

Armed drones on the European media

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THE FIGHT AGAINST DRONES

The rise of the killer robots – and the two women fighting back

8 apr 2019

Melissa Chan, The Guardian, Uk

Two women armed with nothing more than a Nobel prize, knowhow and a lot of conviction are standing in front of the march of deadly killer robots. They want them banned. And they've done this kind of thing before. Jody Williams won her Nobel for leading the long, global effort to get anti-personnel landmines banned. Mary Wareham was a prominent supporter in that campaign.

- ▶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/08/the-rise-of-the-killer-robots-jody-williams-mary-wareham-artificial-intelligence-autonomous-weapons>

Italy could be blamed for its role in Us drone strikes in Libya

23 apr 2019

Tania Mastrobuoni, La Repubblica, Italy

In early 2016, the Italian government began allowing armed American drones to fly out of an air base in Sicily for military operations against Islamic State in Libya and across North Africa. Now the European country is facing a severe scrutiny for its role in the Libyan war that could lead to legal troubles, as victims of the airstrikes are beginning to challenge in court not just the Us army but also the governments that host the drones.

- ▶ https://rep.repubblica.it/pwa/generale/2019/04/23/news/italia_a_rischio_condanna_per_le_missioni_in_libia_dei_droni_usa-224719858/

The thin line between good and bad drones

12 apr 2019

Jean-Michel Normand, Le Monde, France

According to the journalist Jean-Michel Lombard, the dualism between “good” and “bad” drones is disappearing from our mind. As evidence of this, the recent decision to arm with drones the French Army has not cause controversy, as well as the african civilian victims caused by drone strikes.

- ▶ https://www.lemonde.fr/la-foire-du-drone/article/2019/04/12/les-lignes-bougent-entre-gentils-et-vilains-drones_5449140_5037916.html

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Killer robots are not science fiction

9 apr 2019

Mike Ryder, The Independent, Uk

Humans will always make the final decision on whether armed robots can shoot, according to a statement by the US Department of Defence. Their clarification comes amid fears about a new advanced targeting system, known as Atlas, that will use artificial intelligence in combat vehicles to target and execute threats. While the public may feel uneasy about so-called “killer robots”, the concept is nothing new – machine-gun wielding “Swords” robots were deployed in Iraq as early as 2007.

- ▶ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/killer-robots-military-technology-weapons-ai-drones-a8842406.html>

Florence Parly: “Yes to artificial intelligence, no to killer robots”

5 apr 2019

Anne Bauer, Les Echos, France

An interview with Florence Parly, French minister of the Armed Forces. While the debate on killer robots intensifies, minister Parly clarifies the French position: to seize the opportunities of the artificial intelligence without exceeding some limits, saying “no to killer robots”. She also announced the creation of an ethics committee.

- ▶ <https://www.lesechos.fr/industrie-services/air-defense/florence-parly-oui-a-lintelligence-artificielle-non-aux-robots-tueurs-1006856>

Fear the Reaper: Who will lead the international debate?

10 apr 2019

Wim Zwijnenburg, Clingendael Spectator, Netherlands

The development, acquisition and export of drones is growing rapidly. To protect international security and international law, we need to create clear boundaries for the use of drone strikes. Dit niet alleen om het huidige internationaal recht te bestendigen, maar ook om te kijken hoe opkomende militaire technologieën de aard van militaire operaties kunnen veranderen. As the Netherlands acquires Reapers, there is a good opportunity to take in a position on how to use them both in European and global discussions. A multilateral and inclusive process is the best path to set up robust standards for how to deploy drones and commit to them.

- ▶ <https://spectator.clingendael.org/nl/publicatie/fear-reaper-wie-geeft-richting-aan-het-drone-debat>

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Unmanned bombing in NoD: A theater play inquires how much of humanity we are able to give up for our own safety

5 apr 2019

Marie Kobrlová, Radio Wave, Czech Republic

Theatre NoD, Prague alternative theatre, is presenting a new play “On the beauty of unmanned bombing” by a director Nina Jacques based on a book The Drone Theory by French philosopher Grégoire Chamayou. The play is supposed to be a network of associations related with the drone and is based on improvisation and real stories by soldiers, civilians and scientists. The play deals with society’s approach to the war: how it is presented and accepted in movies, media or theatre.

► <https://wave.rozhlas.cz/bezpilotni-bombardovani-v-nodu-inscenace-zkouma-kolik-lidskosti-umime-obetovat-7886826>

Why sending robots in the battlefield is dangerous and scary

10 apr 2019

Rachele Gonnelli, il Manifesto, Italy

“If we let drones and robots decide when to shoot and where, we are erasing the element of blame from war”, says Italian scientist Marco Dorigo. According to Dorigo, soldiers commit errors, but in their case we can establish who’s responsible and how to punish them. This is not the case with robots. These kind of incidents will happen all the time, because humans and robots have different cognitive processes. Robots learn things in different ways and we are not completely able to understand them.

► <https://ilmanifesto.it/lo-scienziato-dorigo-mandare-in-guerra-i-robot-intelligenti-cancella-le-colpe/>

DRONES KEEP KILLING EVERYWHERE

US drone strike kills 3 high-ranking Al-Qaeda commanders in Yemen

1 apr 2019

Giordano Stabile, La Stampa, Italy

A U.S. predator drone killed three high-ranking commanders belonging to the Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) group that is currently operating in Yemen. The U.S. drone attack reportedly took place inside Yemen's Al-Sawma'ah District, which is located in the southern part of the country.

- ▶ <https://www.lastampa.it/2019/04/01/esteri/yemen-drone-usa-decapita-la-leadership-di-alqaeda-r5ndGNxC6Iu2QBxVeqXjTL/pagina.html>

Drone strike kills 5 IS militants including commander in Afghanistan

3 apr 2019

Ansa, Italy

Five militants of the Islamic State (IS) group including commander Mawlawi Suliman have been killed in a drone attack against the group in Achin district of Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province, said a statement of the provincial government released here Wednesday.

- ▶ http://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/topnews/2019/04/03/drone-uccide-capo-militare-isis-afghano_60285e54-b3c6-40d6-81cd-5531c66e53c9.html

How many civilians does America kill in air strikes?

4 apr 2019

The Economist, Uk

America has conducted 108 air strikes in Somalia since 2017, killing some 800 people. The Pentagon says they were all jihadists. Amnesty International, a human rights organization, disagrees. It has gathered detailed evidence suggesting that five recent strikes alone killed 14 civilians. Concern started growing on March 6th, president Trump revoked an executive order by Mr Obama which had required intelligence officials to publish civilian casualties in undeclared war zones like Pakistan and Yemen, mostly from Cia drone strikes.

- ▶ <https://www.economist.com/united-states/2019/04/04/how-many-civilians-does-america-kill-in-air-strikes>

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Airstrikes hit Tripoli as Libyan warlord steps up offensive against government

21 apr 2019

Peter Stubbley, The Independent, Uk

The Libyan capital Tripoli was rocked by airstrikes overnight as a rebel warlord stepped up his two-week offensive on the government-held city. Explosions shook the area after residents spotted an aircraft or unmanned drone circling for more than 10 minutes before opening fire on a southern suburb. Several missile strikes appeared to hit a military camp in the Sabaa district on Saturday night, according to witnesses.

- ▶ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/libya-airstrikes-tripoli-drone-khalifa-haftar-trump-a8880066.html>

Trump shrouds drone operations in secrecy

8 apr 2019

Soetkin van Muylem, De Wereld Morgen.be, Belgium

During the first three months of Trump's presidency, 70 people were killed through drone strikes in Yemen alone, including 12 children and a three month old baby. The numbers suggest that victims are much higher than the White House reports. For the past few years, international human rights organisations have systemically found civilian casualties of drone strikes that were not counted in official recordings. At least one in five fatal drone-victims is likely an innocent victim, but even these numbers are likely an under-estimation, because it is extremely difficult to gather data in places in Yemen and Somalia.

- ▶ <http://www.dewereldmorgen.be/artikel/2019/04/08/trump-hult-drone-operaties-in-geheimhouding>

Somalia: US Army restarts its strikes

10 apr 2019

Le Figaro, France

The US army announced the restart of strikes in Somalia, after a pause following the Amnesty International report that accused them of hiding the number of civilian victims. A new strike in the southwest of Mogadishu killed an Islamist, claimed the American military command for Africa. But, for the first time, the army has introduced procedures to gather additional informations on the effects of its drone strikes.

- ▶ <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/somalie-l-armee-americaine-reprend-ses-frappes-20190410>

AND THE DRONE RACE CONTINUES

US Military testing the Grizzly robotic tank vehicle

15 apr 2019

Petr Vašíček, Cdr, Czech Republic

US Military is testing a new unmanned ground vehicle Grizzly that could be used as a logistic vehicle carrying equipment, ambulance, communication vehicle and could also be mounted with weapons such as cannon, heavy machine gun, grenade launcher, mortar or anti-tank missiles. The ground drone powered by a diesel-electric powertrain providing a 72 hours autonomy will be operated on a remote control or will perform a mission in autonomous mode.

► <https://cdr.cz/clanek/americka-armada-testuje-roboticke-tankove-vozidlo-grizzly>

Dark spots on Junckers' final balance

18 apr 2019

Die Tageszeitung, Germany

There are some dark spots on Jean-Claude Junckers' final balance. Some criticisms concern the new UE defence funds (€13 billion), built in record time. "The armament subsidies may be invested in mass destruction weapons and also in armed drones", warned the green MEP Reinhard Bütikofer.

► <http://www.taz.de/!5589446/>

The US Navy creates a hacker team to fight small drones

9 apr 2019

Stanislav Mihulka, Vtm, Czech Republic

Events in Syria, where small commercial drones were used in combat by different armed groups, and in the UK, where small drones were able to paralyze airport traffic, proved that these inexpensive drones can cause great damage. The US Navy is building up a team of engineers, scientists, and hackers, who should develop procedures to effectively fight flocks of small commercial drones. Within this project a possibility of using laser guns or High Velocity Projectiles (HVP) is being studied.

► <https://vtm.zive.cz/clanky/americke-namornictvo-dava-dohromady-tym-hackeru-pro-boj-s-malymi-drony/sc-870-a-197956/default.aspx>

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Artificial intelligence can revolutionise future warfare

18 apr 2019

Jørn Mikkelsen, Jyllands-Posten, Denmark

[No full access without subscription.] First, gunpowder was invented, then nuclear weapons. Now we may face the third quantum leap in military history: weapons, which think and act independently, via artificial intelligence. [the article continues with a summary of AI initiatives by various national militaries (e.g. the Chinese and American), and mentions drones later on].

▶ <https://jyllands-posten.dk/premium/indblik/International/ECE11228699/kunstig-intelligens-kan-revolutionere-fremtidens-krige/>

Salvoes of rockets and drones: the new-old Russian artillery strategy

22 apr 2019

Marcin Gawęda, Defence24, Poland

As it transpires from the experience of armed conflicts in Donbas and Syria, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation are improving rocket artillery but also increase their reliance on barrel artillery with the massive use of UAVs. Drones are used to detect targets, track columns, coordinate firing not only on fixed positions but also on moving troops, and to assess its effects.

▶ <https://www.defence24.pl/salwy-rakiet-i-drony-nowa-stara-taktyka-rosyjskiej-artylirii-raport>

Drones and submarines lurking around Danish frigate in the Mediterranean

5 apr 2019

Ritzau, Denmark

Foreign drone flew close to Danish frigate in the Mediterranean while Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen was visiting the ship. The ship is, until the 27th April, functioning as bodyguard for the huge French aircraft carrier, “Charles de Gaulle” in the sea between Cyprus and Syria, where Russia is also heavily present. The Danish ship monitors the surrounding airspace. This time it was a drone belonging to allies, but there have been unfamiliar drones spotted nearby before.

▶ <https://www.bt.dk/politik/droner-og-ubaade-lurer-paa-dansk-fregat-i-middelhavet>

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Nuclear arms race vs Euro defence

10 apr 2019

Hugo Gaarden, Magasinet Europa, Denmark

There is increasing risk of nuclear arms race, but rather than engage with the US, the EU maintains focus on European defence and security. There is much talk, especially from Germany and France, and strong support for Macron's idea of a European Intervention Initiative. Yet little is happening and the EU struggles to create common, collaborative weapon systems, although this could save billions and strengthen resources for research into cyberwar, drones and artificial intelligence.

► <http://magasineteuropa.dk/atomvaabenkaploeb-contraeuro-forsvar/>

World War III: battle of drones or atomic missiles?

23 apr 2019

Sputnik News Polska, Poland

The US wants to change the conception of war, putting accent on the use of drones. This would enable to avoid casualties. An enormous number of drones in a conflict would potentially be a threat to Russia in a military conflict between superpowers, as the US has better equipment. However, Russia would use nuclear bomb to response to a possible American drone attack.

► <https://pl.sputniknews.com/swiat/2019042310261612-III-wojna-swiatowa-bitwa-na-drony-czy-rakiety-jadrowe-sputnik/>

China: armoured amphibian drone

20 apr 2019

Marek Dąbrowski, Defence24, Poland

China is about to assembly the first amphibian drone called Marine Lizard. It can move on land and sea. Its main tasks will include reconnaissance, fight and transporting other drones. It's maximum speed will be 50 knots on sea and 20 km/h on land. Autonomy: 1200 km on sea. it is equipped with two machine guns and a vertical launching system to stop missiles.

► <https://www.defence24.pl/autorzy/marek-dabrowski>

Israel's military export exceeded \$7,5 billion in 2018

17 apr 2019

Le Figaro, France

The Ministry of defense of Israel announced that Israel's military export exceeded \$7,5 billion in 2018 (€6,6 billion). Their most important customers come from Asia and Pacific. Armed drones represent the 24 percent of the military exportation.

► <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-eco/les-exportations-militaires-d-israel-ont-depasse-7-5-milliards-de-dollars-en-2018-20190417>

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Thales will take part in european combat program created by Germany and France

15 apr 2019

Le Figaro, France

The French minister of the Armed Forces, Florence Parly, confirmed that the high-tech and defense group Thales will have its place on Future Air Combat System, the european combat system created by France and Germany. This project will be also include some air drones.

- ▶ <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-eco/thales-aura-sa-place-a-bord-de-l-avion-de-combat-du-futur-franco-allemand-20190415>

DRONES IN THE WRONG HANDS

Burmese guerrilla shows it's military power

17 apr 2019

Mratt Kyaw Thu, La Vanguardia, Spain

The might of the United Wa State Army (UWSA) was on full display this week as Burma's largest and most powerful ethnic army celebrated its 30th year of existence with an 8,000-strong military parade that included a company of women and a sniper platoon and hardware ranging from drones to surface-to-air cannons and missiles. UWSA is the military wing of the United Wa State Party (UWSP), the de facto ruling party of Wa State. It is an ethnic minority army of an estimated 20,000 soldiers.

- ▶ <https://www.lavanguardia.com/internacional/20190417/461710080229/el-mayor-narcoejercito-de-birmania-busca-legitimarse-en-su-30-aniversario.html>

Drug war in Mexico: gangs are using drones as weapons

23 apr 2019

Sonja Peteranderl, Der Spiegel, Germany

In countries such as Mexico, gangs are increasingly using drones for their drugs businesses. Now they are using drones to carry explosives as well. The US border guard is overwhelmed with the phenomenon.

- ▶ <https://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/netzpolitik/drogenkrieg-in-mexiko-so-setzen-kartelle-drohnen-als-waffen-ein-a-1257400.html>

GOOGLE FAILURE ON AI

Google's brand-new AI ethics board lasted 9 days

5 apr 2019

Martina Pennisi, Il Corriere della Sera, Italy

Google's newly created AI ethics board has been canceled. The board survived for barely more than one week. Founded to guide "responsible development of AI" at Google, it would have had eight members and met four times over the course of 2019 to consider concerns about Google's AI program. The inclusion of drone company CEO Dyan Gibbens reopened old divisions in the company over the use of the company's AI for military applications.

- ▶ https://www.corriere.it/economia/consumi/19_aprile_05/google-fallimento-lampo-comitato-etico-l-intelligenza-artificiale-7da25826-57ba-11e9-9553-f00a7f633280.shtml

Artificial intelligence: Google dissolves its ethic committee after one week

9 apr 2019

Kesso Diallo, Le Figaro, France

On April 4th Google announced its ethics committee's dissolution, after a dispute on two of its members. The presence of Dyan Gibbens was put into question because she's the boss of Trumbull, a company involved in developing autonomous systems for the defence industry. The other contested member is Kay Coles, President of the conservative think tank Heritage Foundation. A letter of protest has been signed by more than 2.500 people, among the signatories there are also employees from Microsoft, Apple, Facebook and Slack.

- ▶ <http://www.lefigaro.fr/secteur/high-tech/intelligence-artificielle-google-dissout-son-comite-d-ethique-au-bout-d-une-semaine-20190405>