

## Research Report

**Assembly:** General Assembly 1

**Topic:** The question of regulating unmanned aerial vehicles

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### Introduction

What used to be science fiction is now a reality: drones, or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are now commonplace in our everyday life. First created for military purposes, they are now used in many areas such as aerial photography and delivery services. In the military, UAVs were initially used for intelligence surveillance purposes, which in itself could violate the basic human rights of privacy. However, in recent years drones have been armed and turned into lethal weapons, and these weapons have been used in strikes against terrorist groups. On the other hand, UAVs could be used for acts of terror. Apart from that, the proliferation of commercial and personal usage of drones can exacerbate privacy issues. Therefore, it is necessary to set regulations on these devices.

### Definition of Key Terms

#### ***Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV)***

According to the Oxford Dictionary, an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) is an aircraft without a human operator onboard and is controlled either remotely by human operators or is guided by a computer program. It is commonly referred to as a 'drone', remotely piloted vehicle (RPV), remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) or remotely operated aircraft (ROA).

#### ***Unmanned aerial combat vehicles (UACV or UCAV)***

According to the Oxford Dictionary, an unmanned aerial combat vehicle (UACV) or armed UAV is a UAV capable of carrying weapons and performing airstrikes.

#### ***Disarmament***

Disarmament is the act of reducing and abolishing all sorts of weapons of mass destruction, e.g. nuclear weapons.

#### ***Middle East***

The Middle East is a transcontinental region that includes all of Turkey, Egypt, and Western Asia.

### ***Terrorism***

Terrorism is the unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims, according to the Oxford Dictionary.

## **General Overview**

### ***Key Issues and background information***

➤ ***Privacy:***

Private and commercial use of UAV surveillance and photography poses major privacy concerns to the public. In the past drones have been used by the police to search for wanted criminals. However, journalists and paparazzi have used them to infiltrate celebrities' personal life, which violates their human right to privacy.

➤ ***Production and trade regulations:***

In the USA, Australia or Europe drone production and exportation are regulated. However, in most countries, no regulations are set for this new technology. This leads to the proliferation of UAVs and UACVs all over the world, mostly in the Middle East where the tension between countries is high, but also in parts of Asia and Africa.

➤ ***Misuse of armed UAV:***

Most Middle Eastern countries have been denied access to USA drones because of the MTCR regulations. Nevertheless, countries and militant groups in the Middle East still have access to these devices, purchasing them from China or Israel, which has not signed any drone trade agreements, and Iran, which produces its own UAVs and distributes them to terrorist groups in the region. Thus in this highly tense area, the proliferation of armed drones has allowed countries or militant groups to use drones as a method of terrorism.

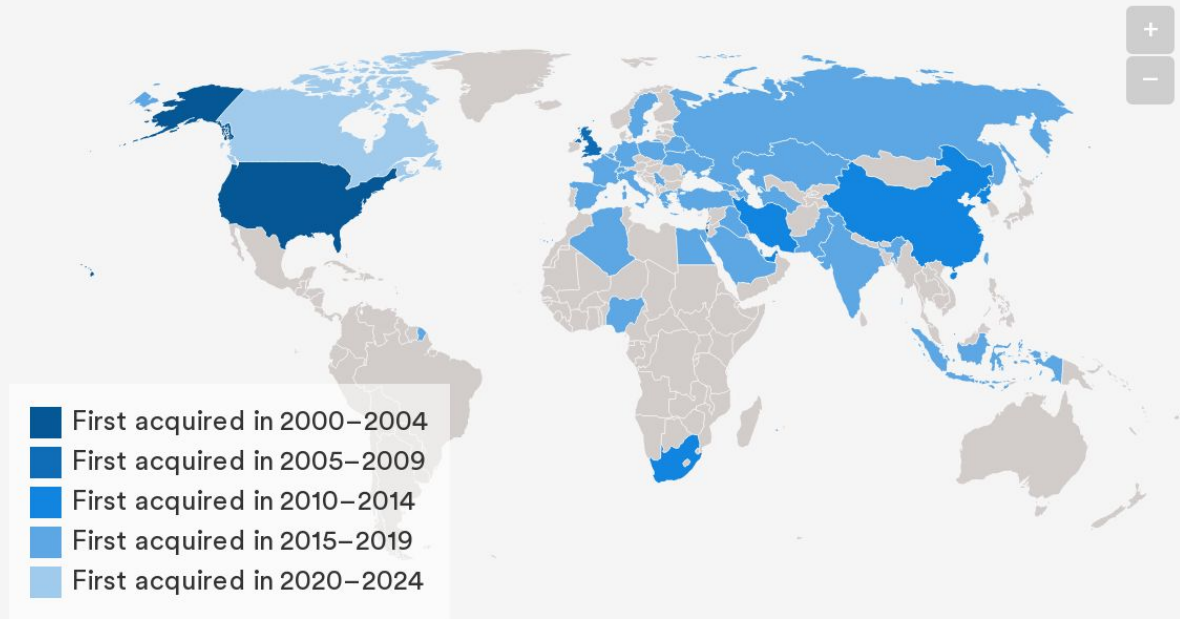
### ***Current situation***

Currently, few countries have set regulations for the use of commercial drones, for example, the USA with their FAA regulations, the EU with the Rica declaration and Australia with the CASA regulations. However, there are no regulations set on the use of personal drones besides flight limitations.

Moreover, exportation and drone trade has very few regulations, which easily allows dishonest groups to use them for unlawful acts (terrorism).

Therefore it is necessary to set laws and regulate these devices as it can be used for unarmful and well-intentioned purposes, like commercial use for delivery or to aid police searches.

## Countries with Armed Drones



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### Major Countries and Organizations Involved

#### ***United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)***

This department was established in 1998 by the United Nations and is part of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's plan to reform the United Nations. This department aims to set regulations, standards, and transparency for the use of UAVs.

#### ***North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)***

NATO uses the 'Global Hawk' unmanned surveillance drone, though it is not armed, it is used for military surveillance purposes.

#### ***United States of America (USA)***

The U.S. is the global leader in terms of military drone technology, however, it has strict rules about which countries can buy them.

#### ***Israel***

Israel is the largest exporter of drones in the world. The exportation of their drone 'IAI Heron' accounted for 41% of all drones exportation between 2001 and 2011. Israel does not publicly acknowledge drone use, but reports of Israel's drone use are innumerable. Israel conducted an airstrike in Gaza in 2004.

### ***People's Republic of China***

In recent years, China has been producing and supplying Middle Eastern countries with UAVs, such as the UAE, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey. China is also the largest producer of civilian drones.

### ***Iran***

With the aid of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran produces its own UAVs and supplies them to terrorist groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen and Hamas in Gaza.

### ***United Kingdom (UK)***

The UK bought armed drones from the USA and has used them to conduct airstrikes in Afghanistan in 2008.

### ***European Union (EU)***

Numerous countries in the EU such as France, Belgium, Spain, and Italy, bought armed drones from the USA. The European Union (EU) believes in the benefits UAV can bring to the community, offering jobs and performing services (such as delivery) in a more environmentally friendly and sustainable way.

### ***Amazon***

Amazon is developing a drone delivery system called "Amazon Prime Air", which delivers packages via drones to the customer's location.

### ***Non-State Actors***

Non-State Actors such as the Islamic State, the Houthi rebels in Yemen, the Boko Haram in Nigeria, the Mauti group in the Philippines, the Libyan National Army (LNA), the Palestinian National Jihad, and many more around the world have access to UAVs or military class UAVs. The UAVs are mostly used for surveillance purposes but are sometimes used to perform airstrikes.

## **Timeline of Events**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of Event</b>
1849	Austria deployed air balloons loaded with explosives to bombard Venice. This is the first recorded use of armed UAVs.
1916	During World War One (WWI) the USA built the first UAV.
1937	The USA continued by creating the first radio-controlled UAV called Curtiss N2C-2, in 1937.
October 7, 2001	The USA conducted the first drone attack in Afghanistan, in the hunt for Islamist group al-Qaeda's leader Osama Bin Laden.

- May 1, 2008      The UK bought and armed their USA ‘Reaper’ UAV and conducted a drone strike in Afghanistan.
- 2014              Amazon suggested the use of drones to deliver packages to customer doorsteps.
- 2017              Saudi Arabia struck a deal with China to set up its first Chinese drone-factory in the Middle East to domestically manufacture UAVs.
- 2019              On September 19, drone strikes were conducted on two Saudi oil facilities. The Houthi rebel group in Yemen claims responsibilities for the attack. However, the USA accused Iran of these attacks, to which the country rejected the allegations.  
On November 1, Russia conducted a drone strike on Syria.  
On December 21, France conducted a drone strike on Mali.
- January 3, 2020      The USA conducted a drone strike on Iranian general Qassem Soleimani. He was the commander of the Quds Force which was deemed a terrorist organization by the USA.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Missile Technology Control Regime (MTGC)
  - Established in 1987 the MTCG aims to prevent the proliferation of missiles and systems capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. UAVs fall into the MTCG Category I and Category II weapons.
- Arms and Trade Treaty (ATT)
  - This treaty was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2013 and aims to increase transparency, regulations, and accountability in international arms transfer decisions.
- Joint Declaration for the Export and Subsequence Use of ‘Armed or Strike-Enabled Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)’
  - Established in 2016, this agreement aims to prevent the proliferation of weapons capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction such as UAV. This joint declaration was agreed upon by the US and 44 other countries.
- European Union declarations:
  - Riga Declaration on Remotely Piloted Aircraft (drone) - “Framing the future of aviation”  
<https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/modes/air/news/doc/2015-03-06-drones/2015-03-06-riga-declaration-drones.pdf>

- Established on March 6, 2015, by the European Union, this declaration sets rules for commercial UAV use in Europe
- Drones Warsaw Declaration  
<https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/drones-warsaw-declaration.pdf>
- Human Rights Council resolutions:
  - Resolution A/HRC/28/38 - 15 December 2014  
<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/28/38>
  - A/HRC/28/L.2 - 19 March 2015  
[https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/28/L.2](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/28/L.2)

### Previous Attempts to solve the issue

Treaties such as the ATT, MGCR and the US Joint Declaration previously attempted to regulate the exportation of UAVs and UACVs to prevent their proliferation around the world. However, large UAV exporters such as China and Israel have not agreed to them. Moreover, the UNODA has hosted meetings to discuss the issues of the proliferation of drones and give recommendations to set international standards.

### Possible Solutions

There are solutions to this problem such as:

- setting regulations on the production but more importantly the exportation and trade of UAVs.
- setting rules for the use and deployment of military drones, but also for commercial use.
- improving transparency through the release of a detailed report from the administration explaining the legal basis for their UAV use.
- developing oversight and accountability mechanisms, which can include an independent commission set to review UAV policies and confirm strikes.
- regulate the commercial use of UAVs to protect privacy.

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