

Mapping Drone Proliferation: UAVs in 76 Countries

The main international agreement that controls the transfer of drones is the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)

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Global Research, September 18, 2012

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Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

A new US Congress report on the proliferation of drones has confirmed a huge rise in the number of countries that now have military unmanned aerial systems. The US [Government Accountability Office \(GAO\)](#) has published an unclassified version of its February 2012 report [on the proliferation of UAVs](#). The report examines both the proliferation of UAVs, commonly known as drones, and examines US and multilateral controls on the export of drone technology.

The report states that between 2005 and December 2011, the number of countries that possess drones rose from 41 to 76 (see [here for full list](#)).



(Countries that have drones according to GAO report)

According to the report:

“The majority of foreign UAVs that countries have acquired fall within the tactical category. Tactical UAVs primarily conduct intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions and typically have a limited operational range of at most 300 kilometres. However, some more advanced varieties are capable of performing intelligence collection, targeting, or attack missions. Mini UAVs were also frequently acquired across the globe during this period.”

It should be noted that currently only the US, UK and Israel are known to have used armed UAVs.

The report goes on: “Currently, there are over 50 countries developing more than 900 different UAV systems. This growth is attributed to countries seeing the success of the United States with UAVs in Iraq and Afghanistan and deciding to invest resources into UAV development to compete economically and militarily in this emerging area.”

While the report fails to highlight the danger of growing drone proliferation to global peace and security it does emphasize the danger of drone proliferation to “US interests”. The report states that “the use of UAVs by foreign parties to gather information on U.S. military activities has already taken place” and “the significant growth in the number of countries that have acquired UAVs, including key countries of concern, has increased the threat to the United States.”

Despite this, the report states “the U.S. government has determined that selected transfers of UAV technology support its national security interests”, thus highlighting the contradiction at the heart of current arms control measures. ‘Private sector representatives’ told the reports authors that “UAVs are one of the most important growth sectors in the defense industry and provide significant opportunities for economic benefits if U.S. companies can remain competitive in the global UAV market.”

Type of Sale	FY 2005 to FY 2010
Military Direct Commercial Sales licenses	240m
Foreign Military Sales program	144m
Approved dual-use UAV export licenses	4m
Total	\$388m

Table 1: US drone sales Fiscal Year 2005-2010

The report reveals that between 2005 - 2010, the US approved over \$380m of drone exports (Table 1). In total, the U.S. government approved transfers of complete UAV systems in 15 cases over the period. Eight of the 15 countries were names in the report: Denmark, Italy, Lithuania, United Kingdom, Australia, Colombia, Israel, and Singapore. Additionally, 1,278 UAV-related licenses were identified over the period.

The US and the MTCR

The main international agreement that controls the transfer of drones is the [Missile Technology Control Regime \(MTCR\)](#). Although not primarily focused on drones, the MTCR controls UAVs by dividing them into two categories. Category One systems are capable of delivering a 500 kilogram warhead further than 300 kilometres, while Category II covers systems that carry a lighter warhead or have a range of less than 300km. Although all decisions are taken on a national basis (and there is no sanction by other countries if the MTCR is broken) there is a “strong presumption of denial” underpinning Category One - that is, an assumption that MTCR signatory states will not export such systems. Countries have greater discretion about exporting Category Two systems.

Drone Wars UK has [previously highlighted efforts by US corporation to “relax” controls on the export of drones](#). However the GAO report details for the first time “six US-sponsored UAV-related proposals” to amend the MTCR over the 2005-2011 period, five of which “would have resulted in moving some UAVs currently categorized under MTCR Category I to

Category II” and thus making them more easier to export. The five proposals were rejected by other members of the MTCR.

While the GAO report goes on to detail the need to improve internal US controls on the export of drones and related technology (recommending improving information databases and communication between licensing departments and intelligence agencies), it shies away from advocating the need to improve international controls.

Two weeks ago it was reported that [the Pentagon has identified 66 countries that would be eligible to buy US drones](#) under new guidelines yet to be approved by Congress. Meanwhile, [Germany wants to buy armed drones](#); while neighbouring [Poland plans to scrap its manned fighters for armed drones](#), just as [Canada wants to spend \\$1 billion on armed drones](#) and [Australia too plans to spend \\$3 billion on drones](#).

The time for global controls to stop the spread of drones has never been more urgent or important. Next month the 26th annual plenary meeting of the MTCR takes place in Berlin behind closed doors. No public agenda or details of the meeting are available. We urge all those involved to see the growing dangers of drone proliferation and to resist the siren calls by those with vested interests to relax the controls that currently exist.

Table 2: List of Countries reported by US GAO to posses drones.

Algeria	Egypt	Lebanon	Singapore
Angola	Estonia	Libya	Slovakia
Argentina	Ethiopia	Lithuania	Slovenia
Australia	Finland	Malaysia	South Africa
Austria	France	Mexico	Spain
Azerbaijan	Georgia	Morocco	Sri Lanaka
Belarus	Germany	Netherlands	Sweden
Belgium	Greece	New Zealand	Switzerland
Botswana	Hungary	Nigeria	Syria
Brazil	India	Norway	Taiwan
Bulgaria	Indonesia	Pakistan	Thailand
Burundi	Iran	Panama	Trinidad & Tobago
Canada	Israel	Peru	Tunisia
Chile	Italy	Philippines	Turkey
China	Ivory Coast	Poland	Uganda
Colombia	Japan	Republic of Korea	Ukraine
Croatia	Jordan	Romania	UAE
Czech Republic	Kazakhstan	Russia	United Kingdom
Denmark	Latvia	Serbia	United States

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