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Chris Woods, *Sudden Justice: America's Secret Drone Wars*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2015. Pp. xvi, 386. ISBN 978-0-19-020259-0.

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Much has already been written about the killing technology built into Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA), commonly known as drones. In *Sudden Justice*, investigative journalist Chris Woods¹ covers material already in print, but breaks new ground by focusing on the complex interactions between machines and humans, including operatives, targets and other victims, as well as political defenders and opponents of this burgeoning weapons program. Woods has interviewed many individuals currently or formerly on the sending or receiving end of drone attacks. The interviewees were in the United States, the United Kingdom, or counterattacked drone-managing bases abroad, in officially identified war zones or not. He intersperses documented factual data with the individuals' comments to demonstrate that there exists a serious lacuna in military rules of engagement with regard to war zones and to civilian casualties off the battlefields.

The book is a perceptive issue oriented history of drone use in the twenty-first century. The author begins with the development of drones and their introduction to battlefields. He then turns to targeted killing, first on a limited basis in Yemen and Palestine, then more expansively in Afghanistan and Pakistan, then in Iraq, Libya, and Somalia. Key operatives throughout this program were the CIA and US Air Force and several allied agencies, especially in the United Kingdom. Earlier bans on such killings were modified during President George W. Bush's second term; the Obama administration then elevated the program into a major component of its foreign policy.

During the period Woods covers, the principal RPAs, or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), were the older Predator MQ-1 and the more advanced Reaper MQ-9, both now being replaced by still more advanced devices (3). They were used in some 2,500 strikes, about two-thirds of them on the conventional battlefields of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya (4). They typically carried Hellfire missiles (154-pound antitank weapons able to be laser-guided onto their targets) (39-40). Both were produced by San Diego based General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI or GA), which has received billions of taxpayer dollars and is presently developing the Avenger, a jet-powered drone (27). The company first came into prominence during President Bill Clinton's administration, when CIA director James Woolsey joined his agency's talents with those of GA and the Pentagon's newly established Defense Airborne Reconnaissance Office to develop the Gnat prototype of the Predator, which carried out revolutionary intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions over war-torn Bosnia. The new technology eventually eliminated the need for pilots and analysts stationed near battlefields (32-35).

Since remote control of drones is no longer a problem, the CIA's program is administered by Distributed Ground System (DGS) One, based at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia and other locations on several continents. The Air Force program is supervised by the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan and the Air Force Special Operations Command at Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico. The actual operation of killer drones is done primarily under CIA jurisdiction by members of the Air Force's Seventeenth Reconnaissance Squadron at Creech Air Force Base near Las Vegas.

On 7 September 2000, DGS One started "Afghan Eyes" to conduct ISR missions in Afghanistan. Five years later, elite airmen in the Air Force Operations Command were chosen for an independent drone force designated as the Third Special Operations Squadron; over time they were equipped with their own MQ-1 fleet (77). A year later, the Special Operations Command placed its entire drone intelligence program in the

1. Funded for this project by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, a London NGO.

Florida-based Eleventh Intelligence Squadron. Within two years, it was handling half of all videos from major battle zones (79–80).

Woods directly addresses the constitutionality of the drone killing of Western, including American, citizens.² Then, in the second half of the book, he explains specific unresolved problems and controversies with regard to drone strikes on civilians. These include indifference to civilian fatalities (especially on the part of the CIA in Pakistan); psychological and emotional effects of remote killing work on the personnel so engaged; retaliation against targeted killing by countermeasures that cost American lives and alienate the hearts and minds of people on a signature list or too close to someone who is; UN and international NGOs' condemnation of the killing of civilians, especially those outside designated battlefields; and, finally, the US government's adamant and imperious defense of globally scattered killings as being in America's national interest.

President Gerald Ford's Executive Order 11905 banned assassinations by US agencies. This left a loophole for proxy killings by contractors, later closed by the administrations of Presidents Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter (47). These restrictions lost support after 9/11 and George Bush's declaration of a "War on Terror" that fit neither category of war recognized by international law, that is, between two or more sovereign states or between a nation-state and insurgents within its borders (63). Within a week of 9/11, Congress passed the Authorization for Use of Military Force against Terrorists, defined as "nations, organizations, or persons" in any way involved in the attacks. But the Authorization has been used to justify increasingly widespread and controversial targetings.³

When lethal drone attacks first became viable, the United States deployed them against the enemies of the moment—Afghan insurgents and their Pakistani allies. In 2005, however, drones killed two Spaniards and their families and later two Canadians in Waziristan (131–33). At some point, perhaps in 2008, President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney loosened restraints on targeting Westerners (133). In 2009, after Barack Obama took office, Westerners became fairly common targets (289–90). In 2010, an Australian and a New Zealander were killed, and a year later two Britons in Somalia. In 2012, President Obama changed a longstanding policy in Iraq and directed that drone use be extended beyond surveillance to targeted killings (200).

Woods reports that concern for civilian lives has become an ever more important policy consideration over the years. But relevant data has been kept secret by the CIA. A microcosm of the issue is a village in Yemen, where a US cruise missile killed forty-four civilians in 2009, just a week after Barack Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize (240). At the time, up to thirty civilians could be killed without pre-approval; in time that number was lowered to six and then to one (241), with the notable exception of "Troops in Contact" situations, where self-defense Rules of Engagement would justify Escalation of Force. British forces kill far fewer civilians than do US forces, in part because they follow stricter Rules of Engagement and use Reapers only on conventional battlefields (88–92, 246). As for US data, UN reports indicate a tripling of civilian casualties year-on-year in 2013; but, except for a brief period of openness, US Central Command has kept such information "classified in the interest of national security" (249).⁴

The foregoing policies are at least rationally defensible, in contrast to the CIA's obstructionism and obfuscation about its responsibility for civilian deaths. Its first line of defense is denial of charges and ridicule of anyone making them. But, in 2011, an NGO presented evidence that the CIA had killed 390 civilians to date. The agency did not dispute that figure, but claimed that all the deaths had been of "military-aged

2. Listed in an appendix, "Reports of Westerners Killed in US Targeted Strikes, September 2001 to December 2014."

3. Other materials relevant to justifying drone attacks include a 30 April 2012 speech by Barack Obama's counterterrorism specialist John Brennan on "The Ethics and Efficacy of the President's Counterterrorism Strategy" and a 23 May 2013 document entitled "Fact Sheet: US Policy Standards and Procedures for the Use of Force in Counterterrorism Operations outside the United States and Areas of Active Hostilities." See further Marjorie Cohn, ed., *Drones and Targeted Killings: Legal, Moral, and Geopolitical Issues* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Pr, 2015) 147, 283–286.

4. Woods acknowledges his own failure to obtain certain data or documents by the time the book went to press. This admission is both a mark of a responsible journalist and an indication of how strenuously relevant information is being concealed.

males,” a label very dangerous to any person in a drone-monitored area, including any “voluntary human shield” or, indeed, simply anyone the powers that be would prefer dead.

Woods provides a detailed account of the psychological effects of remote targeting on drone operators. Boredom is a common side effect, sometimes secretly mitigated by playing online games in the workplace (one of which resulted in an electronic “sneak attack” on the system!). Another challenge is too much overtime due to a lack of volunteers. The job itself is not viewed favorably by military leadership and, accordingly, is seldom rewarded with honors or citations.

In one respect, persons actively engaged in high-tech killing should take comfort in being located far from their targets. For those being targeted learn fast and have devised many countermeasures against drone brigades. One involves finding and shooting or blowing up spies on the ground. By 2009, over a hundred drone personnel in Pakistan and some 250 in Afghanistan had been killed (271), many of them detected by specially developed tracking devices. The Russian SkyGrabber device was useful in tracking older drones. Al Qaeda is working on jammers that interfere with GPS signals and infrared tags and (why not?) on their own drones (274-75). There have also been straightforward attacks on close-to-target Allied bases, including a US naval base in Karachi, a British camp in Helmand province, and another facility in Yemen. Along these lines, when the CIA allegedly killed eighty students, mostly children, in Chenagai, Pakistan, a suicide bomber retaliated by killing forty-two Pakistani soldiers in Dargai (93-96).

Chris Woods has previously concentrated on policies and practices associated with the killing of civilians inside designated war zones. He argues that such killing is a strategic blunder and the cause of bitter hatred of the US government. In *Sudden Justice*, he turns his attention to killings that are not part of any military confrontation as such, that is, with no US boots (or spies) on the ground. Though not an ethicist, he makes his moral concern over these matters very clear, pointedly citing UN spokespersons, among others, who explicitly declare such killings to be murder. In closing, he posits that the money and manpower already committed to the military drone industry give us every reason to expect a perpetuation of an effectively immoral approach to global problem solving (288).