

# **Into the Fire**

**The dangers of re-deploying British  
Reaper drones after Afghanistan**

September 2014

**DRONE WARS UK**

## **About Drone Wars UK**

Drone Wars UK is a small British NGO, founded in the Spring of 2010, to undertake research, education and campaigning on the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and the wider issue of remote warfare. Drone Wars UK has become recognised internationally as a credible and reliable source of information on the use of drones and unmanned technology with its research used by journalists, lawyers, human rights organisation and campaigners.. Drone Wars UK has been one of the key voices publicly expressing serious concerns about the expansion of this new way to wage war.

## **Terminology**

Various terms are used to describe unmanned aircraft including Remotely Piloted Air Vehicles or Systems (RPAS), Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and drones. This briefing uses the terms interchangeably.

Written by Chris Cole  
Published by Drone Wars UK  
September 2014

Drone Wars UK  
Peace House  
19 Paradise Street  
Oxford OX1 1LD  
[www.dronewars.net](http://www.dronewars.net)  
[info@dronewars.net](mailto:info@dronewars.net)

# CONTENTS

## **Executive Summary**

### **One: UK armed drone operations 2004 - 2014**

- A brief history of UK armed drone operations
- Types of UK armed drone operations
- Statistics on UK armed drone operations

### **Two: The end of NATO operations in Afghanistan**

- NATO in Afghanistan
- UK drones post-2014
- Where next for the UK's armed drones?

### **Three: The dangers of redeploying UK drones after Afghanistan**

- The risk of becoming embroiled in armed conflict
- Increased threat of terrorist attacks
- Normalising the deployment of drones diminishes global security

## **Conclusion**

### **Appendix 1: A long-term base for the UK's Reapers?**

### **Appendix 2: Recommendations to UK Government on use of armed drones**

## Executive Summary

- UK forces have used armed drones to undertake airstrikes since 2004, either in conjunction with the US or utilizing its own fleet of armed Reapers acquired in 2007. Increasingly the UK has relied on its Reaper drones to undertake airstrikes. Ministry of Defence (MoD) figures show the percentage of British airstrikes in Afghanistan undertaken by drones has risen from 52% in 2009/10 to 82% in 2013/14. The MoD confirmed in January 2014 that Reapers would be retained as core equipment for contingency purposes following the end of combat operations in Afghanistan but insisted that no decision had been taken on basing options.
- Due to air safety regulations Reapers would not be allowed to fly within British airspace. However as they are specifically designed to be disassembled for easy transportation they could safely be retained in storage at RAF Waddington for possible future missions. It seems however that the UK MoD would prefer the Reapers to be based overseas where they could continue to fly operations. Al Minhad air base in the Gulf seem a likely candidate for a long term base but it is difficult to be certain without further information. Given the situation in Iraq and Syria it is likely that that the UK's Reapers could be deployed there directly from Afghanistan.
- Whether UK Reaper drones are to be moved from Afghanistan to take part in military operations in Iraq or to long-term bases in Africa or the Gulf, there are clear dangers to both UK and global peace and security. In brief, redeploying UK Reapers overseas
  - Increases the risk of the UK becoming embroiled in on-going armed conflict
  - Increases the threat of terrorist attacks in the UK or on British citizens abroad
  - Diminishes international security by normalising the basing of armed drones overseas, sending a signal to other countries that it is acceptable to do so.
- It may be argued that if the UK deploys its Reapers without armaments in a surveillance role this could negate these dangers. However we believe that while lessening the direct hazard, deploying Reapers even in an unarmed configuration creates clear risks for the UK.
- Rather than 'jumping from the frying pan into the fire' with its armed drones, the UK should instead pause the programme at the end of combat operations in Afghanistan. This would enable a thorough evaluation of the actual impact of these systems on the ground in Afghanistan, and allow an investigation into the long-term implications for both UK and global peace and security.

# UK armed drone operations 2004 - 2014

## A brief history of UK armed drone operations

- 1.2 In 2004 RAF pilots located in the US began operating US armed Predator drones over Iraq as part of a USAF/RAF Combined Joint Predator Task Force (CJPTF).<sup>1</sup> According to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) the first armed attack undertaken by an RAF pilot assigned to this unit took place in late 2004, striking insurgents near the Iraqi town of Najaf.<sup>2</sup> These joint operations contributed towards the UK deciding to acquire its own armed UAV capability.
- 1.3 In January 2005, 1115 Flight was established by the RAF at Creech USAF Base, Nevada.<sup>3</sup> Forty-five British personnel assigned to the unit trained in UAV operations and tactics before becoming 'A' Flight of 39 Squadron when it was re-established on 3 January 2007. 'B' Flight was established later to operate the UK's own MQ-9 Reapers in Afghanistan after they were purchased as an Urgent Operational Requirement (UOR) in October 2006.
- 1.4 RAF operations using the UK's own Reapers in Afghanistan began in October 2007 with the first strike taking place at the end of May 2008.<sup>4</sup> After a UK Reaper crashed in April 2008, additional airframes were purchased bringing the number of Reapers owned by the UK to five.<sup>5</sup> In December 2010 Prime Minister David Cameron announced the purchase of a further five Reapers.
- 1.5 In October 2012, RAF 13 Squadron was 'stood up' at RAF Waddington in order that UK Reapers in Afghanistan could be directly controlled from the UK as well as from Creech Air Force Base in Nevada. In July 2014 the MoD announced that the Reapers ordered in 2010 had finally come into service in Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup>

## Types of UK armed drone operations

- 1.6 As well as operating UK-owned Reapers in Afghanistan, RAF pilots also fly US Reapers while they are officially embedded with US forces. In addition, a Freedom of Information (FoI) request revealed that the UK sometimes simply borrows US Reapers for

---

<sup>1</sup> Barnes, Owen (ed.). Air Power: UAVs: the wider context, Royal Air Force Directorate of Defence Studies, 2009, (p51)

<sup>2</sup> Craig Hoyle, RAF strikes in Iraq with Predator, *Flight International*, 08.02.2005, <http://www.flightglobal.com/news/articles/raf-strikes-in-iraq-with-predator-193572/>

<sup>3</sup> 'Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance' undated article, RAF website. Accessed 17 July 2014

<sup>4</sup> Craig Hoyle, UK cheers the Reaper UAV, *Flight International*, 16.06.08 [www.flightglobal.com/articles/2008/06/16/224622/uk,-cheers-the-reaper-uav.html](http://www.flightglobal.com/articles/2008/06/16/224622/uk,-cheers-the-reaper-uav.html)

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Chuter, U.K. To Double Reaper UAV Fleet, *Defense News*, 07.12.2010, <http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=5183706>

<sup>6</sup> 'MoD: More RAF Reapers Take To The Skies': Ministry of Defence Press Release 03.07.2014 [Http://www.politicshome.com/uk/article/100962/mod\\_more\\_raf\\_reapers\\_take\\_to\\_the\\_skies.html](http://www.politicshome.com/uk/article/100962/mod_more_raf_reapers_take_to_the_skies.html)

operations when an RAF Reaper is unavailable.<sup>7</sup> Thus there can be said to be currently three different types of UK armed drone operations:

- a) RAF pilots operating UK owned Reapers;
- b) RAF pilots operating US Predators/Reapers while embedded with US forces;
- c) RAF pilots operating 'borrowed' US Reapers.

It should be noted that the MoD does not consider the second category (RAF pilots operating US drones while embedded with US forces) as 'UK operations' even though these serving UK officers must operate strictly according to UK not US Rules of Engagement (RoE).<sup>8</sup>

- 1.7 Outside of Afghanistan, RAF pilots have operated armed US Predators and Reapers in Iraq and Libya although again the MoD insists these were purely US operations. While the MoD refuses to give details, a written answer to Rehman Chishti MP revealed that RAF pilots have flown approximately 2,150 missions using US Reapers in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan between October 2006 and December 2013.<sup>9</sup> Of these the MoD told Drone Wars UK that 271 missions took place in Afghanistan using 'borrowed' US drones but would not break down the remaining figures by country.

### **Statistics on UK armed drone operations in Afghanistan**

- 1.8 Little actual detail beyond statistical information about UK armed drone operations in Afghanistan has been publicly released. Between May 2008 and May 2014 the UK has flown more around 4,500 armed Reaper missions in Afghanistan launching over 470 weapons in roughly 350 separate drone strikes (see Table 1 below). Again it must be noted that these figures do not include missions and strikes by RAF pilots while embedded with US forces.
- 1.9 Out of the more than 350 UK drone strikes in Afghanistan the MoD insists that only one has resulted in civilian casualties.<sup>10</sup> The MoD states that "for reasons of operational security we are not prepared to comment on the assessed numbers of insurgents killed/wounded in Reaper strikes."<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Nick Hopkins, RAF has fired missiles in Afghanistan using US drones, MoD reveals, *The Guardian*, 09.02.2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/feb/09/raf-british-crews-missiles-afghanistan-us-drones-mod>

<sup>8</sup> It would be interesting to see if the international community accepted Russian pilots undertaking airstrikes while operating Syrian military aircraft according to Russian RoE as merely Syrian operations.

<sup>9</sup> Hansard, 24 Apr 2013: Column 906W

<sup>10</sup> Nick Hopkins, Afghan civilians killed by RAF drone, *The Guardian*, 05.07.2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/jul/05/afghanistan-raf-drone-civilian-deaths>

<sup>11</sup> Defence in the Media [Official UK MoD New blog] 19 June 2012; [www.blogs.mod.uk/defence\\_news/2012/06/page/4](http://www.blogs.mod.uk/defence_news/2012/06/page/4). In December 2010 The Telegraph reported that David Cameron had that UK Reapers had 'killed more than 124 insurgents'. However this has subsequently been denied by the PM's office.

**Table 1: UK Reaper sorties / weapon releases in Afghanistan 2008 - May 2014: Source MoD FoI response.<sup>12</sup>**

Year	Total Number of UK Reaper sorties by UK & USAF platforms	Number of sorties with one or more weapon releases:			Number of weapons released from:		
		UK platform	USAF platform	Total	UK platform	USAF platform	Total
2008	296	14	0	14	29	0	29
2009	431	33	0	33	44	0	44
2010	758	51	0	51	73	0	73
2011	901	67	7	74	99	12	111
2012	895	65	26	91	76	28	104
2013	897	68	4	72	90	4	94
2014 (to 31.05.14)	312	10	6	16	15	6	21
Total	4,490	308	43	351	426	50	476

1.10 Figures released by the MoD also show that the UK is increasingly relying on its drones to undertake airstrikes in Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup> Since 2010, the percentage of airstrikes undertaken by Reaper drones in Afghanistan has risen from 52% to 82% (see table 2)

**Table 2: Munition launches from fixed-wing aircraft in Afghanistan**

Aircraft type	24 March 2009 to 23 March 2010	24 March 2010 to 23 March 2011	24 March 2011 to 16 June 2014
Fixed wing	43	48	71
Reaper (RPAS)	46	79	317
Total	89	127	388
Percentage of airstrikes carried out by drones	52%	62%	82%

1.11 Across the border in Pakistan where there is much greater scrutiny of the impact of drone strikes, media and local reports compiled by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism show that out of 390 drone strikes undertaken by the US between 414 - 957 civilians have been killed.<sup>14</sup>

1.12 As well as armed Reaper UAVs, UK forces operate four other types of unarmed UAVs. These are the Black Hornet mini-drone; the T-Hawk, the Desert Hawk III and Hermes 450 (which were due to be replaced by the Watchkeeper UAV although this is now extremely unlikely).

<sup>12</sup> Chris Cole, New figures show UK increasingly relying on drones for strikes in Afghanistan, Drone Wars UK, 22.07.2014 <http://dronewars.net/2014/07/22/new-figures-show-uk-increasingly-relying-on-drones-for-strikes-in-afghanistan/>

<sup>13</sup> Hansard 7 July 2014: Column 138W

<sup>14</sup> See Drone Strikes in Pakistan, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/category/projects/drones/drones-pakistan/>

# 1. UK armed drones and the end of NATO combat operations in Afghanistan

## NATO in Afghanistan

- 2.1 At the 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon it was announced that the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) would begin transition of responsibility for Afghan security to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), with Afghanistan taking full responsibility for its own security by the end of 2014.<sup>15</sup> Although the ISAF mission would then end, NATO would lead a follow-on mission to train, advise and assist the ANSF after 2014.<sup>16</sup>
- 2.2 Prime Minister David Cameron confirmed that British combat troops would leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014 but left the way open for UK forces to take part in the follow on NATO security mission in Afghanistan. The UK committed to supporting the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) at Qargha, near Kabul. Around 90 UK training staff are involved at the Academy with around a further 100 British troops committed to protect the institution.<sup>17</sup>
- 2.3 As withdrawal has proceeded and public support for military operations in Afghanistan has continued to evaporate it has become increasingly unlikely that any further UK forces will be committed to the on-going NATO security mission in Afghanistan (beside that committed to the Afghan Army Officer Academy). David Cameron told the House of Commons after the Wales NATO summit that the number of UK troops in Afghanistan after 2014 would be “in the low hundreds”.<sup>18</sup>

## UK drones post-2014

- 2.4 Since the announcement of troop withdrawals in 2011, there has been speculation about whether US and UK armed drones would continue to operate in Afghanistan as part of the security assistance force. In 2012 former US Ambassador to Afghanistan, Karl Eikenberry argued that the withdrawal of combat forces on the ground would not end the role of drones instead “they would play an even more important role.”<sup>19</sup>
- 2.5 As the UK’s Reapers were acquired under Urgent Operational Requirement (UoR) rules using contingency funding for combat operations in Afghanistan, there was no commitment to long term funding or to bringing the Reapers into UK forces core equipment budget.

---

<sup>15</sup> Ian Traynor, NATO maps out Afghanistan withdrawal by 2014 at Lisbon summit, *The Guardian*, 20.11.2010. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/nov/20/nato-afghanistan-2014-withdrawal-lisbon>

<sup>16</sup> NATO and Afghanistan, Website of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, retrieved 25/08/2014 <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/69772.htm>

<sup>17</sup> See Afghanistan, 15<sup>th</sup> Report of 2013-14 session, Defence Select Committee, published 7 May 2014. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmdfence/994/994.pdf>. Also: Ben Farmer, Army proposes keeping 200 troops in Helmand after 2014, *The Telegraph*, 22.09.2013 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/10321216/Army-proposes-keeping-200-troops-in-Helmand-after-2014.html>

<sup>18</sup> Hansard, 8 Sep 2014: Column 658

<sup>19</sup> Francis Leithen, UAVs Could Become More Prevalent In AfPak, *Aviation Week*, 19.06.2012, <http://aviationweek.com/awin/uavs-could-become-more-prevalent-afpak>

- 2.6 Questioned about the role of UK armed Reapers in Afghanistan beyond 2014 Ministers have repeatedly stalled, saying throughout 2012 and 2013 that no decisions have been taken on the longer term use of Reaper equipment after 2014.<sup>20</sup> However in January 2014 Defence Minister Phillip Dunne confirmed for the first time that Reaper UAVs would continue to be used by British forces following the end of Afghanistan combat operations saying:

*"It is our intention to retain the Reaper capability for contingent purposes following the end of operations in Afghanistan. However, no final decisions have yet been taken on its future basing options."*<sup>21</sup>

- 2.7 Core funding for the future operation of Reaper was confirmed in the Government's reply to the Defence Select Committee inquiry into the use of RPAS published in July 2014:

*"The Ministry of Defence plans to retain the Reaper for contingent purposes, principally for its ISR capabilities, following the end of operations in Afghanistan. The Defence Board recently gave approval for funding to allow the Reaper capability to be maintained until SCAVENGER enters service towards the end of the decade; plans for this bridging capability are currently under development."*<sup>22</sup>

- 2.8 In March 2014 the MoD confirmed in reply to a question from Tom Watson MP, that "there have been no discussions with the Government of Afghanistan about the future basing of UK unmanned aircraft systems in Afghanistan after 2014."<sup>23</sup>

- 2.9 Although the use of armed unmanned systems is new and serious ethical and legal questions about their use has been raised, there has been no discussion about the necessity of a proper review or analysis of the use of armed drones in Afghanistan before deploying them elsewhere. While the Defence Select Committee has undertaken a short inquiry - unusually deciding to hold no public evidence sessions - discussion or analysis of the actual impact of the use of drones in Afghanistan is a glaring omission from their report.<sup>24</sup>

## **Where next for the UK's armed drones?**

- 3.1 Due to current air safety regulations the UK's Reapers will not be allowed to fly in UK civil airspace or segregated airspace. If the UK is to keep its armed drones operational there appear to be two broad options for a future long term base: alongside other British

---

<sup>20</sup> See Defence Minister Andrew Robathan written replies to Angus Robertson MP, 13 Nov 2012 Hansard Column 172W; David Davis MP, 29 Jan 2013: Hansard Column 740W; Tom Watson MP, 11 Jun 2013: Hansard Column 232W. Note that Philip Hammond, Secretary of State for Defence told Rehman Chishti that "combat drone strikes" would end in 2014 - see Hansard 26 Nov 2012: Column 4

<sup>21</sup> Phillip Dunne MP written response to Rehman Chishti, Hansard 29 Jan 2014 : Column 598W [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140129/text/140129w0004.htm#140129w0004.htm\\_wqn7](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140129/text/140129w0004.htm#140129w0004.htm_wqn7)

<sup>22</sup> Remote Piloted Air Systems – current and future UK use: Government Response to the Committee's Tenth Report of Session 2013–14

<sup>23</sup> Defence Minister Mark Francois MP to Tom Watson, Hansard 9 Apr 2014: Column 234W [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140409/text/140409w0001.htm#140409w0001.htm\\_wqn11](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140409/text/140409w0001.htm#140409w0001.htm_wqn11)

<sup>24</sup> Defence Select Committee, Tenth Report of Session 2013-14, Remote Control: Remotely Piloted Air Systems—current and future UK use, published 25 March 2014.

aircraft in the Gulf for operations in the Middle East, or alongside US & French drones undertaking surveillance and counterterrorism operations in and around Africa (see 'Appendix A: Long-term basing options for the UK's Reapers' for further discussion).

- 3.2 However as NATO combat operation in Afghanistan draw to a close, the US is attempting to gather a new coalition to undertake military operations against ISIS in Iraq and Syria and it may well be that UK Reapers will be re-deployed direct from Afghanistan to take part in these operations.<sup>25</sup>
- 3.3 In August 2013, six RAF Typhoon Fighters were deployed to RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus in response to the deepening crisis in Syria and again in August 2014 a number of RAF Tornados were sent to the base to undertake surveillance missions over Iraq.<sup>26</sup> RAF Akrotiri hosted British military aircraft during the invasion of Iraq in 1991 and 2003 and is a likely location for UK Reapers deployment.<sup>27</sup> The base has often been a staging post for British forces operating in the region including being used for aircraft involved in Operation Ellamy in Libya in 2011.<sup>28</sup> While it is certainly possible that UK Reapers may be deployed to Akrotiri to undertake missions in Iraq it is unlikely to be their permanent base.
- 3.4 US and British forces will see it as most preferable to base their drones within Iraq as that will enable them to have the longest time over the target area without spending time flying from overseas airbases. In mid-September the Pentagon announced that it was undertaking manned aircraft flight from Arbil airbase in Northern Iraq.<sup>29</sup>
- 3.5 If for political reasons UK Reapers are not deployed to operations in Iraq, they are likely to be deployed to the Gulf or Africa. Although the UK has a military presence in several Gulf states including Bahrain and Qatar, the most likely option as a base for the UK's Reapers is the Al Minhad in the UAE. Firstly there is already an RAF squadron present which means the communications and control infrastructure are already in place. And secondly, the UAE was the first non-NATO country to have been allowed to buy the unarmed 'export' version of Reaper and may well see an advantage to having UK Reapers based alongside them.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Patrick Wintour, US forms 'core coalition' to fight Isis militants in Iraq, *The Guardian*, 05.09.2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/05/us-core-coalition-fight-isis-militants-iraq-nato>

<sup>26</sup> Typhoons deploying to Cyprus, MoD Press Release, 29.08.2013, <http://www.raf.mod.uk/news/archive/typhoons-deploying-to-cyprus-29082013> and Steven Swinford & Ben Farmer, UK jets deployed to stop advance of Islamic State in Iraq, *The Telegraph*, 18.08.2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/11040290/UK-jets-deployed-to-stop-advance-of-Islamic-State-in-Iraq.html>

<sup>27</sup> See Richard Norton-Taylor, Why a corner of island remains forever Britain, *The Guardian*, 05.07.2001, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/jul/05/richardnortontaylor>

<sup>28</sup> Alice Richie, UK drops more aid in Iraq, readies jets for surveillance, *AFP*, 12.08.2014. <http://news.yahoo.com/uk-drops-more-aid-iraq-readies-jets-surveillance-090313879.html>

<sup>29</sup> Dan De Luce, US war planes to fly from Iraqi air base: Pentagon, *AFP*, 11.09.2014, <http://news.yahoo.com/us-warplanes-fly-iraqi-pentagon-184428488.html>

<sup>30</sup> Pierre Tran, UAE To Buy Predator Version UAV, *Defense News*, 18/02/2013, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130218/DEFREG04/302180011/IDEX-UAE-Buy-Predator-Version-UAV>

## 4. The danger of redeploying UK drones

- 4.1 Whether UK Reaper drones are to be moved from Afghanistan to take part in military operations in Iraq or to long-term bases in the Gulf or even Africa, there are clear dangers to both UK and global peace and security. In brief, redeploying UK Reapers overseas
- Increases the risk of the UK becoming embroiled in on-going armed conflict
  - Increases the threat of terrorist attacks in the UK or on British citizens abroad
  - Diminish international security by normalising the deployment of armed drones, sending a signal to other countries that it is acceptable to do so.
- 4.2 It may be argued that if the UK deploys its Reapers without armaments in a surveillance role this could negate the danger. However we believe that while lessening the hazard, deploying Reapers even in an unarmed configuration creates clear risks for the UK.

### The risk of becoming embroiled in long-term armed conflict

#### Iraq/Syria

- 4.3 If - as seems likely at the time of writing - the UK's Reapers will be deployed to take part in military operations against ISIS militants in Iraq there is a serious risk that the UK will be drawn into a long, drawn-out and dangerous conflict. Indeed it seems that ISIS want to draw Western countries into such a long war. Both President Obama and Prime Minister David Cameron have repeatedly stated that they will not send in ground troops but instead rely on airstrikes to support ground operations by Iraqi and other forces.<sup>31</sup> It is likely that any air operation could last for several years and inevitably be subject to 'mission creep'.
- 4.4 In his speech outlining US strategy for combating ISIS, President Obama explicitly cited US drone and counter-terrorism operation in Somalia and Yemen as a 'model' for operations in Iraq.<sup>32</sup> Yet as long-time national security writer Spencer Ackerman put it

*"Despite years of strikes and billions spent on shoring up local forces, no end is in sight against either al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen or al-*

---

<sup>31</sup> Stuart Henderson, Iraq crisis: David Cameron will not put 'boots on ground' – but Britain's involvement expected to last for months, *The Independent*, 18.08.2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/iraq-crisis-david-cameron-will-not-put-boots-on-ground--but-britains-involvement-expected-to-last-for-months-9675609.html> and Stephanie Condon, Obama promises no U.S. ground war against ISIS, *CBS News*, 11.09.2011, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/obama-promises-no-us-ground-war-against-isis-but-some-in-congress-wary/>. Note however that more than 1,000 US military 'advisors' have been sent to Iraq.

<sup>32</sup> Spencer Ackerman, Air strikes, drones and advisers: the new template for America's counterterror fight, *The Guardian*, 11.09.2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/11/us-isis-iraq-air-strikes-drones-advisers-counterterror>

*Shabaab in Somalia – an ominous indicator for a war against the far more capable and financially flush Isis.*<sup>33</sup>

4.5 Undertaking airstrikes will undoubtedly lead to civilian casualties, likely to be higher if they are undertaken without trained and experienced air controllers on the ground. In Yemen and Somali - the model examples quoted by president Obama- there have been numerous examples of airstrikes by drones and other aircraft that have caused high civilian casualties including an infamous drone strikes on a wedding guests in Yemen in December 2013.<sup>34</sup>

## Elsewhere

4.6 If the UK's Reapers are not deployed to take part in military operations in Iraq, as they are not allowed to fly in UK airspace they will likely be based in the Middle East - most probably Al-Minhad Air Base near Dubai - or possibly an African base (see Appendix A for further discussion).

4.7 Although relations between the West and Iran are stabilising at the moment, drone flights over the Gulf have led to serious military confrontations in the past. US Predator and Reaper drones regularly patrol the region in what the US calls "routine maritime surveillance" or "routine classified surveillance missions". At least twice these flights have led to direct confrontations between the US drones and Iranian aircraft; once in November 2012 and again in March 2013.<sup>35</sup> Other confrontations may have gone unreported. If UK's Reapers are deployed to the Gulf it may well be that they too take on these patrols and the potential clashes with the Iranian air force.

4.8 If UK Reaper drones are deployed to Africa it is highly likely they will become involved in the on-going conflicts in the region. US drones based in Djibouti are undertaking armed strikes in Yemen against alleged Al Qaeda militants and US and French drones are undertaking surveillance missions over Mali. US drones, some flown by RAF pilots, also took part in the bombing of Libya in 2011. US drones are believed to be continuing to fly missions over Libya but this is unconfirmed. In all three countries (and of course others in the region) there are on-going civil wars as well as separate terrorist attacks.

4.9 In addition each time a crisis erupts in the region - such as, for example, the abduction of schoolgirls in Nigeria or attacks on western tourists in Kenya - there will be increased pressure for the UK to become involved militarily due to the very presence of its drones in the region. While it is of course right that there should be local and international

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> A Wedding That Became a Funeral: US Drone Attack on Marriage Procession in Yemen, Human Rights Watch, 20 .02.2014, <http://www.hrw.org/node/123245>. See also U.S. missile attacks killed civilians in Yemen: rights group, *Reuters*, 22.10.2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/22/us-usa-yemen-drones-idUSBRE99L03V20131022>, and Chris Woods, Militants and civilians killed in multiple US Somalia strikes, *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, 22.02.2012, <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2012/02/22/militants-and-civilians-killed-in-up-to-20-us-somalia-strikes-new-study-shows/>

<sup>35</sup> Barbara Starr, Iranian jets fire on US drone, *CNN*, 08.11.2012, <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/11/08/first-on-cnn-iranian-jets-fire-on-u-s-drone>. Iranian plane pursued U.S. spy drone over Gulf, Pentagon says, *Associated Press*, 14/03/2013, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/iranian-plane-pursued-us-spy-drone-over-gulf-pentagon-says/>

responses to terrorist attacks and criminal activity, political and diplomatic options should always be the first response.

### **Increases the threat of terrorist attacks in the UK or to British citizens abroad**

- 4.10 Although many politicians try to deny it, national security and terrorism experts regularly confirm that UK military intervention overseas has increased the security threat to the UK. Baroness Manningham-Buller, former head of MI5, for example, told the Chilcot inquiry that the invasion of Iraq had “substantially” increased the terrorist threat to the UK, while a UK MoD briefing paper argued that the war had acted as “a recruiting sergeant for Muslim extremists.”<sup>36</sup> A recent study by the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) also acknowledges that “there is no longer any serious disagreement” over how the UK’s role in the Iraq war helped to increase the radicalisation of young Muslims in Britain. “Far from reducing international terrorism ... the 2003 invasion had the effect of promoting it.”<sup>37</sup>
- 4.11 Some of those undertaking terrorist attacks in the US and the UK have directly attributed their attacks as responses to Western interventionary wars. Michael Adebolajo one of the murderers of Lee Rigby said that his was a “military attack” in retaliation for Britain’s occupation and violence in “Muslim lands”. London bomber, Mohammed Siddique Khan, and the Glasgow attacker, Bilal Abdullah, delivered similar messages.<sup>38</sup> Some, like Faisal Shahzad, whose car bomb failed to explode in Times Square in May 2010, and Najibullah Zazi, who allegedly plotted to blow up the New York subway, attributed their attacks directly to on-going drone strikes.<sup>39</sup>
- 4.12 Some senior diplomatic officials and counter-terrorism experts have been arguing that drone operations specifically are increasing the threat of terrorism rather than reducing it. Kurt Volker, former US Permanent Representative to NATO argues that:

*“Drone strikes allow our opponents to cast our country as a distant, high-tech, amoral purveyor of death. It builds resentment, facilitates terrorist recruitment and alienates those we should seek to inspire. Drone strikes may decapitate terrorist organizations, but they do not solve our terrorist problem. In fact, drone use may prolong it. Even though there is no immediate retaliation, in the long run the contributions to radicalization through drone use may put more lives at risk.”<sup>40</sup>*

---

<sup>36</sup> Iraq inquiry: Ex-MI5 boss says war raised terror threat, *BBC News*, 20.07.2010.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-10693001> Richard Norton-Taylor, Iraq war was terrorism 'recruiting sergeant', *The Guardian*, 28.09.2006

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/sep/28/pakistan.iraq>

<sup>37</sup> Richard Norton-Taylor, UK military operations since cold war have cost £34bn, says study, *The Guardian*, 23.04.2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/23/uk-military-operations-costs>

<sup>38</sup> Seumas Milne, Woolwich attack: If the whole world's a battlefield, that holds in Woolwich as well as Waziristan, *The Guardian*, 20.12.2013,

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/20/woolwich-attack-muslim-world-islamophobia>

<sup>39</sup> Chase Madar, Drone attacks undermine national security, *Al-Jazeera*, 27.07.2014

<http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/7/drone-blowback.html>

<sup>40</sup> Kurt Voller, What the U.S. risks by relying on drones, *The Washington Post*, 26.10.12;

[http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-10-26/opinions/35500650\\_1\\_drone-strikes-drone-attacks-guantanamo-bay](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-10-26/opinions/35500650_1_drone-strikes-drone-attacks-guantanamo-bay)

- 4.13 Volker is not alone. Professor Michael Boyle, former counter terrorism adviser to President Obama has outlined in an important and detailed essay how use of armed drones directly conflicts with long term counter-terrorism initiatives and is doing real damage.<sup>41</sup> Yet again, Robert Grenier, who headed the CIA's counter-terrorism centre from 2004 to 2006 and was previously CIA station chief in Pakistan said of the use of armed drones in Afghanistan and Pakistan "We have gone a long way down the road of creating a situation where we are creating more enemies than we are removing from the battlefield."<sup>42</sup>

### **Normalising the deployment of drones reduces global security**

- 4.14 Although only three countries so far - UK, US and Israel - have used armed drones many nations are now developing or acquiring the capability. It is thought that around thirty countries have the larger classes of military drones within their armouries, of which around ten to fifteen have, or are close to, acquiring armed drone capability.<sup>43</sup>
- 4.15 It has been stated many times that the way the three early users of armed drones have used such equipment is likely to set a precedent for the future.<sup>44</sup> By deploying its drones on a long-term basis at the end of combat operations in Afghanistan, the UK will be setting a precedent that it is normal and acceptable to deploy such systems overseas and other nations may well follow this example in the future. It is axiomatic that the greater number of deployed weapon systems, the greater danger there is to global peace and security.
- 4.16 The danger of multiple nations deploying armed remote systems overseas is amplified when one considers the way that remote systems are being used. Pilots from one country operating a drone owned by a second nation over the territory of yet a third country. Inevitably accountability is lowered and public scrutiny is much more difficult.
- 4.17 While it has becoming more accepted internationally that parliamentarians and representatives should be consulted before armed forces are deployed, the use of armed drones appears to be defying this tendency. Both the US and Israel have deployed and used armed drones without gaining prior legislative authority and now the UK too has been explicit in arguing that it too will not seek prior approval before re-deploying its drones. Defence Minister Mark Francois told Tom Watson MP, Chair of the Drones APPG:

---

<sup>41</sup> Michael Boyle, The costs and consequences of drone warfare, *International Affairs*, January 2013. Available at [http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/International%20Affairs/2013/89\\_1/89\\_1\\_Boyle.pdf](http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/International%20Affairs/2013/89_1/89_1_Boyle.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Paul Harris, Drone attacks create terrorist safe havens, warns former CIA official, *The Guardian*, 05.06.12; [www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jun/05/al-qaida-drone-attacks-too-broad](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jun/05/al-qaida-drone-attacks-too-broad)

<sup>43</sup> See 'Who has drones?' on Drone Wars UK website compiled from various sources. <http://dronewars.net/6-who-has-drones>. Also Guy Taylor, US Intelligence warily watches for threats to US now that 87 nations possess drones, *Washington Times*, 10.11.2013 <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/nov/10/skys-the-limit-for-wide-wild-world-of-drones/?page=all>

<sup>44</sup> David Pilling, Legal or not, drone strikes set a dangerous precedent, *Financial Times*, 23.10.2013. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b50462f0-3b4b-11e3-87fa-00144feab7de.html#axzz3BbcTIKYw>

*“...the Ministry of Defence may notify Parliament of the deployment of UK Reaper Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems but there is no intention for parliamentary approval to be sought prior to each deployment or redeployment.”<sup>45</sup>*

The perception that somehow using armed drones is not as serious a breach of national sovereignty as the use of manned aircraft appears to be playing a role here and again underlines that danger of drones to international stability.

- 4.18 While there is of course a difference between deploying drones overseas to a long-term base and using them in an armed attack against a sovereign nation, as the All Party Parliamentary Group on Drones has urged there should at the very least be "reasonable opportunity for debate and scrutiny" by MPs of any deployment of UK Reapers as well as the opportunity to think through the long-term implication of permanently deploying drones overseas.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Written question 204049: Mr Tom Watson 03-07-20144, <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2014-07-03/204049/>

<sup>46</sup> Bring in the Special Rapporteur, All Party Parliamentary Group on Drones, 14.05.2014. <http://appgondrones.wordpress.com/2014/05/14/bring-in-the-special-rapporteur/>

## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The UK's commitment to the use of armed drones is clear through both its decade long history of use and its financial investment in developing future armed unmanned systems.<sup>47</sup> Despite this political and financial commitment there has yet to be a thorough public examination of the dangers of the increasing use of these systems.
- 5.2 As combat operations draw to a close in Afghanistan, the UK intends to base its fleet of armed Reaper drones overseas as it will not be allowed to fly them in UK airspace due to safety concerns. While the UK insists that no decision has been made on the long-term basing of its Reapers, from our analysis it is most likely that the UK will base them alongside RAF aircraft already in the Gulf, or alongside US and French Reapers in Africa. However with the increasing likelihood of military action against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, it is possible that UK Reapers will be deployed directly from Afghanistan to take part in military operations there.
- 5.3 Despite advocates arguing that drones are a 'risk free' way for the UK to engage in military operations as there are no (or few) 'boots on the ground' there are clear dangers to both UK and global peace and security. In brief, redeploying UK Reapers overseas
- Increases the risk of the UK becoming embroiled in on-going armed conflict
  - Increases the threat of terrorist attacks in the UK or on British citizens abroad
  - Diminish international security by normalising the basing of armed drones overseas, sending a signal to other countries that it is acceptable to do so.
- 5.4 Rather than jumping from 'the frying pan into the fire' with its armed drones, at the end of combat operations in Afghanistan the UK should pause and undertake a thorough assessment of the use and impact of these remote armed systems, scrutinizing not only the impact on the ground in Afghanistan, but also look at the long-term implications for UK and global security.
- 5.5 Permanently deploying drones overseas sets a perilous precedent and gives the illusion that whenever necessary we can solve serious security problems merely by undertaking 'risk free' airstrikes. This is a dangerous and simplistic fallacy which will do nothing to solve the world's security problems.

---

<sup>47</sup> See 'Shelling Out: UK Government Spending on Unmanned Drones, Drone Wars UK, published September 2012: <http://dronewars.net/2012/09/26/shelling-out-new-reports-shows-uk-has-spent-2bn-on-drones>. In July 2014 the UK MoD committed a further £100m to developing unmanned systems, see Hansard 1 Sep 2014: Column 108W

## Appendix 1: Long Term basing options for the UK's Reapers

A.1 Due to current air safety regulations the UK's Reapers will not be allowed to fly in UK airspace. However as they are specifically designed to be disassembled for easy transportation and storage they could safely be retained at RAF Waddington for possible future missions. However it seems that the MoD would prefer the Reapers to be based overseas where they could continue to fly operations and there appears to be two broad options for long-term basing; alongside other British aircraft in the Gulf or alongside US and French drones undertaking surveillance and counterterrorism in Africa.

### The Gulf

A.2 UK military forces in the Gulf receive little publicity as the host countries do not want the presence of foreign troops highlighted, while the UK is somewhat sensitive about being seen to support such autocratic regimes. Nevertheless a squadron of RAF Typhoons is based at Al-Minhad Air Base near Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and, even more discreetly, an eavesdropping RAF Sentinel aircraft<sup>48</sup> is believed to be deployed to the Al Mussanah Air Base in Oman.<sup>49</sup>

A.3 Over the past few years the UK has been working to bolster its relationship with Gulf States and especially with the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This has included the signing of a defence partnership agreement in late 2012.<sup>50</sup> Although this was in part about trying to gain lucrative arms sales (which did not come to fruition<sup>51</sup>) it has also been about the UK becoming more focused on the Gulf as a key strategic military location.

A.4 Defence Analyst Michael Clarke, Director General of RUSI summarised the UK position in April 2013:

*"The military intends to build up a strong shadow presence around the Gulf; not an evident imperial-style footprint, but a smart presence with facilities, defence agreements, rotation of training, transit and jumping-off points for forces that aim to be more adaptable and agile as they face the post Afghanistan years from 2014. The Minhad airbase at Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has emerged as the key to this smart presence."<sup>52</sup>*

A.5 Although the UK also has a military presence in other Gulf states including Bahrain, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia (where officially at least RAF personnel are 'seconded' to the

---

<sup>48</sup> Note this is different from the US RQ-170 drone also called Sentinel

<sup>49</sup> Frank Gardner, 'East of Suez': Are UK forces returning?, *BBC News*, 29/04/2013

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22333555>, See also Nicholas Watt and Ian Black, David Cameron heads to Gulf in bid to sell Typhoon fighter jets, *The Guardian*, 05/11/2012

<sup>50</sup> Joint defence partnership between UK and the UAE announced, *BBC News*, 06/12/2012  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-20216028>

<sup>51</sup> David Blair, Britain's ambitions in the Gulf suffer blow as UAE rejects Typhoon deal, *The Telegraph*, 20.12.2013.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Clarke's Foreword in Gareth Stansfield and Saul Kelly 'A Return to East of Suez? UK Military Deployment to the Gulf' Rusi Briefing Paper, April 2013  
[https://www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/East\\_of\\_Suez\\_Return\\_042013.pdf](https://www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/East_of_Suez_Return_042013.pdf)

Saudi Royal Air Force), Al Minhad in the UAE is the most likely option. Firstly there is already an RAF squadron present which means the communications and control infrastructure is already in place. And secondly the UAE was the first non-NATO country to have been allowed to buy the unarmed 'export' version of Reaper and may well see an advantage to having UK Reapers based alongside them.<sup>53</sup>

- A.6 Asked about the possibility of establishing a permanent presence in the Gulf during an April 2014 visit to Qatar Defence Secretary Philip Hammond stated:

*"It's a possibility that we are looking at and we're interested to discuss how to take that forward... We haven't decided for sure to do this yet, but certainly it's one of the options we are looking at."*<sup>54</sup>

## Africa

- A.7 The second option for the UK is to base its armed drones alongside US and French drones in Africa. The known location of deployed US drones is mapped below although it is likely that there are other drone bases in Africa that are not in the public domain (rumours include Quagadodo in Burkina Faso and Al-Wigh in Libya). Experts, including Michael Clarke of RUSI and UN Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism Special Rapporteur Ben Emmerson, have suggested that UK drones may be deployed to Africa after Afghanistan.<sup>55</sup>
- A.8 While the British Army has a small army training unit in Kenya it has no permanent air base in Africa. It is possible therefore that if UK Reapers are sent to Africa they will be deployed alongside US drones based at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti,<sup>56</sup> Arba Minch in Ethiopia or Niamey in Niger.
- A.9 In May 2014 it was revealed that three British officers are based at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti as part of a Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) which is responsible for planning and supporting US military operations in the region. The MoD said "as embedded military personnel within a US headquarters they come under the command and control of the US armed forces, but remain subject to UK law, policy and military jurisdiction."<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Pierre Tran, UAE To Buy Predator Version UAV, Defense News, 18/02/2013,

<sup>54</sup> Salman Siddiqui, UK mulls 'options' for Gulf army base, *Gulf Times*, 10.04.2014 <http://www.gulf-times.com/qatar/178/details/387868/uk-mulls--%E2%80%98options%E2%80%99-for-gulf-army-base>

<sup>55</sup> Owen Bowcott, UK Reaper drones to be sent to Africa and Middle East, says UN official, *The Guardian*, 10.03.2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/10/uk-reaper-drones-africa-middle-east-mod-afghan>. See also Ben Emmerson QC and Professor Clarke parliamentary event on drones, UNA-UK, 04.12.2013, <http://www.una.org.uk/media/audio/4-december-2013-ben-emmerson-qc-and-professor-clarke-parliamentary-event-drones-part-1>

<sup>56</sup> After five Predator crashes at Camp Lemonnier which is adjacent to Djibouti international airport, the US have moved its drone operations to a nearby airfield. See US Relocates Drones Airfield After Djibouti Crashes, *AFP*, 25.09.2013, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130925/DEFREG02/309250035/>

<sup>57</sup> Owen Bowcott, UK troops working with US military at base for Yemen drone operations, *The Guardian*, 12.05.2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/may/12/uk-troops-us-base-djibouti-drones-yemen-mod-reveals>

**Figure 1: Locations of known US drone bases in the region**



Country	Location	Type
Afghanistan	Jalalabad and Kandahar	Reapers, Predators & Sentinel
Djibouti	Camp Lemonier	Predators / Reapers
Ethiopia	Arba Minch	Reapers
Italy	Signonella	Global Hawks & Reapers
Kuwait	Ali Al Salem	Predator
Niger	Niamey	Reapers
Saudi Arabia	Unknown	Predator?
Seychelles	Mahe	Reapers
Turkey	Incirlik	Predators
United Arab Emirates	Al Dhafra	Sentinel & Global Hawk
Yemen	Al-Anad Air Base	Reapers

A.10 In January 2014 two French Reaper drones were deployed to Niamey in Niger to operate alongside French Harfang drones for operations over Mali and the Sahel region.<sup>58</sup> Two US Reapers have also been operating from Niamey since early 2013 and the base is reportedly undergoing expansion.<sup>59</sup> It is understood that both the French and US Reapers are currently flying unarmed missions only.

A.11 In March 2014 the incoming Head of Africom (US Africa Command), General David Rodriguez, lobbied the Senate Armed Services Committee for more drones arguing that the "biggest intelligence gaps are out in northwest Africa."<sup>60</sup> In July 2014, French media

<sup>58</sup> Reaper Drones In Sahel Now Part of ISR Assets of French Armed Forces, *Defense-unmanned*, 30.01.2014. <http://www.defense-unmanned.com/article/1295/french-reaper-uavs-now-fully-operational.html>

<sup>59</sup> Eric Schmitt, Drones in Niger Reflect New U.S. Tack on Terrorism, *New York Times*, 10.07.2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/11/world/africa/drones-in-niger-reflect-new-us-approach-in-terror-fight.html?smid=tw-share&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/11/world/africa/drones-in-niger-reflect-new-us-approach-in-terror-fight.html?smid=tw-share&_r=0)

<sup>60</sup> For US forces in Africa, spy drones in short supply, *AFP*, 07.03.2014. <http://tunisia.news24.com/Regional-News/For-US-forces-in-Africa-spy-drones-in-short-supply-20140307-4>

reported that France had asked the UK to deploy its drones to Niamey at the end of operations in Afghanistan.<sup>61</sup>

A.12 At the time of writing, behind-the-scenes the UK continue to debate the pros and cons of each of the long-term basing options for the UK's Reapers. The perceived advantage of basing them in the Gulf is that with an RAF squadron present, the infrastructure is already in place. However, how often they would actually be allowed to fly is debatable. While there is no RAF infrastructure in Africa, US and French Reaper drones are already based and this would no doubt facilitate greater co-operation between the three nations operating Reapers. If, as seems likely, UK Reapers are deployed to operations in Iraq and Syria the decision on a long-term base for UK's Reapers may be postponed.

---

<sup>61</sup> Jean-Dominique Merchet, La France espère l'appui des drones britanniques au Sahel, *L'Opinion*, 28.07.2014. <http://www.lopinion.fr/blog/secret-defense/france-espere-l-appui-drones-britanniques-sahel-14846>

## Appendix 2: Recommendations to UK Government on use of armed drones

These recommendations were submitted by Drone Wars UK to Defence Select Committee inquiry into the use of Remote Piloted Air Systems (RPAS) in April 2013.

- The UK government should publish details of the numbers of individuals it believes to have been killed or injured in UK Reaper airstrikes in Afghanistan, their status as civilians or combatants; and affiliation to any armed group if known. The UK should also improve its casualty recording and reporting in general.
- The UK government should clarify if it is abiding by the ICRC interpretative guidance on civilians directly participating in hostilities.
- The UK government should clarify whether it has carried out the targeted killing of individuals using Reaper UAVs within Afghanistan and if so, provide details.
- The UK government should seek assurances from the US that intelligence provided will not be used for targeted killing contrary to international law norms.
- The UK government should release information about the accuracy and precision of weapons released from UK Reapers, including details of when munitions have fallen outside their given CEP on operations in Afghanistan.
- The UK government should carry out a review, available for public scrutiny, examining the impact of armed UAVs on the stabilisation of Afghanistan and including reference to assertions of increased radicalisation, political instability, and a reduction in socio-economic activity.
- The UK government should make a clear and unambiguous commitment not to develop autonomous weapon systems and to take part in efforts to build an international treaty to ban the use of these weapons.
- The UK government should investigate carefully the implications of arming smaller surveillance UAVs before it takes any steps to do so.
- The UK Government should commit to a more open approach to Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests on the use of armed UAVs, which would lead to the achievement of the objective set out in the MoD's Joint Doctrine Note 2/11 (The UK Approach to Unmanned Aircraft Systems) on the need for a public debate on this technology.