

Historic U.K. Trial. Anti-drones Protesters Praised by Judge. Illegality of Drone Warfare Upheld

The Waddington Six Trial

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As many of you will have seen reported in the media the [Waddington Six trial took place yesterday](#). All six spoke about the dangers of drone warfare and how the use of drones by British forces [breaches international law](#). District Judge John Stoddert listened carefully to everything that was said, but stated that he felt constrained by what he could do. As has been reported in various media, the judge said that [he convicted “with a heavy heart”](#) and then went on to urge the six to appeal to a higher court as there were important issues in the case that needed careful examination. The six are considering their next move. For a good summary of the day see [War isn’t a video game: witnessing \(against\) drone warfare](#).

Britain’s affinity with drone warfare continues to grow. [Figures released by the UK MoD in response to a question by Caroline Lucas MP](#) show that between June 2008 and July 2013 there were 299 Reaper UAV sorties that resulted in one or more weapons being fired. We know from other information that a total of 419 weapons have been fired from UK Reapers (till 2 Sept). According to analysis by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, [the UK is three times more likely than the US to fire weapons from its drones in Afghanistan](#). Latest figures on UK drone strikes are summarised in this table:

UK Armed Reaper Activity in Afghanistan

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (Till 2 Sept)
Reaper Weapon Releases						
Hellfire (100lb)	17	32	58	100	104	57
GBU-12 (500lb)	13	12	15	11	0	
Total released per year	30	44	73	111	104	
Monthly average	3.7	3.6	6.1	9.2	8.7	7.1
Cumulative total	30	74	147	258	362ⁱ	419
Reaper Sorties						
Total no. of sorties	296	431	757	903	892	n/a
Sorties with weapons released	14	33	51	73	92	n/a

ⁱ 2008 - 2012 Figures Fol response to Chris Cole
2013 figures - PQ of 25 Feb 2013 and 10 Sept 2013

Despite the withdrawal of British forces from Afghanistan in 2014 getting ever closer, the UK MoD continues to refuse to confirm if UK Reapers will remain flying in Afghanistan post troop withdrawal or not. What is becoming clearer, as stated by various senior military officers as the recent DSEi arms fair, is [a commitment to armed drone technology beyond Afghanistan](#). These admissions, especially in the light of the recently revealed [MoD policy document](#) on fighting future wars with a 'casualty averse public' (suggesting a greater use of private military contractors, special forces and, surprise, surprise, drones) means that British armed drones will continue to be used into the future.

As Martin Newell of the Waddington 6 stated outside court after the verdict: "this isn't the end of the process - its just the beginning."

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