

Trump's First War Crimes: Assassinations by Drone

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Now Donald Trump is a war criminal just like his predecessors.

That didn't take long. Over the inaugural weekend, while the president was obsessing about the size of his crowd, his government also let loose two drone strikes against defenseless Yemen, reportedly killing an estimated 10 people, some of whom could possibly have been terrorists about to strike somewhere in Yemen. Three of these people were on a motorcycle hit by one drone, the other seven were in a vehicle hit by the other drone.

President Trump is not known to have a coherent policy on Yemen, whose war he inherits from the Obama administration. [In answer to a question](#) about providing "military aid to Saudi Arabia during its conflict with Yemen," Trump answered: "No, we should stay out of conflicts that are not an immediate threat to our security." Most mainstream media, who rarely bothered President Obama about Yemen, have not asked President Trump to clarify his apparent stand against participating in wars we're already participating in.

President Trump has let it be known that he plans [to sign an executive order](#) to bar any immigrants from Yemen and other countries from coming to the U.S., because they're Muslims and if we couldn't bomb them there we'd have to bomb them here.

The ten drone victims in Yemen were part of a total death toll of about 75, according to [The New York Times](#), based on "Yemeni news reports." Most of the killing resulted from fighting on the ground in the southwest of the country near the Red Sea, where Saudi-allied forces supporting the deposed Yemeni president have launched an offensive against the forces of the Houthis, who toppled the Yemeni government more than two years ago. The Times report is silent on whether President Trump personally ordered the drone strikes that killed ten alleged "terrorists."

[The Washington Post reports](#) more directly: "The first drone strikes under President Donald Trump were carried out in central Yemen over the weekend, the Pentagon said Monday [January 23]." According to the Post, U.S. drone strikes in Yemen, which started many years ago, have increased in the past two years:

The United States maintains a small ground presence of Special Operations forces in Yemen that coordinates with troops from the United Arab Emirates, who are fighting al Qaeda, while another U.S. detachment provides limited intelligence to Saudi-led forces that are focused on defeating the Houthis. Since 2014, more than 10,000 people have died and 40,000 have been wounded in the civil conflict, according to a recent statement by the United Nations.

The “civil conflict” so-called is in fact a civil war engulfed in an international invasion with perhaps a dozen nations participating in a fight that also includes both al-Qaeda and ISIS. Both terrorist groups control significant portions of Yemen, as do the Houthis and the Saudi-backed deposed government.

Based on Pentagon briefings, the Post reported only five fighters killed by drone strikes, with no mention of any others killed or not. This report said those killed were al-Qaeda fighters, not Houthis, as the Times reported. The Pentagon asserted that these drone strikes “did not require approval by recently appointed Defense Secretary James Mattis or Trump.” The Post did not say who approved the strikes, if anyone. President Obama was understood to have personally approved drone strikes designed to kill suspected terrorist leaders.

While the Post omits mention of the fighting that killed 65 or so in the southwest, it does report that “U.S. aircraft also carried out bombing missions in Iraq and Syria in recent days in support of local forces attacking Mosul and advancing on the Islamic State’s self-declared capital of Raqqa.” The Post mentions no casualties.

[According to The Guardian](#), the first drone strikes of the Trump administration killed only three al-Qaeda operatives, with no mention of any other deaths, “security and tribal officials said.” The Guardian also reported that the Obama administration left office after a years-long drone killing spree:

U.S. intelligence officials said as many as 117 civilians had been killed in drone and other counter-terror attacks in Pakistan, [Yemen](#), and elsewhere during Obama’s presidency. It was the second public assessment issued in response to mounting pressure for more information about lethal U.S. operations overseas.

[The Bureau of Investigative Journalism](#) puts Obama’s killings at ten times the number of Bush administration drone assassinations. According to reports logged by the bureau, the Obama death toll was between 384 and 807 civilians at wedding parties, funerals, and more mundane activities.

The Obama exit may have been splashier than otherwise reported. [According to Democracy Now](#), in a report that requires the reader to believe more than 100 terrorists were neatly segregated as precision targets:

The Pentagon says a U.S. airstrike and U.S. drone strikes in Idlib, Syria, killed more than 100 people Friday. U.S. officials say the victims of the airstrike were al-Qaeda fighters. But the Syrian opposition group Jabhat Fateh al-Sham says the airstrike hit its camp and that the victims were not al-Qaeda fighters. Jabhat Fateh al-Sham is the new name for the group al-Nusra, which says it broke from al-Qaeda in 2016. The airstrike was one of the final military acts of Obama’s presidency.

While the numbers of the dead may be hard to verify, there is no dispute that three consecutive American presidents have sanctioned killing civilians with drones as the price they’re willing to pay to sometimes kill actual terrorists. In a rational time, it would be an undisputed war crime and an impeachable offense for a U.S. president to order the assassination of people, including Americans citizens, based on mere suspicion.

So now the question becomes – with President Trump now joining the circle of war-criminals-in-chief – why is there no article of impeachment before the House of Representatives? This is the third opportunity to impeach a murderous president for acts of official assassination that are patently unconstitutional. Maybe Rep. John Lewis of Georgia might take it on, as a response to [Donald Trump’s recent tweet](#) about him: “rather than falsely complaining about the election results. All talk, talk, talk – no action or results. Sad!”

Some people might ask: Why impeach Trump for what Bush and Obama got away with? Others might wonder: Why begin to worry about hypocrisy now? And still others might say: How come we’ve been waging war for two years on one of the world’s poorest countries?

[Note: a possible correction might be called for if the premise of this article turns out not to be true. If this is NOT President Trump’s first war crime, the author regrets the error and requests that the administration identify the president’s actual first war crime.]

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