

# Obama Has Killed More People with Drones than Died On 9/11

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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*Law school teacher Marjorie Cohn – president of the National Lawyers Guild – [writes](#):*

“Obama has killed more people with drones than died on 9/11. Many of those killed were civilians, and only a tiny percentage of the dead were al-Qaeda or Taliban leaders.”

She may be right ...

The Council on Foreign Relations estimates that U.S. drone strikes outside of Iraq and Afghanistan have killed [3,674](#) people.

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism reports that up to [4,404](#) people have been killed – just in Pakistan and Yemen alone – between 2004 and 2014.

While it’s hard to estimate how many *additional* people have been killed by drone in Iraq and Afghanistan, a December 2012 report by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism found that US and UK forces had carried out [over 1,000 drone strikes](#) in Afghanistan over the previous five years. Given that *numerous* people are often killed by *each* drone strike, it is reasonable to assume that several thousand people have been killed by drone in that country.

And many Iraqis have also been killed by drones ... long before ISIS even appeared on the scene. So – altogether – the number of people killed by drone is probably well above *five thousand*.

In contrast, [under 3,000](#) people were killed on 9/11.

But aren’t drone strikes *targeted* attacks on *terrorists* ... unlike 9/11, which was an attack on civilians?

Unfortunately, no ...

The West is intentionally targeting [farmers, small-time drug dealers and very low-level Taliban members](#) with drone assassination.

And the process for deciding who to put on the “kill list” [is flawed](#). People are often targeted by the metadata on their phones, a process which a former top NSA official called the drone assassination program “[undisciplined slaughter](#).”

And people are targeted for insanely loose reasons. As the New York Times [reported](#) in

2012:

Mr. Obama had approved not only “personality” strikes aimed at named, high-value terrorists, but “signature” strikes that targeted training camps and suspicious compounds in areas controlled by militants.

But some State Department officials have complained to the White House that the criteria used by the C.I.A. for identifying a terrorist “signature” were too lax. The joke was that when the C.I.A. sees “three guys doing jumping jacks,” the agency thinks it is a terrorist training camp, said one senior official. Men loading a truck with fertilizer could be bombmakers — but they might also be farmers, skeptics argued.

And then there are “double taps” ... where the family members, friends or neighbors who try to rescue someone hit by a drone missile are [themselves targeted for assassination](#).

And - even when the West is actually targeting high-level terrorists - there is massive slaughter of innocent civilians as “collateral damage”. For example, American University Professor Jeff Bachman [reports](#):

Strikes focused on the Kill List “killed on average 28 other people before they actually succeeded in killing their target.”

The Brookings Institution also [noted](#) the high proportion of civilian deaths in 2009:

Critics correctly find many problems with this program, most of all the number of civilian casualties the strikes have incurred. Sourcing on civilian deaths is weak and the numbers are often exaggerated, but more than 600 civilians are likely to have died from the attacks. That number suggests that for every militant killed, 10 or so civilians also died.

The Costs of War Project - a nonpartisan, nonprofit, scholarly initiative based at Brown University’s Watson Institute for International Studies - [notes](#):

In Iraq, over 70 percent of those who died of direct war violence have been civilians.

(Civilians [usually suffer the most casualties](#).)

No wonder people all over the world are [overwhelmingly opposed](#) to drone strikes.

Indeed, even the [CIA admits](#) that the drone program might be counter-productive in fighting terrorism.

And the architect of America’s drone assassination program says it’s gone too far ... [creating terrorists rather than eliminating them](#).

Notes: Obama has used drone strikes [much more than Bush](#):

Obama has [increased the number of drone attacks](#) in Afghanistan, [Pakistan](#), [Yemen](#) and elsewhere. Indeed, most people who have looked at the numbers believe that Obama has killed many more civilians with drone attacks than Bush did using the same method.

The former constitutional law teacher may or may not know that drone attacks are a [war crime](#) (more [here](#) and [here](#)).

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