

Bureaucratized murder and the “war on terror”

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On Sunday, the *New York Times* published a lead article devoted to the Obama administration’s drone assassination program. The article describes a mechanism for state-sanctioned assassination that has become thoroughly bureaucratized and institutionalized. It makes clear that the assassination program is not a rogue operation of the CIA, but a central component of American foreign policy, supported by both Democrats and Republicans.

The *Times* report does not have the character of an exposé. Rather, it seeks to provide a rationalization for the program while desensitizing the population to the crimes of the state and implicating the American people in these crimes.

The beginning of the article is chilling. “About once a month,” authors Mark Mazzetti and Matt Apuzzo write, “staff members of the congressional intelligence committees drive across the Potomac River to CIA headquarters in Langley, Va., and watch videos of people being blown up.” The “macabre ritual,” the *Times* states, involves a review of “footage of drone strikes in Pakistan and other countries and a sampling of the intelligence buttressing each strike...”

These regular viewings of the documentary record of CIA assassinations are Congress’s counterpart to the “Terror Tuesday” meetings where Obama consults with intelligence and military officials to decide who will be included on the “kill lists” drawn up by the state.

The *Times* article appeared three days after Obama acknowledged that a drone attack in Pakistan in January had killed two hostages, an American and an Italian. The article makes clear that, Obama’s thoroughly insincere “apology” notwithstanding, the CIA drone program, which has already killed thousands of people in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and other countries, will continue unabated.

The newspaper notes the “unwavering support from Capitol Hill” as “one reason the CIA’s killing missions are embedded in American warfare and unlikely to change...” Among the most fervent advocates of the assassination program is Democrat Dianne Feinstein, the former chairwoman of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

The *Times* article for the first time names several individuals who have played a critical role in developing the CIA killing program. This includes Michael D’Andrea, a top CIA official who, according to the newspaper, “was chief of operations during the birth of the agency’s detention and interrogation program” before becoming head of the CIA Counterterrorism Center and an architect of the drone assassination program.

The involvement of D’Andrea highlights the continuity between the Bush administration’s program of torture and the Obama administration’s program of assassination. Last year, the Senate Intelligence Committee published a detailed report on CIA torture, which, in the months since, has simply been dropped by the media and the political establishment. Those responsible for the torture remain in influential posts, including D’Andrea and Obama’s current CIA director, John Brennan, another architect of the assassination program.

At the top of the list of architects is Obama himself, who, during his more than six years in office, has worked to develop the pseudo-legal theory that the president has the authority to kill anyone, anywhere in the world, including US citizens, without due process or any judicial review. When Obama acknowledged in 2013 that he had ordered the killing of at least one US citizen, Anwar al-Awlaki, he made a pretense of calling for stricter regulation of the CIA drone program, but

even this fig leaf has been abandoned.

Perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of the murder program is the matter-of-fact character of its operations and the way they are simply accepted by the media as part of the normal course of events. The same day the *Times* article appeared, representatives of the state and the media assembled at the White House Correspondents Dinner to take part in the annual joke-punctuated celebration of wealth and influence.

It is taken for granted that the United States has the right to kill anyone it chooses once it proclaims the victim to be a “terrorist”—a category that covers any individual or group that opposes American policy in any particular region of the globe.

The CIA regularly fires off drone missiles against unidentified targets, often simply because they match “signatures,” i.e., a gathering of military-aged men traveling in a convoy. Civilian casualties, as a *Guardian* article put it, are considered a “cost of doing business.”

Routinized murder—such is the essence of the “war on terror.” Proclaimed nearly 15 years ago, this phony war has become a catch-all justification for neocolonial conquest and military aggression. Despite the multiple catastrophes that have resulted from this “war,” support for it within the political establishment has not only not diminished, it has grown.

Those who set government policy in the United States regularly carry out activities that were previously considered high crimes and misdemeanors. The administration that oversees the whole process represents the alliance of the financial aristocracy with the military-intelligence apparatus, buttressed by sections of the affluent middle class that have reconciled themselves to policies that go beyond even those carried out by the Bush administration.

The entire state and all of official public opinion are implicated in these crimes, making clear that war abroad and repression at home cannot be stopped apart from the independent mobilization of the working class in opposition to the Obama administration and both capitalist parties.

The fight against imperialist violence must be rooted in the working class, organized on the basis of an independent, revolutionary and socialist program. To build the leadership of this movement, the International Committee of the Fourth International is holding the

International May Day Online Rally on May 3. We urge all of our readers to register and make plans to join the rally today.



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