

SUBMISSION TO THE DEFENCE SELECT COMMITTEE'S INQUIRY
REMOTE CONTROL: REMOTELY PILOTED AIR SYSTEMS – CURRENT AND FUTURE UK
USE

INTRODUCTION

1. This submission focuses on the following issues:
 - (a) A lack of transparency and accountability about the use of drones by the UK Government particularly in relation to:
 - the poor recording of the status and numbers of those killed and injured in drone strikes;
 - the limited consideration of the psychological impact of drones on operators and those living in affected areas;
 - the broader relationship between the achievement of the UK's military and diplomatic objectives and drone use.
 - (b) Concerns about the shape of the US-UK relationship and drone warfare with particular reference to:
 - Operation of US drones from UK soil;
 - Citizenship stripping.

BACKGROUND

2. The All Party Parliamentary Group on drones (APPG) was established in October 2012.¹ The aim of the Group is to examine the use of drones (unmanned aerial vehicles, UAVs) by governments, for domestic and international, military and civilian purposes. The Group uses Parliamentary

1 The Group is chaired by Tom Watson MP (Lab); the Vice Chairs are Zac Goldsmith MP (Con) and Baroness Stern (CB); the Treasurer is John Hemming MP (LD); and the Secretary is Dave Anderson MP (Lab). The Group is staffed by a human rights researcher, which is currently funded, in the short-term by Reprieve (a human rights NGO). The Group has received funds from the Persula Foundation (registered March 2013); the Edith M Ellis 1985 Charitable Trust (registered June 2013; Trust for Research and Education on the Arms Trade; Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation (registered September 2013). Please refer to the APPG's entry on the Parliamentary Register for more details. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmallparty/register/drones.htm>

processes to facilitate greater transparency and accountability on the development, deployment and use of drones. Parliamentarians have an important role to play in shaping and developing the policy on the use of this weapon, domestically and internationally, and in the application of relevant scrutiny.

3. The level of Parliamentary interest in drones is steadily increasing. To date, there have been four debates in Parliament on drones: two Westminster Hall debates on 6 November 2012 and 11 December 2012 (at the latter, the Minister for Defence Equipment, Support and Technology acknowledged that the debate demonstrated “the increasing interest among not only Members of the House but the public at large about the use of unmanned aerial vehicles”²); a House of Commons Adjournment debate on 17 June 2013; and a House of Lords question for Short Debate on 25 June 2013. Since January 2012, Parliamentarians have asked approximately 270 Parliamentary questions on unmanned aerial vehicles.³

4. It should be made clear that the APPG is not opposed to drones. There is recognition, by the Group, of the value offered by drone technology, when used in compliance with domestic and international human rights law, and international humanitarian law. However, the Group is concerned that this technology is now outpacing the relevant legal frameworks and that States are failing to pay due regard to their international legal obligations, for example, in legitimising extra-judicial killings. This is a new generation of technology which, it appears, is presenting a substantial challenge to the current legal frameworks, and thus is being operated with only limited regulation.

2 House of Commons Debate, Hansard, 11 December 2012: column 42WH.

3 The APPG on drones has collated and analysed all Parliamentary Questions on drones since 2012, please see <http://appgondrones.wordpress.com/parliamentary-questions/>

NOMENCLATURE

5. The diversity of the terminology which can be applied to drone technology is broad and politicised. The APPG is aware of the on-going debate about this terminology, for example, “Remotely Piloted Air Systems (RPAS)” versus “Unmanned Aerial Vehicles/Systems (UAV/S)”. For simplicity, ease of reference and to enable the inclusion of both unmanned aerial and maritime vehicles, the APPG uses the term “drones”. It does not use this term in a pejorative sense. The Group has noted that the Government, in its responses to Parliamentary Questions, uses a variety of terms to describe this technology including “remotely piloted aircraft system”⁴, “unmanned aerial vehicles”⁵ and “drones”⁶. The Ministry of Defence’s (MoD) Joint Doctrine 2/11, *The UK approach to unmanned aircraft systems*, makes it clear that the terms “Unmanned Aerial Vehicles/Systems” should be the primary wording used, with “Remotely Piloted Air Vehicles/Systems” used when speaking to the media. It would be helpful if there was a more consistent approach across Government on the terms used.

CASUALTY COUNTING

6. Parliament cannot reach a settled view on the wisdom of expanding the drone programme without an accurate assessment of the efficacy of this technology. There is a belief that the Ministry of Defence is holding more detailed information regarding casualties than it is prepared to admit. There are particular concerns at the numbers of civilian casualties caused by drones.

4 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, to Annette Brooke MP, Hansard, 12 June 2013: Column 328W.

5 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, to Tom Watson MP, Hansard, 17 June 2013: Column 503W.

6 Baroness Warsi, Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Lord Patten, Hansard, 3 July 2013: Column WA219.

7. The recording of information relating to those killed and injured by UK drone strikes in Afghanistan is notable in its paucity. Answers to Parliamentary Questions have revealed that: “the Government does not record total figures for civilian casualties in Afghanistan because of the immense difficulty and risks that would be involved in collecting robust data.”⁷ Most worryingly, this response has been given consistently since 11 July 2011, indicative that despite a number of questions from concerned Parliamentarians, and in contrast to broader improvements made to casualty counting procedures by ISAF and the UN, the Government has not sought to address the challenges of casualty counting.⁸ Despite this, the Government claims to have “strict procedures, frequently updated in light of experience, intended to both minimise the risk of casualties occurring and to investigate incidents that do happen”⁹ and offers the assurance that “it did conduct post-strike assessments of every weapons release from Reaper”.¹⁰ Indeed, since 1 April 2008, the Government has paid:

2,833 ex gratia payments amounting to £3,596,902.00 ... to Afghan civilians up to 31 May 2013. Payments have been made in respect of deaths, injuries, road traffic incidents, property damage, and crop damage, occurring within Helmand Province and in Kabul.¹¹

These payments appear to indicate that there are some mechanisms within the Ministry of Defence which are monitoring civilian deaths and injuries; the APPG encourage the Government to make this information publicly available.

7 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, to David Anderson MP, Hansard, 13 June 2013: Column 410W.
8 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, to Yasmin Qureshi MP, Hansard, 19 June 2013: Column 722W.
9 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, to Yasmin Qureshi MP, Hansard, 18 June 2013: Column 584W.
10 See Information Commissioner’s Office, Freedom of Information Decision Notice, 7 February 2013, [http://www.ico.org.uk/~media/documents/decisionnotices/2013/fs_50462269.ashx](http://www.ico.org.uk/~/media/documents/decisionnotices/2013/fs_50462269.ashx)
11 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, to Yasmin Qureshi MP, Hansard, 17 June 2013: Column 495W.

Further, the Government should consider that the absence of robust data collection on civilian casualties raises the question as to how the Government can be clear that they are making ex-gratia payments to the correct people.

8. While there is an obligation in international law to record the details of the deaths of combatants in international armed conflict, as set out in the Geneva Conventions, Afghanistan is considered to be a multinational Non-International Armed Conflict and thus the obligation on counting casualties, both civilian and fighter, differs from that required for an international armed conflict.¹² This is a subject of expansive debate for which there is not adequate space in this submission to address fully.¹³ However, it can be concluded that the failure by the Government to lead the way in developing and adopting robust casualty counting mechanisms is problematic. For example, as highlighted by Action on Armed Violence, casualty recording is central to the fulfilment of victims' rights and the broader protection of civilians¹⁴. Accurate and systematic recording of casualties can be an important contribution to building and maintaining support for international intervention and in challenging the narrative produced by the enemy. From the perspective of military objectives, the recording of civilian casualties allows governments to assess their compliance with the international legal principles of distinction and proportionality. Respect for these principles is set out in the MoD's own *Basic Principles of the Law of Armed Conflict*¹⁵ and also forms a fundamental part of customary international law.

12 See, International Committee of the Red Cross, Nils Melzer, *Interpretive guidance on the notion of direct participation in hostilities*, 2009.

13 This issue has been extensively explored by the Oxford Research Group, see, for example, Professor Susan Breau, Marie Aronsson, Rachel Joyce, Oxford Research Group, *Discussion Paper 2: Drone attacks, International Law and the Recording of Civilian Casualties of Armed Conflict*, June 2011, <http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/sites/default/files/ORG%20Drone%20Attacks%20and%20International%20Law%20Report.pdf>

14 Action on Armed Violence, *Reclaiming the Protection of Civilians under International Humanitarian Law*, May 2013, <http://www.aoav.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/casualty-recording-presentation-oslo-for-website-230513.pdf>

15 See, for example, paras 2.6-2.8.2 on proportionality, Ministry of Defence, *Basic Principles of the Law of Armed Conflict*.

9. The Government's lack of engagement with casualty counting is potentially negatively shaping the engagement between the UK and the United Nations in Afghanistan. For example, the UK has declined to participate in the report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict and in the review of criteria, advocated by the UN Mission in Afghanistan, to establish the positive identification and determination of status undertaken by international forces in Afghanistan.¹⁶ The APPG is concerned that the Government's decision not to engage with improvements to casualty counting in Afghanistan will undermine efforts to improve this system domestically. Part of the UK's role in Afghanistan is to "train, advise and assist" which includes encouragement to the "Afghan National Security Forces to operate within the bounds of International Humanitarian Law, including with respect to mitigating and ensuring accountability for civilian casualties."¹⁷ It is unclear how this role can be undertaken effectively if the UK is facing such challenges with its own casualty counting mechanisms.

10. This lack of information, on those killed by drones, raises very serious questions as to how the UK Government is able to ascertain that it is meeting its military objectives in Afghanistan as well as its legal obligations, for example, in respecting the principles of proportionality and the protection of civilians. To date, the Ministry of Defence claims to have killed only four civilians, on 25 March 2011, since the drone programme began in this context.¹⁸ In contrast, the United States, in carrying out roughly the same amount of drone strikes in Pakistan, is believed to have killed between 411 and 890 civilians.¹⁹ Most recently, a leaked internal Pakistani government

16 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, to David Anderson MP, Hansard, 10 June 2013: Column 7W.

17 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, to Yasmin Qureshi MP, Hansard, 18 June 2013: Column 584W.

18 An International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) investigation carried out into this incident concluded "the actions of the Reaper crew had been in accordance with extant procedures and ISAF rules of engagement." Nick Harvey, Minister of State for the Armed Forces to Roger Godsiff, Hansard, 26 June 2012: Column 187W.

19 The Bureau of Investigative Journalism is considered one of the most authoritative sources on casualty drone strike recording, see <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/category/projects/drones/> and figures from the

document shows that, by their assessments, there were at least 147 civilian deaths, including 94 children, as the result of drone strikes between 2006-2009.²⁰ The disparity in civilian casualties caused by US and UK drone strikes gives rise to a number of differing questions:

- How does the Ministry of Defence categorise casualties as civilian? Does this differ to the definition of civilians from that found in, and protected by, the Laws of War?
- Does our methodology, for both the categorisation and targeting of civilians, differ to that used by the United States?
- What are the Ministry of Defence's terms of engagement for drone strikes?
- How do these terms of engagement differ to the terms of engagement for fast jet strikes by the Ministry of Defence?
- How do these terms of engagement differ to the terms of engagement employed by the US Department for Defense?
- Does the Ministry of Defence not know, either prior to or after an attack, the status of those killed? Is this information only released internally?
- Is it true that the Ministry of Defence has killed more than four civilians but has declined to state this publicly?

20 New America Foundation which claimed there have been between 258 and 307 civilians killed by drones. <http://natsec.newamerica.net/drones/pakistan/analysis>
See *Exclusive: Leaked Pakistani report confirms high civilian death toll in CIA drone strikes*, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 22 July 2013, <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2013/07/22/get-the-data-the-pakistan-governments-secret-document/>

None of these questions reflect well on the Ministry of Defence.

Casualty counting engages with the accuracy of this technology. Without the collation and utilisation of robust data on the identity and status of those killed, it is unclear how the MoD can establish the efficacy of drones. This further resonates with the future procurement plans of the Ministry of Defence where the accuracy of weapons must surely play a key role in the determination of new contracts.

Recommendation.

We encourage the Committee to:

- **engage robustly with the Government on the need to record the numbers and status of those killed by UK drone strikes;**
- **ask the Government to make this information available to Parliamentarians and the public alike;**
- **ensure that the Government strikes the correct balance between releasing information and the protection of British forces.**

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

11. The *Joint Doctrine* includes the objective to increase public debate on this technology, where it states “What is needed is a clear understanding of the issues involved so that informed decisions can be made”.²¹ Such a debate on drones is vital to the legitimate use of this technology by the Government.

12. The APPG has consistently highlighted the lack of transparency and accountability about drone use by the UK Government. Currently this debate is being stymied by:

21 Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine 2/11, The UK approach to unmanned aircraft systems*, 2011, para 517.

- a. limited responses to Parliamentary Questions, where the substance of the question is sometimes avoided and/or the relevant information is withheld;²²
- b. extended delays in responses, by the Ministry of Defence, to Freedom of Information requests;
- c. a consistent emphasis within responses to Freedom of Information requests to withhold information;
- d. an absence of publicly accessible reports, publications and briefings on the development, deployment and use of drones by the Ministry of Defence.²³
- e. Limited departmental debate on the issue.

13. As an example of the APPG's experience of the Freedom of Information Act, a request for the results of a local study on the psychological health of UAV pilots, cited in a Parliamentary Question, and undertaken in conjunction with another State, was refused on the basis that disclosure "would undermine the relationship of trust that exists between the UK and other countries". No efforts were made to ask the country in question if this information could be shared nor if the parts of the study, undertaken by the UK Government, could be shared. Anecdotal evidence from the APPG's civil society partners has highlighted a similar approach taken by Government to their enquiries.

22 See, for example, Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces to Yasmin Qureshi MP, Hansard, 18 June 2013: Column 583W on publishing casualty figures; Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces to David Anderson MP, Hansard, 13 June 2013: Column 410W on data collection; Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces to Tom Watson MP, Hansard, 12 June 2013: Column 323W on drones in Africa; Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces to Anas Sarwar MP, Hansard, 10 June 2013: Column 19W on training costs; Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces to Anas Sarwar MP, Hansard, 10 June 2013: Column 15W on support for the US; Baroness Warsi, Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Baroness Kinnock, Hansard, 25 February 2013: Column WA207 on legal frameworks; Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces to Fabian Hamilton MP, Hansard 25 March 2013: Column 940W on US activities at UK air bases.

23 This is particular pertinent with regard to the intermittent posting of Operational Updates on the RAF website; there is no consistency as to the inclusion of information on the activities of 39 Squadron who are charged with the UK's drones programme.

14. Emblematic of the impact of this limited accurate information on drones can be seen in a recent survey on the UK public's attitude to drones. For example, the survey relied on the term "known terrorist" as the basis for the questions asked of respondents.²⁴ This is despite the fact that the identity and status of all of those killed by drones is not always assured.²⁵
15. The Group's monitoring of Parliamentary Questions has revealed a number of key areas where the Government appears unwilling, or unable, to allow full Parliamentary scrutiny of key impacts relating to drone use. We advocate that such a secretive approach is unnecessary and undermines the role of Parliament in the assessment of the Government's defence policy. Further, a lack of transparency and accountability leads, perhaps unfairly, to the perception that the Government is not operating in compliance with its domestic and international human rights commitments, which in turn undermines its reputation at home and abroad.

Recommendation.

The Group urges the Committee to ask the Government to:

- **hold a departmental-led public engagement strategy on this technology, to facilitate the broader debate, including placing relevant evidence in the public domain;**
- **reconsider its approach to the application of transparency and accountability on the use of drone technology;**
- **take a more consistent approach to the terminology used to refer to this technology so that greater clarity can be achieved.**

24 Joel Faulkner Rogers, "The Public View: British Attitudes to Drone Warfare and Targeted Killing", in Eds. Michael Aaronson and Adrian Johnson, *Hitting the target? How New Capabilities are Shaping International Intervention*, March 2013, pp 7-17, p 8.

25 See, for example, Andrew Robathan MP to Yasmin Qureshi MP, Hansard, 19 June 2013: Column 722W and the use of signature strikes by the United States. targets are selected on the basis of "pattern of life analysis", and Text of President Obama's May 23 speech on national security (full transcript), Washington Post, 23 May 2013.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF DRONES

16. The Group is concerned by anecdotal evidence, currently primarily focused on US drone pilots, which raises questions as to the psychological impact of drones on those who operate them.²⁶ Some research has been undertaken in the United States by the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine. A 2011 study *Psychological Health Screening of Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) Operators and Supporting Units* examined significant numbers of Predator/Reaper operators, Global Hawk operators and non-combatant airmen supporting drone operations for 'burnout' i.e. long-term exhaustion and a loss of interest/ability to carry out their jobs.

The results of this study suggest there is a high incidence of emotional exhaustion/fatigue among RPA operators as a group in comparison to noncombatant airmen. Efforts to reduce occupational burnout should focus on operational stressors and be equally devoted to weapon and nonweapon-deploying RPA operators.²⁷

17. A second study which surveyed 426 officer and enlisted operators (pilots and sensor operators), between 2010 and 2011 found that:

Although a wide range of stressors may contribute to elevated levels of burnout, the majority of occupational stress was reported to stem from operational stress and not exposure to combat (e.g., live video

26 See, for example, Nicola Abe, *Dreams in Infrared: The Woes of an American Drone Operator*, Der Spiegel, 14 December 2012, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/pain-continues-after-war-for-american-drone-pilot-a-872726-3.html>

27 Wayne Chappelle, Psy.D., ABPP; Amber Salinas, M.A.; Kent McDonald, LtCol, USAF, MC, FS :USAF School of Aerospace Medicine, *Psychological Health Screening of Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) Operators and Supporting Units*, *Psychological Health Screening of Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) Operators and Supporting Units*, (2011), p. 19-11

feed regarding the destruction or death of enemy combatants and ground forces).²⁸

18. Most recently, media coverage of a forthcoming study from the US Department of Defense, indicates that rates of conditions such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse were the same as for pilots of manned aircraft, deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan.²⁹ This research indicates a relatively negligible impact on those involved in their use. In other words, it is the conditions of employment, rather than impact of using drones per se which seem to be problematic.

19. In the UK context, the Ministry of Defence's *Joint Doctrine* asks "do we fully understand the psychological effects on remote operators of conducting war at a distance?"³⁰ Responding to a Parliamentary Question from Mark Pritchard MP on 15 November 2010, the MoD stated that the Department was undertaking a local psychological study of the impact of combat drone use on drone pilots and commented that the "RAF Medical Services have not detected any instances of acute stress reaction in any pilot responsible for operation of UAVs."³¹ A subsequent Freedom of Information request, submitted in Autumn 2012 to obtain a copy of this psychological study, received the response, in March 2013, that the report would be withheld on the grounds that the report was undertaken in conjunction with another Government. "While the MOD was provided copies of the report, the report which is within the scope of your request remains the copyright of that other Government. That Government has expressly not given permission for the MOD to release the report, which remains their copyright."³²

28 Joseph A. Ouma, Lt Col, USAF, MC, FS ; Wayne L. Chappelle, Psy.D., ABPP; Amber Salinas, M.A.; *Facets of occupational burnout among US Air Force Active Duty and National Guard/Reserve MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper operators*, (2011), p.14.

29 James Dao, *Drone Pilots are Found to Get Stress Disorders Much as Those in Combat Do*, New York Times, 22 February 2013.

30 Ministry of Defence, (n21) p. 5-8.

31 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Mark Pritchard MP, Hansard, 15 November 2010: Column 564W.

32 Response to APPG Researcher, Freedom of Information request from Ministry of Defence, 8

20. In December 2012, the Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans stated that:

Regarding psychological considerations, experience of operating the Reaper Remotely piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) suggests that far from being detached from the reality of the situation, Reaper aircrew are just as, if not more, connected to the situation on the ground as compared to operators of other aircraft types. ...³³

There was no comment on the impact or consequences of this experience on drone operators within this answer. However, in answer to a further question, the MoD stated that the RAF had in place, for their Reaper Remotely Piloted Air Systems (RPAS) force, Trauma Risk Management strategies. "The RAF Medical Services have not detected any adverse psychological and physical trends for RAF pilots of RPAS."³⁴

21. Further concerns have been raised about the perception that drones are perpetuating a more clinical and detached kind of warfare, where a lack of engagement with the "bloody reality" of conflict is leading to a more casual attitude to killing. The RAF Directorate of Defence Studies' examination of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles questioned whether a lack of personal engagement:

raises the question of whether unmanned vehicles, whose operators can only experience war through a datalink, are in any meaningful sense involved in a "dialogue" with their adversary. Does the UAVs

March 2013.

33 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, to Craig Whittaker MP, Hansard, 6 December 2012: Column 901W.

34 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Hansard, 25 February 2013: Column 38W.

inherent lack of personal engagement encourage a lack of respect for one's enemy and through that, a dangerous degree of detachment?³⁵

22. A report by MEDACT, published in 2012, on the physical and psychological implications of drones, further acknowledged this idea:

All the aspects of battle, which normally enhance self-esteem and engender the esteem of others are absent and there is the potential for this work to erode the self-image of the drone operator as well as the image of the war hero in the public mind.³⁶

In this respect, the rise of the concept of drone pilots as suffering a "playstation mentality"³⁷ assisted by a US recruitment campaign for drone pilots which uses a simulated computer game to attract candidates³⁸, can only undermine the professional standards upon which the RAF pride themselves and which is central to their public standing.

23. Taken further, the perception of the drone has an impact on how the US and UK are seen in the countries in which this weapon is used; a consideration examined the MoD's *Joint Doctrine*.

The counter-insurgency operation must be perceived as ethically sound, above reproach, and the ill-considered use of armed unmanned aircraft offers an adversary a potent propaganda weapon. This enables the insurgent to cast himself in the role of underdog and

35 Ed Owen Barnes, *Air Power. UAVs: the Wider Context*, <http://www.airpowerstudies.co.uk/UAV-Book.pdf>, p. 95.

36 Medact, *Drones: the physical and psychological implications of a global theatre of war*, (2012), p 8.

37 See, Drone Wars UK, *Convenient Killing: Armed Drones and the 'Playstation' Mentality*, (2010).

38 See, for example, *Will Video Games Help Air Force Recruit Drone Pilots?*, Sharon Weinberger, AOL News, 10 August 2010, <http://www.aolnews.com/2010/08/19/air-force-working-on-video-game-to-recruit-drone-pilots/>

the West as a cowardly bully – that is unwilling to risk his own troops, but is happy to kill remotely.³⁹

It is not clear that these aims and objectives have been achieved nor how the MoD have engaged with this issue beyond its consideration in the *Joint Doctrine*.

24. Further consideration must also be given by the MoD to the psychological impact of drones on those living in affected areas. The *Living Under Drones* report, a joint research project undertaken by the International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic of Stanford Law School and the Global Justice Clinic at New York University School of Law, published in 2012, included a consideration of short and long-term psychological impact of drones in Pakistan.⁴⁰ The report found “Their presence [drones] terrorizes men, women, and children, giving rise to anxiety and psychological trauma among civilian communities.”⁴¹ More recently, in March 2013, the APPG was briefed by Dr Peter Schaapveld, a forensic psychologist, who had recently returned from a research trip to Yemen. His work found:

In total thirty-four persons were interviewed during the three day clinic with the assistance of a translator. For nearly all of the subjects the triggering incident for the resulting abnormal mental health condition was an air strike. All continue to be affected by and prevented from recovery by the presence of drones.... In terms of results virtually all interviewed were found to be suffering from formal abnormal psychological conditions. The majority (71%) were found to be suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Other severe abnormal psychological conditions were found including

39 Ministry of Defence, (n21) p. 5-10.

40 International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic of Stanford Law School and the Global Justice Clinic at New York University School of Law, *Living under Drones*, 2012, <http://livingunderdrones.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Stanford-NYU-LIVING-UNDER-DRONES.pdf> see, for example, pages 81, 86, 150-1.

41 *Living under Drones*, (n40) p.vii.

Anxiety, Depression, dissociative experiences, panic reactions, hysterical somatic reactions, exaggerated fear responses and abnormal grief reactions.⁴²

25. The UK Government's responses to questions on the psychological impact of drones on those living under them in Afghanistan have elicited limited information: "We have no reason to believe that aerial strikes from whatever platform have had an adverse effect in general on the mental health and wellbeing of civilians in Afghanistan."⁴³ There is no indication that any relevant surveys, monitoring or evaluation has been undertaken on this impact.

Recommendation

We would like the Committee to raise with Government:

- **the need to consider the psychological impact of drones on both operators and affected populations.**

THE NATURE OF THE BROADER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE UK'S MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC OBJECTIVES AND DRONE USE

26. The challenge faced by the UK, and its allies, in the development of a secure Afghanistan, are substantial. This task combines a need to effectively balance a range of sensitive political, diplomatic, military and development imperatives. We note the Government's commitment to "work ... to support the development of Afghan security, governance, infrastructure, economy and the provision of essential services." A sentiment echoed in the Government's most recent response to the Defence Committee's report, *Securing the Future of Afghanistan: Government Response to the Committee's*

42 Speaker's briefing, Dr Peter Schaapveld, 5 March 2013, available at <http://appgondrones.wordpress.com/>

43 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, to Tom Watson MP, Hansard 18 December 2012: Column 707W.

Tenth Report of Session 2012–13, in which a clear emphasis was placed upon the UK's commitment toward a stable, secure and sustainable Afghanistan.

27. The Group further notes the commitment as set out by the Government's Stabilisation Unit, to learn lessons from their experiences in complex environments. In this respect, the lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation of drone use in Afghanistan and their impact on the development imperatives within the stabilisation framework, is of concern. For example, according to responses to Parliamentary Questions, there has not been any research undertaken on:

- "retaliation attacks on local and international aid workers following drone strikes in Pakistan and Afghanistan"⁴⁴;
- details of those displaced by drone strikes as this is also not disaggregated by specific cause⁴⁵;
- the effect of drone strikes on livelihood strategies in the areas affected⁴⁶;
- the ability of the affected communities to access education⁴⁷;
- and, referring to states where the Department for International Development is at work, the impact of drone strikes on shifting livelihood strategies in the affected regions in Somalia and Yemen as this information is not disaggregated by specific cause⁴⁸.

28. It is also unclear if the Government is assessing the relationship between drones and political radicalisation in Afghanistan and Pakistan.⁴⁹ The Group

44 Justine Greening, Secretary of State for International Development to Anas Sarwar MP Hansard, 13 Jun 2013: Column 402W.

45 Justine Greening, Secretary of State for International Development to Anas Sarwar MP Hansard, 10 June 2013: Column 56W.

46 Justine Greening, Secretary of State for International Development to Anas Sarwar MP Hansard, 10 June 2013: Column 56W.

47 Alistair Burt, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to David Anderson MP, Hansard, 10 June 2013 : Column 88W.

48 Justine Greening, Secretary of State for International Development to Anas Sarwar MP, Hansard, 13 June 2013: Column 402W.

49 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, to David Anderson MP,

is concerned that the slide into asymmetric warfare, as emblematised by the use of drones, is contributing to political radicalisation in the countries where this technology is used. Though there has been relatively limited research carried out on this relationship, the Pew Center's surveys have shown, as at March 2013, the approval for U.S. drone strikes to target extremists in Pakistanis was at 5% of respondents with over two-thirds, at 68% disapproving of such actions.⁵⁰ We also acknowledge the opinion surveys, undertaken by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan in 2010 and 2011 which included a question related to drone strikes⁵¹ and request the Government to undertake similar research in the domestic context. More broadly, the Group has concerns as to the political and emotional counter-productivity of using this technology in this context.

29. The APPG advocate the need for the Government to undertake research on the relationship between drones and political radicalisation. The absence of the collection and analysis of all of this information seems to be a short-sighted strategy. This absence undermines the potential for lessons to be learnt from the UK's intervention in Afghanistan and the effective pursuit of the UK's broader stabilisation objective.

30. More broadly, in their most recent research into global attitudes toward drone strikes, carried out by the United States, the Pew Center found

In 31 nations, at least half disapprove of the U.S. conducting drone missile strikes targeting extremists in places such as Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. At least three-in-four hold this view in 15 countries from all corners of the world, including nations from the Middle East,

Hansard, Hansard, 26 Feb 2013: Column 422W.

50 Pew Center, *On Eve of Elections, a Dismal Public Mood in Pakistan*: Chapter 3: Attitudes toward the United States and American Policies, 7 May 2013. <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/05/07/chapter-3-attitudes-toward-the-united-states-and-american-policies/#drones-pakistan>

51 Alistair Burt, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to Nicholas Soames MP, Hansard, 16 May 2013: Column 393W.

Europe, Latin America and Asia. The only three countries where majorities support the drone campaign are Israel (64% approve), Kenya (56%), and the U.S. itself (61%).⁵²

31. In the context of Pakistan, research undertaken by Stanford University indicated that the use of drones was negatively impacting upon community coherence and the social fabric of affected communities. Examples provided include a reluctance to attend community events such as weddings and funerals, and important tribal dispute-resolution bodies. Further, children were being held back from attending school by their parents and adults were not tending their fields or undertaking their usual economic activities.⁵³ The Group has concerns that similar affects are occurring in Afghanistan and, significantly, the lack of monitoring and evaluation of such an impact is preventing relevant mitigating measures being put in place.

Recommendation.

The Group encourage the Committee to ask the Government to monitor and evaluate these aspects of drone use including carrying out detailed studies and evaluations in affected areas to measure:

- **Impact on social attitudes;**
- **Impact upon political radicalisation;**
- **Impact upon social stability within communities with particular reference to access to education, economic activities and livelihoods;**
- **Relationship between drone strikes and internal and external displacement and migration patterns;**

52 Pew Center, America's Global Image Remains More Positive than China's but Many See China Becoming World's Leading Power, Chapter 2: Attitudes toward the United States, 18 July 2013, p. 15.

53 *Living under Drones*, (n39), p. 88-99.

- **Relationship between the aims and objectives of other Government Departments operational in the areas concerned and any associated security impact of drone strikes.**

EXPORT

32. The UK Government has been a Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) Partner since 1987. In response to a Parliamentary Question, the Government stated that “The UK supports MTCR outreach to non-members to work towards wider adherence to the MTCR”⁵⁴ and has participated in outreach visits.⁵⁵ We would like to see the UK Government take a more robust and proactive approach to this outreach effort and give a greater commitment to raising awareness as to the UK Government’s activities in this sphere.

33. As the Defence Select Committee are aware, in evidence before the Arms Control Export Committees, the Foreign Secretary, William Hague, was clear on the Government’s commitment to the MTCR and drones,

We are an advocate of strong controls [for drones], and along with our partners in the MTCR we are keen to ensure that they remain appropriately controlled. I think that will be very important, and given that more and more countries are interested in such technology, effective and appropriate controls in this area will remain very important. That is not to say that we do not need to amend them over time as technology changes, but it will remain very important to have strong controls.

54 Baroness Warsi, Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Lord Hylton, Hansard, 14 December 2012: Column WA262.

55 Alistair Burt, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to Anas Sarwar MP, Hansard, 10 Jun 2013: Column 92W.

In the Committee's subsequent report, published on 17 July 2013, it was recommended that:

the Government states in its Response: a) what specific action it is taking within the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) to ensure that the MTCR is not weakened in relation to drones, components of drones and drone technology; and b) whether it considers that any changes to UK export controls in relation to drones, components of drones and drone technology are necessary to achieve the Government's stated policy, and, if so, what those changes are and the date by which they will be implemented. The Committees further recommend that the Government states its policy on approving export licences for drones.⁵⁶

Recommendation.

The Group supports the Defence Select Committee to:

- **draw on their work as part of the Arms Control Export Committees to ensure a consistent approach to the UK's participation in the Missile Technology Control Regime.**

THE SHAPE OF THE US/UK RELATIONSHIP AND DRONE WARFARE

34. The relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom has been impacted by the rise of drone warfare. While the United States has been routinely and globally criticised for their abuse of international law in their (mis)use of drones, recently, there have been concerns at allegations of UK complicity with the United States illegal drone programme. The Group also draws attention to the concerns that drones are carrying out extra-

56 Committees on Arms Export Controls, *Scrutiny of Arms Exports and Arms Control (2013): Scrutiny of the Government's UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report 2011 published in July 2012, the Government's Quarterly Reports from October 2011 to September 2012, and the Government's policies on arms exports and international arms control issues*, 17 July 2013, paras 25 and 90.

judicial killings as a counter-terrorism measure by the United States, in violation of international law.

Operation of US drone operations from UK soil

35. The APPG has been concerned at allegations that US illegal drones strikes are being operated by US personnel based in the UK.⁵⁷ Evidence which appears to support this allegation was provided by an advertisement for a System Administrator, based at RAF Waddington for BOSH Global Services. The role requires “Active US Secret” security clearance for which only US citizens are eligible and “Operational experience with UAV’s specifically PREDATORS”. A private assurance, in a letter from the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, has indicated that the US does not operate drones from either RAF or United States Visiting Force bases in the UK and those US personnel employed at RAF Waddington are working in support of UK drone operations in Afghanistan. This assurance is undermined however by the answers to Parliamentary Questions on this issue which have highlighted a lack of clarity about US activities at UK RAF bases and the limited oversight applied by the UK Government to these activities. For example, in one response, it was stated that “The Ministry of Defence does not hold information on whether RAF Croughton or RAF Molesworth are used to support US operations”.⁵⁸
36. More recently, a complaint has been submitted by the human rights NGO, Reprieve to the UK National Contact Point for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines alleging British Telecom’s complicity in US drone strikes in the provision of a telecommunications link between RAF Croughton to USAF Camp Lemonnier, the East African hub of US drone operations. A similarly vague response was received to a Parliamentary Question on this telecommunications link, which noted “RAF

57 See *US drones bombing Africa operated from RAF bases in the heart of the Lincolnshire countryside*, Mail on Sunday, 9 March 2013.

58 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces to Fabian Hamilton MP, Hansard 25 March 2013: Column 941W.

Croughton is part of a worldwide US Defence communications network, and the base supports a variety of communications activity” and reaffirmed the lack of information held on US operations at Croughton.⁵⁹ A further question on the operation of US drones from UK soil elicited the bald response that “The US does not operate remotely piloted aircraft systems from the UK”.⁶⁰ Yet it is unclear how, based on the aforementioned answers, such a statement can be made. These allegations and the failure by Government to provide adequate answers to questions raised by Parliamentarians are serious.

Recommendation.

The APPG encourage the Committee to take a robust approach to these issues and ask the Government to:

- **hold the United States Government to account on their international legal obligations as engaged by the drone programme;**
- **indicate how they are able to provide adequate oversight of the activities of the US Visiting Forces operational in the UK;**
- **increase public confidence on this issue through a transparent response to Freedom of Information requests and Parliamentary Questions, among other mechanisms.**

Citizenship stripping

37. The APPG are aware of serious allegations of the relationship between the deprivation of British citizenship, under section 56 of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, and the subsequent targeting of these individuals in US drone strikes. See, for example, the cases of Bilal al-Berjawi and Mohamed Sakr.⁶¹ While this issue may be beyond the remit of the

59 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces to John Hemming MP, Hansard 25 March 2013: Column 940W.

60 Andrew Robathan MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces to John Hemming MP, Hansard 25 March 2013 : Column 940W.

61 The Bureau of Investigative Journalism have undertaken an in-depth investigation into his issue, see, Chris Wood and Alice Ross, *Former British citizens killed by drone strikes after*

Defence Select Committee's inquiry, the Group draws attention to this issue because it engages both the shape of the US/UK intelligence relationship and with the UK's international and domestic human rights obligations.

Recommendation.

The APPG hope that attention will be paid by the Committee to the shape of the US/UK intelligence relationship as it relates to drones and an emphasis placed upon the protection of rights.

CONCLUSION

As noted above, the APPG on drones welcomes the scrutiny provided by this inquiry on the important issue of drones. The Group advocates the need by Government to increase transparency and accountability on the use of this technology and hopes that the work of the Defence Select Committee is able to make a key contribution to the debate on drones.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

We encourage the Committee to:

- engage robustly with the Government on the need to record the numbers and status of those killed by UK drone strikes;
- ask the Government to make this information available to Parliamentarians and the public alike;
- ensure the Government strikes the correct balance between releasing information and the protection of British forces.

The Group urge the Committee to ask the Government to:

passports revoked, 27 February 2013,
<http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2013/02/27/former-british-citizens-killed-by-drone-strikes-after-passports-revoked/>

- hold a departmental-led public engagement strategy on this technology, to facilitate the broader debate, including placing relevant evidence in the public domain;
- reconsider its approach to the application of transparency and accountability on the use of drone technology;
- take a more consistent approach to the terminology used to refer to this technology so that greater clarity can be achieved.

We would like the Committee to raise with Government:

- the need to consider the psychological impact of drones on both operators and affected populations.

The Group encourage the Committee to ask the Government to monitor and evaluate this aspect of drone use including carrying out detailed studies and evaluations in affected areas to measure:

- Impact on social attitudes;
- Impact upon political radicalisation;
- Impact upon social stability within communities with particular reference to access to education, economic activities and livelihoods;
- Relationship between drone strikes and internal and external displacement and migration patterns;
- Relationship between the aims and objectives of other Government Departments operational in the areas concerned and any security impact of drone strikes.

The Group supports the Defence Select Committee to:

- draw on their work as part of the Arms Control Export Committees to ensure a consistent approach to the UK's participation in the Missile Technology Control Regime.

The APPG encourage the Committee to take a robust approach to these issues and ask the Government to:

- hold the United States Government to account on their international legal obligations as engaged by the drone programme;
- indicate how they are able to provide adequate oversight of the activities of the US Visiting Forces operational in the UK;
- increase public confidence on this issue through a transparent response to Freedom of Information requests and Parliamentary Questions, among other mechanisms.

The APPG hope that attention will be paid by the Committee to the shape of the US/UK intelligence relationship as it relates to drones and an emphasis placed upon the protection of rights.

This submission is made by the following named officers, on behalf of the All Party Parliamentary Group on drones:

Chair: Tom Watson MP (Lab);

Vice Chairs: Baroness Stern (CB); Zac Goldsmith (Con)

Treasurer: John Hemming MP (LD);

Secretary is David Anderson MP (Lab).

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