

## **PCMC Policy Statement on Militarized or Armed Drones**

The Peace Coalition of Monterey County deplors the use of armed, militarized drones by the US government. Twenty-four years of dropping bombs on Iraq have produced chaos, millions of refugees, widespread death and an ongoing takeover by an extremist regime. It is unlikely that more bombing, whether from airplanes or drones, will have a different effect. The large fleet of U.S. government drones could be used for humanitarian ends: dropping food, medicine, and other supplies needed in trouble spots, laying the groundwork for a young generation that sees the United States as its friend.

Instead the U.S. government is terrorizing Middle Eastern populations with hovering drones and unpredictable attacks. Uncounted people have lost their lives in drone attacks in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia, many of them civilians with no ties to terrorism. By its actions, the U.S. government is setting a dangerous precedent that international law (and its own law) need not be followed. Drones have dropped death and destruction on weddings and funerals and other civilian gatherings and come back to attack the emergency responders.

The decision to kill an individual within another sovereign state without any judicial proceeding deprives that state of its territorial integrity and violates the right of the accused to hear the charges against him and an opportunity to present a defense. "All men are created equal..." says our Declaration of Independence. But with its actions the U.S. government says that lives of people in Middle Eastern Countries are not equal to our own and need not be accorded the unalienable rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. While the U.S. government could be working to create the conditions for lasting peace, it is instead promoting lasting hatred and enmity against our country. Meanwhile, grave moral and legal questions hover in the secrecy that surrounds the drone program.

The US government should be expected to follow the rule of law and, when possible, ask for extradition for those accused of crimes. It should respect the boundaries of other nations, and work for peace through diplomacy. The ensuing peace talks should include all the parties involved – including Assad in the case of Syria.

Now our government talks of selling militarized drones to our allies, a move that may well come back to haunt us. The rapidly developing technology of drones could be focused upon the many helpful and humanitarian tasks they can accomplish. The Peace Coalition advocates the humanly beneficial use of drones with no armed or militarized drones allowed. All human life has value.

The US government should not be setting itself up as the arbitrary executioner of all persons in the world deemed suspect by our President.

Written by Joyce Vandevere, April 14, 2015