

Obama's War on Truth. USAF Drone Operators "Who Blew the Whistle"

By [Craig Murray](#)

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [Law and Justice](#), [Militarization and WMD](#)

The four USAF military drone operators who recently [blew the whistle](#) and exposed the callousness and complete lack of concern for civilian casualties of the US drone assassination programme, (and received very little mainstream media exposure), yesterday found their bank accounts and credit cards all blocked by the US government. The effects of that on daily life are devastating. My source is their lawyer, Jesselyn Radack, through the Sam Adams Associates (of which we are both members).

No criminal charges have been brought against any of the men, despite numerous written threats of prosecution. Their finances appear to have been frozen by executive action under anti-terrorist legislation. This is yet a further glaring example of the use of "anti-terror" powers against people who are not remotely terrorist.



More whistleblowers have been jailed under Obama than under all previous US Presidents combined. Even so, the US authorities seem wary of the publicity that might surround prosecution of these servicemen, who only spoke of the effect upon their own health of having repeatedly to carry out heartless and often untargeted killings.

So their lives are being destroyed in other ways. You will forgive me for recalling that I know how they feel because I have been through just the same thing myself.

When I blew the whistle on UK complicity in torture and extraordinary rendition, I received numerous written threats from the FCO under the Official Secrets Act, and for a while I lived in daily expectation of arrest. Still more hurtful were the constant denials from Jack Straw and his repeated assertion that the UK was never complicit in torture, that there was no such thing as extraordinary rendition, together with the frequent imputations to journalists and politicians that I was in poor mental health and an alcoholic. I never had my bank account suspended, but there were interventions with prospective employers that

prevented my getting another job.

Still, I had it easy. Chelsea Manning will celebrate her birthday in jail on 17 December.

It is worth recalling what these drone operators told us:

Bryant said the killing of civilians by drone is exacerbating the problem of terrorism. "We kill four and create 10 [militants]," Bryant said. "If you kill someone's father, uncle or brother who had nothing to do with anything, their families are going to want revenge."

The Obama administration has gone to great lengths to keep details of the drone program secret, but in their statements today the former operators opened up about the culture that has developed among those responsible for carrying it out. Haas said operators become acculturated to denying the humanity of the people on their targeting screens. "There was a much more detached outlook about who these people were we were monitoring," he said. "Shooting was something to be lauded and something we should strive for."

The deaths of children and other non-combatants in strikes was rationalized by many drone operators, Haas said. As a flight instructor, Haas claimed to have been non-judicially reprimanded by his superiors for failing a student who had expressed "bloodlust," an overwhelming eagerness to kill.

Haas also described widespread alcohol and drug abuse among drone pilots. Drone operators, he said, would frequently get intoxicated using bath salts and synthetic marijuana to avoid possible drug testing and in an effort to "bend that reality and try to picture yourself not being there." Haas said that he knew at least a half-dozen people in his unit who were using bath salts and that drug use had "impaired" them during missions.

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