By Craig Considine

From Craig Considine | Original Article

A recent report from *The Guardian* indicates that the British Royal Air Force (RAF) is increasingly depending on US manufactured drones to kill suspected 'high level targets' in Afghanistan.

How can one describe the 'special relationship' between the US and Great Britain bluntly? Perhaps it is bond that extends far beyond its common heritage and possibly into their tag-team effort in crimes against humanity.

If the criminal activities of the American-used Predator drone is any precursor to the activities of the Reaper, the British will kill many, many innocent civilians and make many, many mor enemies.

The RAF first deployed the American made Reaper in June of 2008. It has fired 84 missiles up until January of 2010, with over 20 missiles being fired in just the last month alone. They are controlled in two fashions: from a military base inside Kandahar and from Creech Base inside the state of Nevada, USA.

In a pact of secrecy, the RAF will not release any details explaining how many Reaper drones it has in its arsenal. It has indicated however that their missions will *increase* in the near future 'as their potential is explored.'

It is said that the Reaper is used primarily as a surveilance mechanism to acquire intelligence.

This is a misleading statement. Why else would it be carrying Hellfire missiles? For protection or for attacks? Common sense says – probably attacks.

The Reaper's sister, the Predator, has become an infamous and dreaded weapon in the region. Americans use them to kill suspected high level targets – even if it means wiping out dozens of innocent civilians in doing so.

Apologists call this the unfortunate consequences of war. The moral call this outright terrorism.

As the Reaper's potential is 'maximized' in experimental missions, it is likely that it too will be used in deadly missions and not just in surveilance missions. That means more innocent civilian deaths. And more civilian deaths equals more enemies. The RAF, for the record, denies that the Repear has killed any innocent civilians.

But how are we to know that the RAF is being truthful when it claims that the Reaper is not used in deadly missions? The Ministry of Defense does not release any information or statistics regarding the Reaper's missions. So should we really just trust the British government on its word alone? History has taught us that no government should ever be trusted.

There are rules to firing missiles from drones, though they have been severely breached by the Predator. Reports suggest that up to 700 innocent civilians have passed away because of them.

A British defense minister has recently said that 'every effort is made to ensure the risk of collateral damage and civilian casualties is minimised.' The minister may only be speaking on behalf of British policy alone - it is not known because their is no available evidence. What is known is that the Americans could care less about civilian casualties.

Chris Cole of the Fellowship of Reconciliation says that: 'Drones are the latest in a long line of new weapons used in the mistaken belief that they will provide a clean and tidy solution to a conflict – time and again history has proved that this is a myth.'

Cole is right in that drones are the latest in a long line of new weapons, though he may be mistaken in that new weapons cannot provide tidy solutions to conflicts.

What is happening to Afghanis and Pakistanis is eerily reminiscent of how for three centuries Americans dealt with Native Americans. If they were resistant in conforming to the traditions of the 'Christians' or if they responded to the invasion of their homeland with force, they were simply crushed and overpowered by a self-identified 'superior race,' which happened to also have a superior technological weapon - the gun.

Drones in Afghanistan and Pakistan are nonetheless having the same effect as the gun had on the Native Americans. They have no adequate defense for this far superior weapon and are paying for it dearly with their lives. Their enemies are also not interested in distinguishing between civilians and warriors and by no means will their enemy ever consider discontinuing the weapon because it is the most cost effective and efficient.

The end result of the gun-Native American encounter was the practical extinction of the entire Native civilization and the subsequent infiltration of Western legal traditions, Christianity and eventually 'America.' This is no myth.

What is now happening internationally is the forceful expansion of American interpretations of culture, law, and governance. In regards to its notion of 'law,' killing innocent civilians is considered by the US as a 'reality of war' and not a violation of international treaties regarding the rules of war, even as their drone operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan would nonetheless be considered terrorism in any international court.

The militants in Afghanistan and Pakistan however are not concerned with international law. What they care about is losing their brothers and sisters, their parents and friends.

Militants are not using their violations of international law as a propaganda mechanism to recruit new members. It is the killing of innocent civilians that is further emboldening their efforts and increasing their numbers.

Yet significant officials, like CIA director Leon Panetta, continue to provide vague reasons and justifications for the continued use of drones. He says that they 'are the only game in town.'

The details of the 'game' the Obama administration is playing are not clear, though it seems like its an imperial one. Many dissidents see the increasing use of drone strikes and their ramifications as an unofficial 'change in direction' in policy, where as the killing of innocent civilians via drones are no longer 'mistakes' but rather intentional. The logic behind this philosophy is that the civilians being killed are those that are 'in the way' of the US as it works towards its imperial goals: enforcing a liberal, democratic, proxy government within Afghanistan, subjugating the region to neoliberalism and the Washington Consensus, and stealing natural resources, especially as it relates to the gas pipeline currently passing through Afghanistan.

However, what we do know certainly is that the Reaper and the Predator have contributed to the continued loss of the 'hearts and minds' of the civilians. This makes all the so-called 'goals' - isolating militants, winning over the population, and securing stability - utter failures.

The 'game' Panetta mentions rages on. In the winning 'hearts and minds' scenario, it appears as if the US and Great Britain is heading for a big L in their record columns. In the imperial scenario, the US and Great Britain seem to be struggling. Drone strikes and the killing of innocent civilians have undoubtedly hampered their mission, primarily because they continue to make more and more enemies that are making things more and more difficult.

That is what happens when you reciprocate violence with violence.

The doomesday scenario with the imperial agenda would mirror what happened with the Native Americans: a superior weapon helps wipe out a native population when all other options failed.

Is this the road the US and Great Britain are heading down?

More importantly, why is the US and Great Britain really playing 'the game'?

2-7-10The Reaper and the Predator drone – 'Twin Terrorizers'