

A lot of work needs to be done on drones

Mary Ann McGivern | Jul. 5, 2012 NCR Today

I am on the board of directors of the Peace Economy Project in St. Louis. Our executive director, Tila Neguse, recently attended a Code Pink conference on the use of drones led by Medea Benjamin. Tila begins by saying there was disagreement in the room about many of the issues, but not "the lack of transparency and accountability with drone usage." Following is part of Tila's report to members of the project.

The Obama administration has been using drone warfare both with a lack of transparency and accountability, killing people without granting them due process to a trial; assassination by association. But then again, they are terrorists. Or are they? In a report done by the New America Foundation, it is cited that the U.S. has launched 297 drone strikes which resulted in 1800 deaths. Of that 1800, it is estimated that three to four hundred were not combatants. As unmanned indiscriminate killing machines, drones are unable to make the distinction between who is a threat and who is not, making them horribly ineffective on this "war on terror." Such callous disregard for human life is weaponized drones biggest offense, but not the only one.

Drones are also a violation of global privacy. Just think, would the U.S. ever let another country fly surveillance or weaponized aircraft in our airspace? Hell no. And global privacy isn't the only concern. Domestic use of surveillance drones is jeopardizing us here on our own soil. Local police departments are already using drones as a means of surveillance and since there are no policies in place to regulate this usage, we are in danger of having our every move recorded by authorities. It's like an Orwellian nightmare; I can imagine it now, unmanned surveillance vehicles flying in every back yard, Big Brother looming in the skies.

Perhaps a little more tangible and immediate than imagining a dystopian society is the obvious fact that domestic drones will be used to increase the already high (and ineffective) level of surveillance in low-income communities of color. As an anti-war organizer, I see this as an opportunity to reach out to and to address the concerns of these communities that have become seemingly absent from the anti-war movement in the age of Obama. There's much organizing work that needs to be done around drones.

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