

Evidence of the ineffectiveness of the drone assassinations term paper sample

[Society](#), [Terrorism](#)



Introduction

Terrorist activities are on the rise worldwide; USA has not been left behind following the recent Boston bombing attack. These attacks and constant threats lead to counteractive measures by governments in a bid to ensure their citizens' safety. In respect to the US situation, the lives of Americans and other individuals end in these attacks. This causes fear among the citizens. The government has a responsibility of acting against these attacks; this ensures the safety of its citizens. The US Department of Justice prepared a secret 16-page memo in reference to the terrorism situation. This memo provides for the assassination of American citizens accused of being senior leaders of, or associated with al-Qaeda terrorist group. It targets citizens who live outside USA and pose a risk to the country's safety. This paper analyzes the contents of the White Paper; its provisions for dealing with terrorism, ethical and legal justifications for the use of drones, and other military means to carry out the operations. It determines whether the justifications are valid and if the strategies are effective.

Assuming a leadership position or associating with the terrorist group is sufficient for the US government to order the killing of a US citizen. This can be carried out even without intelligence evidence on whether the individual is planning against the country or not. President Obama orders the assassination of Americans who are al-Qaeda leaders or associates.

The contents of the Department of Justice White Paper are already in effect. Some of the assassinated American citizens include; Samir Khan, and Anwar al-Awlaki a Muslim cleric with radical ideologies. The US government indicted

and charged them with crimes before the assassination in Yemen about two years ago. This is due to the undated and unsigned White Paper justifying the killing of Americans associated with terrorism if his/her capture is not possible.

The White Paper provides a legal framework stating the circumstances under which the US government can apply lethal force outside its borders. The force targets a US citizen occupying a senior leadership position in al-Qaeda and its associate forces. Though the paper focuses on individuals involved in planning operations to kill Americans, it does not specify the requirements justifying the operation as lawful. Subsequently, it does not provide for activities against enemies on the battlefield and citizens who do not occupy senior leadership positions (Department of Justice, 1).

According to the department, the White Paper provides for the use of lethal force when; a high-ranked US official determines if someone is a threat to USA, the capture of the individual are feasible, and the operation is to be conducted in accordance to the applicable law of war principles (Department of Justice, 6).

According to the paper, the justice department assumes that US citizen rights according to the Fifth Amendments' Due Process Clause and the Fourth Amendment apply to all citizens even outside the US borders.

However, the citizenship of a citizen accused of leadership or association with al-Qaeda does not provide any immunity from the use of lethal force. There are provisions for situations where the attack would be considered a violation of citizen protection according to the Constitution (Department of Justice, 5).

Certain parts of the legal framework require further elaboration. For instance, the fact that the US government does not need clear evidence; this is in order to apply lethal force on targets may put innocent individuals at risk. The government faces several challenges in the use of such operations. First and foremost, the definition of imminence hinders US from acting against terrorists threats until the preparation for attack end; this limits the time US has to defend itself. Subsequently, the limited defense options further reduce when al-Qaeda operatives vanish as their attack time approaches. The constant planning of attacks by al-Qaeda limits the chance US has in self-defense. Terrorist attacks are random thus making it hard to determine when and where the next attack will occur (Department of Justice, 7).

The department notes that the circumstances explored in the paper does not provide for a legal forum to evaluate the constitutional considerations. Judicial intervention rarely applies to matters of national security and foreign policy (Department of Justice, 10). A lethal operation falls under public authority according to the law of war principles controlling the non-international conflict between al-Qaeda and USA.

The operations are justified by the public authority, well-accepted and applicable to several other cases. This authority provides no exceptions to criminal actions by public officials. It exercises criminal prohibitions to all individuals pursuing such activities (Department of Justice, 12). The department believes that the use of lethal force in defending USA is lawful killing; according to law of war principles controlling the use of force in a non-international armed conflict. In the conclusion of the White Paper, it

states that lawful killing in self-defense should not be considered assassination (Department of Justice, 15). The conditions determining whether a condition calls for the use of lethal force should be considered (Department of Justice, 16).

A review of the US intelligence reports done by McClatchy explores the ineffectiveness and challenges associated with drone attacks. The review is from an analysis of 2006-2008, and 2010-2011 attacks. The review provides empirical evidence of the ineffectiveness of the US administration's drone strategy targeting al-Qaeda leaders and associates according to Landay (1). According to the report, 265 of the total 482 killed by the CIA in 2011 were not senior leaders in al-Qaeda. The assessment that they were Pakistani, Afghan, and other unknown extremists justified their killings. In fact, the drones assassinated only 6 senior officials in that period. In that period, 43 of 95 drone attacks targeted the al-Qaeda group. The rest hit other groups and networks such as; Taliban and Haqqani referred to as 'other militants'. Some of the victims died on mere suspicion of association with militant groups.

Justification of the drone attacks

The drone attacks result in the assassination of several al-Qaeda leaders and associates. This is an effective way of dealing with terrorism threats in USA. According to Landay (1) the Obama administration insists that US drones target al-Qaeda leaders and allied groups. This is contrary to the views that these attacks result in the death of several individuals; even innocent victims.

The drone strategy is not effective; the Obama administration's reports

classify the victims as militants involved in terrorist attacks while critics claim their innocence. The US government insists that the CIA's Reaper and Predator drones have the authorization to attack only specific al-Qaeda senior leaders. It further adds that the only other target group is the allied terrorist groups.

This shades light on the possibility of provision of misleading information by the government to the US citizens. According to a Council on Foreign Relations expert, Zenko Micah, the claim of extra killing of innocent individuals shows the government misleads citizen on the extent of the drone attacks and lives at risk. The situation is further worsened by the content of McClatchy's review document showing that, the accuracy of the attacks is questionable. Despite the administration's insistence that the attacks were accurately targeting leaders and associates of al-Qaeda, Landay says the operations sometimes lacks precision on target selection. In its defense, the CIA stated that civilian casualties are very rare- but still there.

The McClatchy review provides a comprehensive evaluation of US intelligence use of drones. It highlights the risks involved and effectiveness of the strategies. It provides a further analysis of the local and international debates over the legality of the attacks. It explores the administration's plan to expand the scope of the attacks and the risks associated with this plan.

Conclusion

The anti-terrorist activities employ various strategies. The White Paper gives the president power to order the killing of individuals suspected to be leaders

of, or associated with al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. This is despite the fact that they are American citizens. The clearance does not require intelligence providing evidence of plots against the country. According to the government, the memo is part of a legal basis for the drone campaign against terrorist figures in Yemen and other parts of the world. It is an expansive definition of self-defense. It does not require any form of clearance on the part of the US government before ordering the killing of suspected US terrorist citizens. But, is this justified? This closely compares to the memos during President Bush's administration, which justified the use of torture. Just like in the Bush administration, this memo is viewed as a product of unjust justifications, to support extrajudicial killings. The lives of many Americans are at stake. Though, some view this as going beyond limits, the US government, justifies its activities as the right thing (Landay, 15).

Works Cited

Landay, J. ' Obama's Drone Wars Kills ' Others' not just al-Qaeda Leaders'. McClatchy. Web (2013): Available from < [http://www. mcclatchydc. com/2013/04/09/188062/obamas-drone-war-kills. others. html](http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2013/04/09/188062/obamas-drone-war-kills_others.html) > [Accessed April 24th 2013]