Details exist but there is no defined tangible chain of analysis concerning the selection of the target, the monitoring of the target, and finally, the assassination of the target

Preparing a MQ-9 Reaper for flight during Combat Hammer
(Staff Sgt. N.B. / Public Domain)

The Intelligence Cycle of Targeted Killing in the United States

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The United States has been using Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) to assassinate terrorist targets since its first RPA strike on November 3, 2002, when a U.S. Predator fired a hellfire missile at a car traveling through the Mar'ib province of Yemen. The intelligence cycle of this targeted killing process is murky at best, and the policy has changed throughout the successive administrations of U.S. presidents. Details exist but there is no defined tangible chain of analysis concerning the selection of the target, the monitoring of the target, and finally, the assassination of the target. This paper attempts to elucidate the intelligence chain of analysis concerning American targeted killing and examine how the intelligence cycle of targeted killing varies through successive presidential administrations.

This paper will begin with a short analysis of relevant literature, although sources concerning this topic are scarce. The occurrence of targeted killings of U.S. citizens will also be explained in the literature section. The paper will continue with an elaboration of a generic intelligence cycle model, which will be used to illustrate the intelligence cycle of U.S. targeted killings using both the Reaper and the Predator RPA.[1] The paper will then address differences in the intelligence cycles and processes that have occurred between successive presidents since targeted killing first began in 2002 with President George W. Bush. Lastly, the paper will provide policy prescriptions in reference to improving targeted killing in the Middle East and Africa.

WHAT DOES THE LITERATURE SAY?

The concept of targeted killing requires some elaboration so the reader can understand how the process works. The United States first developed its own RPAs (previously known as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) under the Clinton administration. Originally, the RPAs were used for surveillance and reconnaissance, but, eventually, after witnessing a similar strategy used by Israel, the idea emerged that Hellfire Missiles could be strapped onto RPAs to destroy targets. RPAs have been devel-

oped by the Israelis for reconnaissance, surveillance, and targeted killing during the Intifadas. However, the Israelis were not keen on sharing the technology with the United States. U.S. companies such as Boeing and Northrop Grumman subsequently developed the U.S. RPA technology used for the surveillance and targeted killing of terrorists.

Targeted killing is defined as the pursuit and assassination of terrorists. RPAs are mostly used for reconnaissance, in addition to surveillance and assassination. The targets are found and/or hunted on a regular basis by pilots located primarily at Creech Air Force Base outside Las Vegas, Nevada, or the Air Operations Center (AOC) at al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar. Pilots and sensor operators are trained at Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo, New Mexico. Sensor operators help determine wind speeds and weather conditions to assist the pilots, as well as guide the Hellfire missile to the target once fired. The pilot is responsible for remotely flying the RPA. Pilots and sensor operators sit next to one another in tractor trailer storage containers, communicating constantly, as they fly RPAs located on bases across the Middle East and Africa. The technology is located in enclosed tractor trailers like those that are used on semis to quickly move and transport the technology. Pilots can see within about ten feet of the target on a clear day, so they will most likely never see the RPAs that they are operating. All care and maintenance of the RPAs occurs at the bases in the Middle East and Africa. The RPAs are tracked and monitored by teams commonly known as the Distributed Common Ground System (DCGS), which are located all over the world.

When a target is located and the occasion is suitable for assassination, one or two Hellfire Missiles that have been strapped to an RPA are used to kill the target. There is also a GBU-12 Paveway II bomb or 500-pound bomb strapped on to the RPA. Typically, a short lapse occurs after firing due to all the integrated communication systems throughout the world that are working together. Pilots and sensor operators will usually return

to the scene a few minutes after firing to ensure that the target is dead and to pursue more targets, (often called squirters) if necessary. The United States does not keep track of its own casualties or at least casualty lists are not published and declassified for public consumption. Think tanks and publications such as *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism* and *The Long War Journal* keep track of targeted killing data independently. However, the U.S. Air Force, which has published data on Afghanistan, and U.S. presidential administrations disagree with their high numbers.

As time has progressed, U.S. presidents have come to rely on RPAs to support military and intelligence operations throughout the world, often assassinating targets as needed. President George W. Bush ordered approximately two RPA strikes per day during his presidency, and President Barack Obama ordered around ten RPA strikes per day.[2] On average, President Donald Trump has ordered less than ten RPA strikes per day, slightly less than President Obama.[3] The strikes have killed thousands of people in countries including Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen in the pursuit of terrorists. Many of the casualties have been the result of "collateral damage," and countries such as Pakistan have citizenry suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of the constant noise of RPAs flying over their heads. On a positive note, several high-value terrorists have been assassinated, including Abdullah Haqqani and Abu Saif al-Jaziri. However, the collateral damage rates for these strikes are problematic and, as seen in Afghanistan, are at times as high as 11 civilians per targeted terrorist.[4] These rates are tricky to pinpoint, as the people who are identified as "noncombatants" by the local population may actually be lesser combatants or low-level terrorists within the organization.

The established literature that discusses how the intelligence cycle of targeted killing works is based on anecdotal stories and personal experiences. Academic research literature does not exist. For example, the first chapter in Andrew Cockburn's book *Kill Chain* tells a detailed true story of a targeted killing attack gone awry in Afghanistan in 2010.[5] In the story, the pilot and sensor operator are given a convoy to target, which unbeknownst to them turns out to be made up of non-combatant women and children. The pilot and sensor operator are handed down the decision by higher ups who decide who and what to target. In this instance, the

Air Force and intelligence agencies do not fair favorably. As illuminated by Cockburn's anecdote, the process of targeted killing appears to be quite haphazard and possibly criminal due to the various mistakes and lapses in judgement that occur. Cockburn asserts that Air Force personnel fire the Hellfire missiles just to kill *some* of the enemy. There is very little oversight over the pilot and sensor operator in this story.

In other books, such as *Predator: The remote-control air war over Iraq and Afghanistan: a pilot's story,* Lt. Colonel Matt J. Martin talks about his experiences as a RPA pilot.[6] As made evident in his book, Martin is given a significant amount of leeway as to which people should be targeted. Often, Martin would follow his assigned target for days before striking. He states: "My job was to find targets, al-Zarqawi if I were lucky. I was a patient, silent hunter. I was armed."[7] Other times, Martin would find something interesting, start following the target, and would then kill if it was a terrorist suspect. Most likely, Martin was working under President W. Bush. In fact, one could argue that pilots and sensor operators are given unrestricted authority as to whom to target. Although the president and his administration have a wish list, in many instances the everyday targeting could be delegated to Air Force personnel. However, after numerous interviews with Creech Air Base personnel, it was affirmed that pilots and sensor operators never pick a target, nor do they have any authority over who is targeted.[8] This decision is made by Air Operations Center administration or even higher up the chain of command.

THE INTELLIGENCE CYCLE

There are many models of the intelligence cycle. For the purpose of simplicity, we will use the basic intelligence cycle on the CIA's website, which has five stages. This process is illustrated in *Figure 1: The Intelligence Cycle.* The first stage is planning and direction. In this stage, the consumer will ask for the intelligence that they need. The consumer may be anyone from the president of the United States to leadership in the CIA or FBI. Military intelligence or the Department of Defense may also be a consumer. In the next step, entitled "collection," information will be gathered from numerous sources both covertly and overtly by military intelligence, the CIA, FBI, or Department of Homeland Security. In the third stage, the data will be processed and put into an intelligence report. The fourth stage

includes analysis and production, where the effects of the information are analyzed. For example, it will be determined what is occurring, why certain situations are occurring, what could possibly occur next, and lastly, how it affects the actor that asked for the intelligence or other actors. In the last step of the intelligence cycle, the information will be disseminated to the original requesting party, in addition to interested third parties that may need to know the intelligence.[9]

Figure 1: The Intelligence Cycle[10]

Although this is a basic model, veteran Air Force officer Arthur S. Hulnick found numerous problems with the model that should be acknowledged. The first problem with this model is that policymakers usually do not ask for intelligence. Rather, intelligence personnel typically predict the needs of policymakers and take the initiative to find the information that is deemed necessary. In the next step of the intelligence cycle process, gaps of information will be filled once the process is underway. Some information will take months to find and the process is not neat and tidy. In fact, the process may occur in a roundabout way where parties communicate back and forth concerning information. Hulnick states that the real drivers of the intelligence cycle are intelligence managers who are usually operating parallel to policymakers. In many instances, information sharing does not occur between intelligence agencies and policymakers due to "information restriction, psychological barriers, fear of compromising sources, and security concerns."[11] Intelligence personnel will often hold back the most pertinent and necessary information until the generic reports have been delivered to senior policy officials. For the most part, the purpose of withholding information is to high-

light certain personnel or to score brown-nosing points with officials. Hulnick points out that these problems occur when the intelligence cycle confronts the real world.

The targeted-killing intelligence cycle does not necessarily follow this model either, but it does give us somewhere to start. Like Hulnick states: "The intelligence cycle is a flawed vision, and thus poor theory. One need only ask those who have toiled in the fields of intelligence."[12] In the targeted-killing intelligence model, the planning and direction stage can be initiated by numerous actors. These actors may include the president, the president's administration, the CIA, the FBI, top military personnel, or on-the-ground Air Force personnel. There are two kinds of targeted killing strikes—personality and signature strikes—although policymakers, not the U.S. Air Force, use this language. Personality strikes are targeted attacks on a person who has been identified as a terrorist leader. These strikes are usually ordered by the president or top officials, depending on the administration in power. A signature strike targets a militant who might be unknown but who has been determined through patterns of life and surveillance to be a part of a terrorist organization. In the case of signature strikes, Air Force personnel are often gathering information, analyzing it, and then making decisions, therefore deciding and carrying out stages two through five. Personality strikes were initiated by President Bush in Afghanistan. The "Terror Tuesday" meetings, described in detail below, that President Obama controlled were predominately organized for personality strikes. It is likely that President Obama's administration perfected, if not created, the signature strike.

Personality strikes are usually determined by intelligence collected from the CIA and were initiated by President Bush. In carrying out a personality strike, the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) first familiarizes Special Forces with a particular geographical area. The Department of Defense's Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) then plans RPA strikes in conjunction with the Air Force and SOCOM. SOCOM is the parent organization of JSOC, whose budget is entirely classified. Personality strikes under the Bush and Obama administrations were strictly controlled by the president and his top aides. Ultimately, however, the president and his administration made the decision as to who was to be assassinated. Under President Trump, the choice of targets has been delegated to high-ranking intelli-

gence and military personnel. These differences between administrations will be discussed in the next section concerning the styles of various administrations. The targets may be found or chosen by numerous people along the way, depending on the strike style. That being said, it is not unlikely for pilots or sensor operators to begin following a person of interest and to then target a person once their value is assessed in signature strikes, but the AOC will make this decision. The CIA, FBI, and other intelligence agencies may also request that the Air Force look for certain people that are suspected to be within the immediate area.
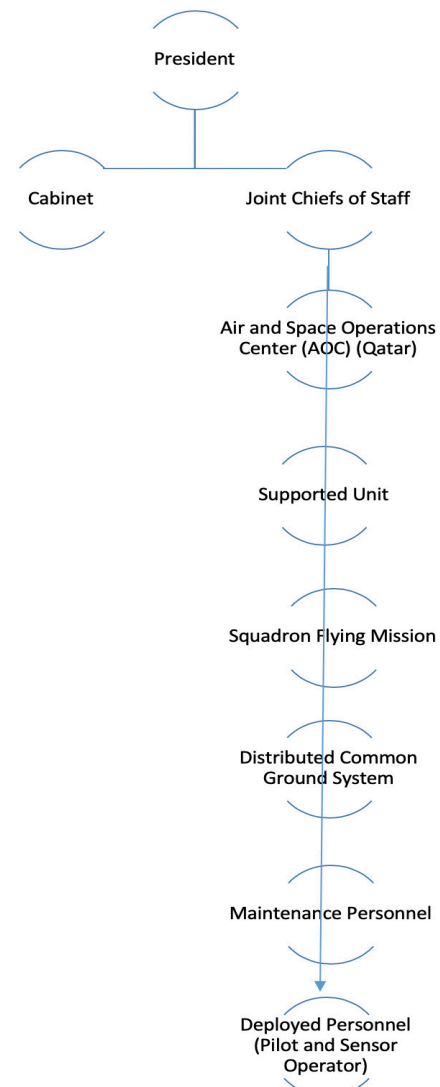
Once a target is found, permission may be granted by the president and his administration, or there may have been an existing order for that person the entire time. The existing orders frequently refer to kill lists. In carrying out the strike, sensor operators and pilots must abide by the laws of war. For example, places of worship cannot be targeted and civilians should not be harmed. While there is extreme caution to prevent civilian casualties, collateral damage may occur.

As a side note, numerous sources have published reports about PTSD among Air Force RPA pilots and sensor operators, stating that the numbers are extremely high.[13] However, after the author spent a week at Creech Air Force Base, it was found that this information simply is not true. According to Colonel Julian Cheater and other Air Force personnel, the PTSD rate is around three-to-five percent, which is not significantly different from the U.S. population as a whole. In fact, the Air Force has had to include signing bonuses up to USD 175,000 for a five-year contract or USD 35,000 for each additional year of service as a result of a shortage of pilots and sensor operators, not PTSD.[14]

The following figure (*Figure 2: The Intelligence Cycle of Targeted Killing: A Preliminary Creation*) is a basic diagram of the intelligence cycle of targeted killing in the Air Force. It has more detail at the lower end of the cycle than the administrative side above AOC. However, with time and more research, this other side of the process will be furthered elaborated on. It is known that the order for the target comes from higher up the chain than the AOC. This may be the president, his staff, the Joints Chiefs of Staff, the CIA, the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, or military intelligence. A Judge Advocate General (JAG) next approves all strikes at the AOC in Qatar.[15] The order is then given to the AOC.

The AOC finds the proper supported unit, which may be RPA or a jet such as an F-16. The proper squadron is located and the DCGS, which controls communication between the various components throughout the world, is contacted. Most likely, the RPA maintenance on the ground in Qatar is the primary contact in this step of the DCGS. Lastly, maintenance personnel and the deployed personnel are given notice before the mission occurs. The RPA takes off from the base, flown by pilots and sensor operators at AOC, and is then taken over mid-air by pilots at Creech. It takes approximately seventy-two hours from the time that AOC is alerted to the assassination of the target.[16] The next section of the paper will look at the targeted killing cycle of intelligence under successive presidents.

Figure 2: The Intelligence Cycle of Targeted Killing - A Preliminary Creation

United States President George W. Bush speaks at the Pentagon Memorial dedication ceremony
(Cherie Cullen / Public Domain)

TARGETED KILLING UNDER PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

Targeted killing pursued by an American president against his enemies is not a unique occurrence. Although the Hague Convention of 1907 outlawed the assassination of foreign leaders and the 1949 Geneva Convention followed suit, discrepancies between laws applied during peacetime and wartime have allowed presidents to subjectively pursue assassination. As an example, numerous U.S. presidents gave the order to assassinate Fidel Castro but failed. According to Castro's former secret-service chief, it is estimated that Castro received a total of 634 attempts on his life.[17] The CIA was responsible for many of those assassination attempts, including bizarre strategies such as an exploding cigar or exploding underwater seashell.[18] From Eisenhower to Clinton, every president at least tried to get rid of Castro, assassinate him, or both.[19] American presidents also played a role in the assassination attempts against Adolf Hitler. The Cold War contained a flurry of eradication attempts against foreign leaders. At one point, it became so bad that Congress passed the War Powers Resolution Act in 1973 trying to curb the war powers of the presidency and the office's power in general, although the act has had little success. It has also been illegal for a president to assassinate any enemy since 1976 when President Gerald Ford passed an executive order outlawing the practice. The culmination of the Iran-Contra scandal led to the final reigning in of the CIA and President Ronald Reagan. However, the CIA has almost returned to its previous levels of power, targeting terrorists with the acquiescence of the president, including targeting and killing several American citizens with RPAs without any due process.

President Bush played a major role in the rejuvenation of the powers of the CIA and assassination when Congress passed his Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) in 2001, in an effort to pursue all the attackers responsible for the September 11 attacks. The AUMF empowered the president "to use all necessary and appropriate force" in pursuit of those responsible for the terrorist attacks. Under the AUMF, President Bush began authorizing targeted killing in Yemen in 2002. Bush, in comparison to President Obama, was much less trigger happy when it came to targeted killing. He allowed the CIA to conduct approximately fifty-one RPA strikes, particularly in Pakistan (although he also targeted Afghanistan and Yemen), where he had the agreement of President Musharraf to conduct the strikes. Fewer than 600 people were killed as a result of RPA strikes under the Bush administration.[20] Under President Bush, the CIA would instruct the Air Force on where to find and kill targets. President Bush had given his consent to the CIA to find and kill dangerous terrorists, mostly al-Qaeda members, but he did not play a large role in the day-to-day decision making. After allowing the United States to use its airspace, Pakistan would either take credit under its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) or remain silent about the strikes. Problematically, things were falling from the sky on a regular basis, so Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf

found it difficult to keep up the ruse.

TARGETED KILLING UNDER PRESIDENT BARACK H. OBAMA

While President Obama criticized President Bush for being too aggressive on many aspects of counterterrorism, when it came to targeted killings, President Obama was much more aggressive than President Bush and used RPAs to a much greater extent to conduct targeted killings. He stated: "The Bush administration has not acted aggressively enough to go after al-Qaeda's leadership. I would be clear that if Pakistan cannot or will not take out al-Qaeda leadership when we have actionable intelligence about their whereabouts, we will act to protect the American people. There can be no safe haven for al-Qaeda terrorists who killed thousands of Americans and threaten our homeland today."[21]
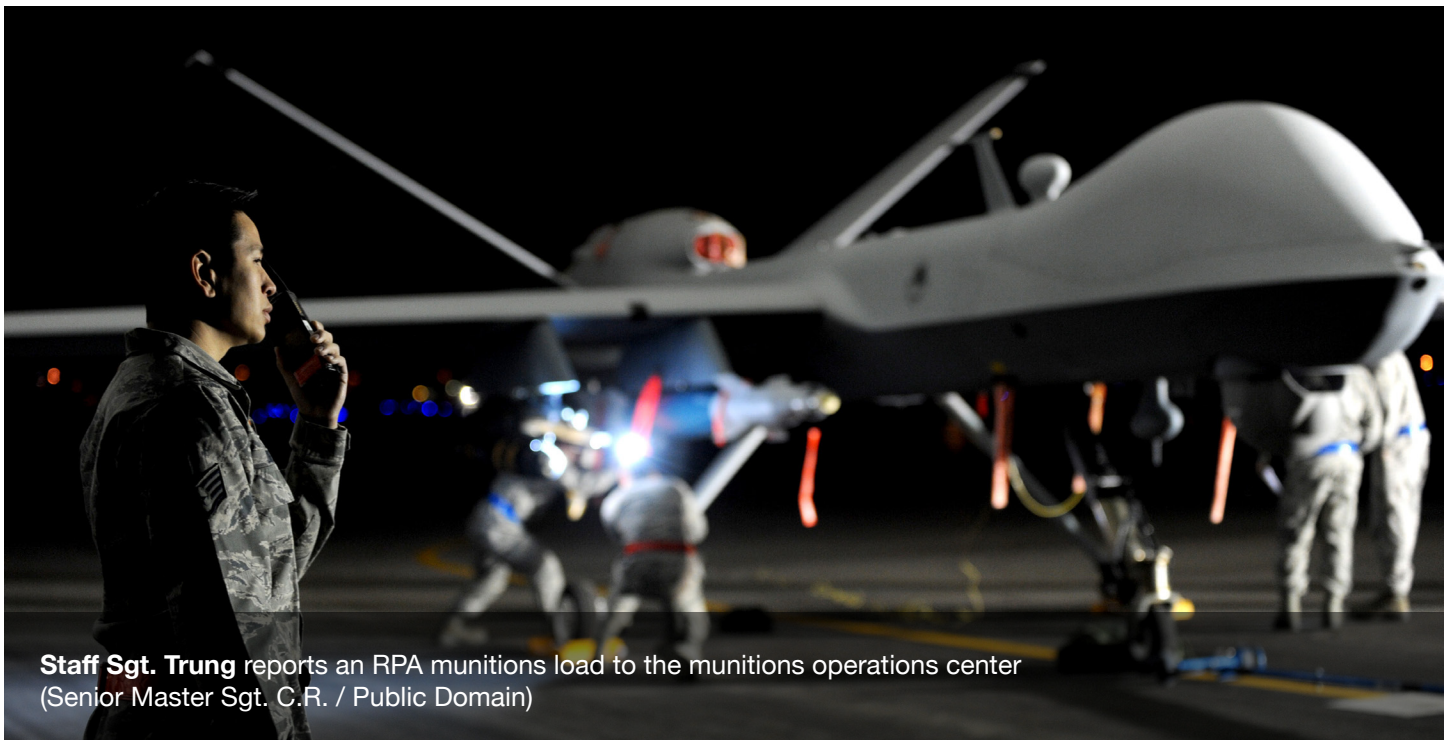
Three days into his presidency, President Obama ordered his first RPA strikes in Pakistan. President Obama expanded the location of targeted killing throughout the Middle East and Africa by adding Libya, Nigeria, Iraq, Syria, and Somalia to the already targeted Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen. The daily number of strikes increased to five times what President Bush had authorized.[22]

If President Bush was a macro-manager of targeted killing, President Obama was a micro-manager when it came to the targeted killing process. Known as the somewhat mythical "Terror Tuesdays," pertinent Obama administration officials and high-ranking military officials would sit around a table in the White House Situation Room and study the faces of numerous terrorists. This information was presented in a condensed format called baseball cards. Using the information on the baseball cards, President Obama took around fifty-eight days to sign off on a target—forces would then have sixty days to carry out a strike against the target.[23] President Obama would study the set of biographies given to him, becoming the preeminent decision maker in who would be killed. He would even get interrupted during family time to make a decision to kill a target. Most likely, these interruptions only occurred in a sticky situation where there might be civilian deaths involved. These "Terror Tuesday" meetings formed the kill lists for personality strikes. These people were also placed on no-fly and selectee lists. There were almost 1 million people on this list, including over 5,000 Americans, during Obama's presidency.[24]

For President Obama, there was a two-part process of an approval for an RPA strike. JSOC Task Force 48-4 would cultivate a case for the person alongside other intelligence agencies to develop and authorize a target. The authorization and action would ultimately be given to the president. JSOC would begin by creating a case and then would pass the target on to the command center in the area, then the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and then to the Secretary of Defense. It was then given to the Principals Committee of the National Security Council. Finally, President Obama would sign off on it.[25]

Thomas E. Donilon, President Obama's National Security Advisor stated: "[Obama] is determined to make these decisions about how far and wide these operations will go. His view is that he is responsible for the position of the United States in the world. He's determined to keep the tether pretty short."[26] William M. Daley, Obama's Chief of Staff in 2011, stated: "One guy gets knocked off and the guy's driver who's number twenty-one becomes [number] twenty? At what point are you just filling the bucket with numbers?"[27] President Obama was highly criticized for his "whack-a-mole" approach, careless targeting, falsified RPA casualty numbers, and high number of civilian deaths. After his promise to close Guantanamo Bay Prison in Cuba and stop the torture of detainees, President Obama's copious use of RPA strikes appeared like a *Twilight Zone* episode to liberals. However, the American public was largely ignorant of what was going on with RPA strikes, as the media rarely researched and reported on the strikes. After President Obama authorized the killing of a U.S. citizen, Anwar al-Awlaki, with an RPA strike on September 30, 2011, and targeted his sixteen-year-old-son, Abdurahman Anwar al-Awlaki, two weeks later, he realized that the legal justification for targeted killing needed some improvement, particularly in relation to killing American citizens. President Obama worked with the Department of Justice to develop the *White Paper*, which allows the military to kill American citizens outside of the United States for suspected terrorist activity, particularly if the person is "considered" an imminent threat.[28] The press rarely covered President Obama's use of RPA strikes or the administration's murder of U.S. citizens. One could even argue that the *White Paper* allowed RPA strikes against U.S. citizens within the United States, although to date this has not occurred.

Staff Sgt. Trung reports an RPA munitions load to the munitions operations center (Senior Master Sgt. C.R. / Public Domain)

In May 2013, President Obama's aides stated that signature strikes, which first began under President Bush, would be phased out. In a speech Obama delivered in May 2013, he vowed to put the fight against terrorists on better legal footing. His administration then released a three-page paper delineating the circumstances under which RPAs could strike. Under the new policy, pilots could only hit targets when there was "near certainty" that civilians would not be injured. Unfortunately, officials never explained the criteria and the rules did not apply in "areas of active hostilities."[29] Later Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan were all marked as "areas of active hostilities," as were some parts of Pakistan. The speech and paper lacked clear criteria and the discontinuation of signature strikes failed to occur with the appearance of ISIS in Iraq and Syria. President Obama continued using signature strikes until the end of his presidency.[30]

TARGETED KILLING UNDER PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

In comparison to the Obama administration, the Trump administration has executed a similar amount of strikes, although the numbers are slightly fewer, with over nine strikes per day.[31] Concerning civilian casualties, it is still too early to make comparisons between administrations. President Trump has experienced more criticism regarding his authorization of targeted killings, possibly because he is a Republican president beset by a predominately liberal press corps and academia. In comparison,

very little attention was paid to President Obama's use of RPAs by both the press and academics, and not much was published concerning the effects of targeted killing and RPA warfare. The increase in publications by a left-leaning press with a combative relationship with the president has complicated President Trump's ability to continue to pursue RPA campaigns. This political pressure partially explains why President Trump has delegated the selection of targets to subordinates in the Department of Defense.[32]

The Trump administration's Principles, Standards, and Procedures (PSP) plan was approved on September 14, 2017. Under this plan, President Trump sustained President Obama's policies by continuing to target high-value targets who are a "continuing and imminent threat" to Americans.[33] In addition, President Trump expanded the policy to include "foot-soldier jihadists with no special skills or leadership roles." Foot-soldier jihadists were targeted under President Obama but were not delineated by his administration as targets. Also, proposed RPA attacks and raids are no longer subject to high-level vetting by the Oval Office. Like the Obama administration, there is no targeting of civilians. President Trump's plan extended the "pattern of giving broader day-to-day authority to the Pentagon and the CIA—authorizing the agencies to decide when and how to conduct high-risk counterterrorism operations."[34] The CIA is also able to conduct covert RPA strikes. Under this plan, high-level approval is still needed to start conducting

strikes in new countries. These strikes require "country plans" that would be reviewed annually. Under international law, the United States still needs need to obtain consent from a country's leaders to use strikes on foreign soil.

As a side note, in comparison to President Obama, President Trump is not shy about publicly stating that the United States targets terrorist families. Families were regularly killed under President Obama. From a rhetoric standpoint, President Obama was careful to say that civilians were never targeted. However, previously mentioned think-tank numbers argue that civilians were frequently targeted under the Obama administration. The value of the target was high enough to endure the political backlash from killing wives and children. President Trump, on the other hand, directly stated on the campaign trail in 2015 that the families of terrorists should be targeted at times. President Trump said on *Fox and Friends* that, "when you get these terrorists, you have to take out their families. They care about their lives, don't kid yourself. But they say they don't care about their lives. You have to take out their families."[35] Although his statement has been highly criticized, it is worth noting that male terrorists will often surround themselves with women and children so that they are less likely to be targeted. In essence, women and children are treated as human shields.

In comparison, the intelligence cycle of President Trump concerning targeted killing is quite similar to that of President Bush. Like President Bush, President Trump has delegated many of the daily decisions to subordinates. President Trump has called for high-value targets to be terminated, and the CIA has planned, collected, processed, analyzed, and disseminated the output needed for high-value targets. Moreover, President Trump does not review daily targets. It is likely that, for some targets, President Trump must give the orders, but targeted killing has been handed down to the personnel in the CIA, and the CIA relies on the Air Force to carry out the missions. Signature strikes and personality strikes are still occurring, but President Trump rarely engages in determining the kill list.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS

In conclusion, RPA strikes have recently been handed to agencies within the Department of Defense by the Trump administration. The policies among Presidents Bush, Obama, and Trump have ebbed and flowed depending on who is in power. However, RPA strikes are still occurring, and the numbers are relatively consistent between Presidents Obama and Trump, although President's Trump's numbers are slightly lower. The intelligence cycle varies depending on whether the strike is a signature strike or personality strike. The CIA plays a large role in gathering information for personality strikes although they also participate in signature strikes. In signature strikes, the Air Force and military intelligence are primarily responsible for gathering intelligence and analyzing it. However, more research needs to be done to pinpoint the exact process, particularly above the AOC. This paper is an attempt at an initial intelligence process concerning targeted killing. The details need to be elaborated on and pilots and sensor operators are the best people to talk to concerning the intelligence cycle of targeted killing.

From a policy prescription perspective, it has been hinted at several times in this paper that the process needs oversight and an actual protocol put into place. Currently, the president and his or her personnel have too much leeway in determining who gets killed. There needs to be more oversight instead of a handful of people acting as both judge and jury to determine death sentences for suspected terrorists. This is particularly true in regard to the numerous American citizens who have been killed without due process by both Bush and Obama.

Although extremely useful, RPA strikes should not be used unless there is a threat of imminent danger. RPA strikes are expedient when an attack is pending or a terrorist group leader is within sight. Children, families, and civilian property, on the other hand, are not threats. Legal scholars Amos Guiora and Jeffrey Brand have suggested the establishment of RPA courts to legitimize and put legal protections into the targeting process. This idea includes a court containing 24 Article III justices, 12 justices from the district courts, and 12 justices from the Court of Appeals. While Guiora and Brand's specific idea of an RPA court is too difficult and cumbersome to implement in full, there should at least be a list of predetermined criteria that is employed when deliberating about whether or not to conduct a strike. An RPA court including a smaller number of competent judges—perhaps ten or less—could be chosen and approved by the Senate to help with this process. While this targeted-killing war machine deserves high respect

for its ability to kill terrorists, it should be considerably regulated and infrequently used by the U.S. government and military.[36]

[1] The Predator was phased out at the end of 2018 and the sole targeted killing RPA is the Reaper.

[2] Christine Sixta Rinehart, *Drones and Targeted Killing in the Middle East and North Africa, An Appraisal of American Counterterrorism Policies* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016).

[3] Christine Sixta Rinehart, "Trump's Drone Policy: The Continuation of a Legacy," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs,* June 15, 2018, accessed July 23, 2018, https://www.georgetownjournalofinternationalaffairs.org/online-edition/2018/6/14/trumps-drone-policy-the-continuation-of-a-legacy.

[4] Christine Sixta Rinehart, *Drones and Targeted Killing in the Middle East and North Africa, An Appraisal of American Counterterrorism Policies* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 117.

[5] Andrew Cockburn, *Kill Chain, The Rise of the High-Tech Assassins* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2015).

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[8] Colonel Julian Cheater, Interview by Author, Creech Air Force Base, November 29, 2018.

[9] The Central Intelligence Agency, "Kid's Zone," *The Central Intelligence Agency*, March 23, 2013, accessed July 23, 2018, https://www.cia.gov/kids-page/6-12th-grade/who-we-are-what-we-do/the-intelligence-cycle.html

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[11] Arthur S. Hulnick, "The Intelligence Cycle" in *Intelligence: The Secret World of Spies, An Anthology*, ed. Loch K. Johnson and James J. Wirtz, 4th Ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 82.

[12] Arthur S. Hulnick, "The Intelligence Cycle" in *Intelligence: The Secret World of Spies, An Anthology*, ed. Loch K. Johnson and James J. Wirtz, 4th Ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 92.

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[14] Stephen Losey, "Air Force offers bonuses up to $175,000 for drone pilots," *Air Force Times*, October 24, 2016, accessed July 23, 2018, https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2016/10/24/air-force-offers-bonuses-up-to-175000-for-drone-pilots/.

[15] *Figure 2: The Intelligence Cycle of Targeted Killing: A Preliminary Creation*

[16] Captain OL, Interview by Author, Creech Air Force Base, November 26, 2018.

[17] Alexander Smith, "Assassination Attempts," NBC News, November 28, 2016, accessed August 1, 2018, https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/fidel-castros-death/fidel-castro-cia-s-7-most-bizarre-assassination-attempts-n688951.

[18] Alexander Smith, "Assassination Attempts," NBC News, November 28, 2016, accessed August 1, 2018, https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/fidel-castros-death/fidel-castro-cia-s-7-most-bizarre-assassination-attempts-n688951.

[19] Charlotte England, "All the US Presidents Fidel Castro outlasted, and how they dealt with the Cuban Leader," *The Independent*, November 26, 2016, accessed August 1, 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/fidel-castro-us-presidents-outlasted-and-how-they-dealt-with-him-eisenhower-kennedy-johnson-nix-

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