

INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEES: NOT INFORMED ABOUT TORTURE, NOT INFORMED ABOUT DRONE CASUALTIES, NOT INFORMED ABOUT US PERSON SPYING

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch released reports on US drone killings today. For the moment, I'm going to outsource reading the reports to Sarah Knuckey's excellent post.

Both reports (per Knuckey) point to individual drone strikes on civilians that may or probably violate international law.

Specific US strikes killed civilians in violation of the law and US policy. These are the first major reports by each organization detailing field investigations into specific strikes. HRW reviewed six strikes in Yemen (occurring between December 2009 and April 2013). HRW concluded that two of the strikes violated international law (pp. 54, 67), four may have (pp. 30, 39, 43, 60), and none of the six appeared to have complied with Obama's May 2013 Presidential Policy Guidance (p. 89). AI reviewed all 45 reported Pakistan strikes between January 2012-August 2013, and investigated nine in detail. AI's legal findings include that "evidence indicates" that an October 2012 strike unlawfully killed a grandmother and injured eight children (p. 23), and AI had "serious concerns" that a July 2012 strike that killed 18 and injured 22 (p. 24) may have been a

war crime or extrajudicial execution (p. 27). AI also investigated a number of strikes on apparent rescuers (those who came to the scene of a first strike to help the wounded), which it concluded may have been illegal (pp. 28-30). Neither report seeks to assess the total number or rate of civilian casualties for all strikes.

[snip]

Investigations and accountability obligations. AI states that the US has legal obligations to investigate any cases where there are “reasonable grounds to indicate that unlawful killings have occurred,” and to prosecute, and remedy where appropriate (pp. 35-37). HRW similarly states that the US has a duty to investigate violations of the laws of war, and that government secrecy effectively denies victims’ right to redress (p. 87). Both reports also state the US should provide compensation or condolence payments for any civilian harm, but that neither organization is aware of the US having done this (AI, p. 39; HRW, p. 88).

This documentation of civilian casualties, of course, provides further evidence Dianne Feinstein and Mike Rogers’ claims about civilian casualties are false.

But we knew that.

Which means, in addition to the fact that we’re violating international law with some of our drone killings, we also are seeing a recurrent trend.

Even the CIA’s own lawyer agreed that CIA didn’t properly inform Congress, including the Intelligence Committees, about torture.

We’re learning that vast parts of the NSA’s spying – including spying that collects US

person data – remains largely hidden from the Intelligence Committees.

And we have yet more proof they have been misinformed about drone killings.

Is there some dubiously legal program the Intelligence Community has fully informed Congress on?