

Why did Obama make that drone speech?

Last week Barack Obama publicly set a out a new, apparently more restrictive, policy for US drone use, seemingly suggesting that in response to the that drone strikes in their territory are 'illegal'



By [Josh Allen](#)
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Photo credit: Secretary of Defense

Last week Barack Obama publicly set a out a new, apparently more restrictive, policy for US drone use, seemingly suggesting that in response to the continued declarations by the Pakistani government (who have significant, if not complete, justification in international law for doing so) that drone strikes in their territory are 'illegal'.

Many were left sceptical by Obama's semi about-turn. As whilst offering a contorted apology of sorts for the non-combatants killed through his administrations zealous use of unmanned flying vehicles in conflict zones, it was made very clear that drone strikes would continue, despite their violation of international relations norms and law, if the USA feels they are justified.

Obama's pledge to avoid future 'undisciplined' use of the weapons can be read as a sop of sorts to the new conservative government in Islamabad following the first relatively smooth democratic handover of power in the country's 66 year history. However, it also seems likely that other political calculations governed the leader of the "worlds sole superpower's" decision to give a speech on the issue.

In November 2010 The Wall Street Journal published an article about China's developing drone program and the country's showcasing 25 of them at a military air-show . This surprised western military experts as China seemingly only developed its first weapon bearing drone in 2006. Suggesting a rapid rate of development.

As China's military technology begins to catch up with the west so the global balance of power will begin to sit differently. At present there are limits to how far China's drone technology can progress, as they lack the ability to cast lightweight jet engines in one smooth process. A process known to only a few western firms including our own Rolls Royce.

However, control over "Unmanned Aerial Vehicles"-especially in their most basic form-is no longer prerogative of the USA, its allies and large, powerful states like China with a clear stake in the international system. In November last year it was reported that China had sold drones to Pakistan, with

Kenya and Burma also reportedly interested. By finding ways to manufacture drones, relatively cheaply it looks as if China's "Model-T" drones will make the technology part of the global military mainstream.

Whilst the US, Israel and other developed countries, like Britain, will retain their technological edge. Putting ownership of weaponised drone technology within the reach of most of the world's nations gives future potential conflicts and internal security operations a terrifying new dimension. The fears of the 1920s and '30s regarding air war are given a striking new resonance. The moral and legal concerns about drone use in warfare to fight both international conflicts and conduct police operations against supposed insurgents and militants do not vanish when the power operating them is itself oppressed rather than an arrogant superpower.

Clearly the possession of drone technology could easily inflame and give a terrifying new dimension to disputes in troubled regions of the world, be it North Africa, the Balkans, or Central and Southern Asia. Regimes with dubious popular legitimacy, especially in the social media age, can if anything afford body bags far less than powerful western states. Sparing the troops, it is easy to picture how they could be used against civilian populations in enemy states or at home. Suffer minority populations deemed inconvenient by those wielding the remote control.

Obama's drone speech in setting up a new framework distinguishing disciplined from 'undisciplined' drone use is not contrition or an olive branch. Rather it is the words of a man whose supremacy has been challenged, whose silver bullets have been found to have a lead core, whose peaked into Pandora's Box and seen the winged monsters of unintended consequence that drag one to the void. His country's zealously arrogant use of these weapons has brought us here. Its words won't now screw the lid back on.



4 comments

Bill Bledsoe

1 Jun '13 at 9:36 am

Obama's drone speech was to bring the police state home to the USA. In his speech, Obama clearly admitted that he gave the orders to murder Americans. If Americans don't respond and impeach Obama for murder, then Americans are clearly welcoming a police state into the USA under Obama and his drones.

Obama admitted he gave the orders in this speech.

Obama said, "And as president, I would have been derelict in my duty had I not authorized the strike that took him out."

Obama authorized the strikes that "took out:"

26 year old Marine Staff Sergeant Jeremy Smith;

23 year old Navy Hospitalman Benjamin D. Rast;

16 year old Abdulrahman Anwar al-Awlaki from Denver, Colorado;

25 year old Samir Khan from North Carolina and New York City;

20 year old Jude Kenan Mohammad from Florida and North Carolina;

40 year old Anwar Al-Awlaki from New Mexico and Colorado;

Sergeant Smith's father viewed the video of his son's murder and was stunned. he said, "You couldn't even tell they were human beings, just blobs."

[Report](#)

Ruhollah Khomeini

4 Jun '13 at 2:19 am

Dear Josh,

Next time you decide to quote me in your illiterate ramblings, please be sure to accredit me as the original author.

Burn in Hellfire,

Ruhollah xxx

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Curtis Sinclair

5 Jun '13 at 6:50 pm

“Whilst the US, Israel and other developed countries, like Britain, will retain their technological edge.”

^Is it just me or is that not a sentence?

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@Curtis Sinclair

5 Jun '13 at 9:21 pm

<http://www.theyorker.co.uk/comment/opinion/international/13984-in-defense-of-drone-strikes>

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