm's way, then it's "murder" and it's wrong? What kind of backwards logic is that? Killing is killing and it's wrong across the board. But if it comes down to us vs. them, then I'd rather see an entire village of Pakistanis go down than one of our own. Call it war or murder, whichever makes it easier for you to swallow... either way they're just as dead when it's over.

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[View 5 more](#)**Rick Button** · Top Commenter · Health Physicist/Environmental Scientist at Environmental Scientist

In a perfect world where everybody plays by the same rules, what we are doing would be wrong. Unfortunately, the world is not perfect and we are the only ones playing by any rules whatsoever, often at the risk of our own troops/citizens lives.

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**Billy Brubeck** · Top Commenter · Watch Dog at Trailor Trash

Typical type of war that video-game-Obama wants to do, even though these kills are not confirmed; yet, the libs cheer, but denounce this tactic when Isreal does it.

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**Phil Bowman** · Top Commenter · University of Iowa

Oh, I don't know Billy. I think conservatives are cheering just as heartily as any lib cheers when Al Qaeda leaders are taken down, are they not?

The real problem with drones is that the "terrorists" or "bad guys" whatever you want to call them, live among civilians. If you want to kill terrorists or bad guys you are going to sometimes kill civilians...goes with the territory. If the civilians are not helping to expose the terrorists, perhaps that makes them close to being terrorist supporters? Then at what point does it matter?

Another point is that with governments one just never knows who is being killed. A government can put the label of terrorist on just about anyone they feel justified to kill. Most people in the mideast countries dislike the US anyway, so what does it really matter. We could pander to the people in those countries all we want and they would still hate us so we might as well take out as many of the "terrorists" or bad guys as we can. After all, Bush invaded Iraq to kill a bad guy and it took a trillion dollars and about 5,000 American deaths.

At least this way the only ones dying are them, not our soldiers. Radical mideast Islam and their followers hate the US so what does it matter if a few of the followers die along with the terrorists?

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**Kenneth Sternberg** · Top Commenter · Works at Pinnacle Airlines Corp.

I am no lib, and this is one of the few things Obama is doing right