

Predator Drone Strikes: 50 Civilians Are Killed For Every 1 Terrorist, and the CIA Only Wants to Up Drone Warfare

[by Robert Taylor](#)



While the 2012 presidential election racket focuses on gaffes, Romney's binders, and Big Bird, the CIA and the Pentagon are currently busy finding ways to increase their military power and influence around the globe. According to the [Washington Post](#), CIA Director David Petraeus wants an increased drone fleet to "bolster the agency's ability to sustain its campaigns of lethal strikes in Pakistan and Yemen and enable it, if directed, to shift aircraft to emerging Al-Qaeda threats in North Africa or other trouble spots."

And with the final presidential debate on Monday focusing on foreign policy, the issue of drone strikes could not be more prescient. President Obama and former Governor Romney both [carefully tiptoed](#) around discussing anything of real substance concerning domestic issues and the economy, and will both look to outhawk each other next week concerning the use of unmanned armed drones overseas — if it is even discussed at all.

It's easy to see why they might want to avoid the subject. The use of drone strikes have increased exponentially under the Obama administration, becoming a signature aspect of his incredibly aggressive and reckless foreign policy. And while [the president](#) and [his advisers](#) defend both their supposed legality and precision while simultaneously [bragging](#) when convenient and [denying](#) when pressured that the drone program even exists, a closer look at the use of Predator drones tells a very different story.

<http://www.policymic.com/articles/16949/predator-drone-strikes-50-civilians-are-killed-for-every-1-terrorist-and-the-cia-only-wants-to-up-drone-warfare>

Despite claims from the administration that drone strikes have killed very few civilians, multiple independent reports confirm that Obama is severely downplaying the wreckage that these drone strikes inflict. It is ultimately impossible to get exact numbers, but a [new study](#) from [Columbia Law School's Human Rights Institute](#) finds that the number of Pakistani civilians killed in drone strikes are "significantly and consistently underestimated" by tracking organizations which are trying to take the place of government estimates on casualties.

There are estimates as high as [98%](#) of drone strike casualties being civilians (50 for every one "suspected terrorist"). The Bureau of Investigative Journalism issued a report detailing how the CIA is [deliberately targeting](#) those who show up after the sight of an attack, rescuers, and mourners at funerals as a part of a "double-tap" strategy eerily reminiscent of methods used by terrorist groups like Hamas.

These numbers and reports alone should cast much doubt on the effectiveness at protecting the U.S. and combating terrorism that the Obama administration uses as justification for drone strikes. If a drone kills an actual terrorist but leaves multiple, sometimes dozens, of innocent civilians vaporized as well, this creates a brand new set of enemies and blowback. According to Jeremy Scahill's [reporting](#) at *The Nation*, U.S. drone strikes in Yemen are the primary source for Al-Qaeda's presence in the Arabian Peninsula. Obama's "signature strikes" — where targets are hit for displaying "suspicious behavior" and which Petraeus also wants to [expand](#) — are [backfiring](#) and can only boomerang back to us.

While the CIA [claims](#) that the drone program operates "under a framework of legal and close government oversight," multiple legal experts are [challenging](#) the legality of the drone program under both American and international law. But much like how the Obama administration is [blocking](#) any challenges to the provisions in the NDAA that essentially nullify habeus corpus and Posse Comitatus, any lawsuit or inquiry into the drone program has been met with [staunch opposition](#) — especially concerning the targeted assassinations by drones of [Anwar Al-Awlaki](#) and his [16-year old son](#), both U.S. citizens.

The Obama-CIA drone program is the perfect example of government secrecy, lawlessness, and the inevitable next step in the U.S. government's long tradition of claiming the right to intervene military anywhere and everywhere it pleases. Government programs, whether they be welfare transfer payments or weapons contracts, like cancer, grow for growth's sake.

Many Americans may display indifference to the use of drones and the CIA's desire to expand the program. After all, these strikes are done thousands of miles away, and our noble public servants would never mislead us or fearmonger about a supposed foreign threat. Besides, it is far better to have CIA agents in Virginia or Nevada flying weaponized robots by remote control than to send in thousands of Marines, right?

The problem with this, of course, is twofold. First, the basic justification for the use of drones is the threat of terrorism. But terrorism is simply a [predictable consequence](#) of an interventionist foreign policy, the propping up of puppet dictators, and the embrace of empire that began after World War II (at least). The use of drones simply compounds this problem, creating more potential terrorists for every one that is killed.

Secondly, foreign and domestic policy are incredibly intertwined, and empires always eventually turn inward. During the occupation of the Philippines, the U.S. government [experimented](#) with drug prohibition and torture, programs that eventually became standard domestically. Police are now [increasingly resembling](#), in both attire, attitude, and tactics, their overseas counterparts in Baghdad and Kandahar. Given that in just a few years, drones are set to [police American skies](#), how long will they remained unarmed?

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This is why the the drone program, and the CIA's desire to expand it, are so troubling. More than anything, the issue of whether the President, in a supposedly free society and a constitutional republic, should have this type of power at his fingertips should be front and center.

But since the only critique of Obama's foreign policy that Romney offers is that it isn't aggressive enough, the American people will sadly once again be deprived of a debate on the most substantive issues facing the future of what's left of our republic.