CMSM Response to Armed Drones Policy

Silver Spring, MD (May 30, 2013). The Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) is very concerned about the use and proliferation of armed drones. CMSM has produced a statement “Armed Drones: Do They Make us Better People?”

Recently President Obama laid out an updated drone policy. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) as well as academics have offered important responses. CMSM’s statement says, “for the most part these analyses consider laws of war, ‘just war’ theory, and civil rights. However, Dr. Cusimano Love’s analysis notably mentions a key limit in that ‘just war’ theory does not tell us how to build peace. Even more significant, ‘just war’ theory doesn’t prioritize or illuminate a more important moral question about human habits. Therefore, by taking a longer-term view of building a just peace, we recommend that we shift the primary analysis of armed drones from law, ‘just war’ theory, and rights to the question, ‘what kind of people are we becoming by using armed drones?’ The following discussion provides an example of where this ethical approach, i.e. virtue ethics, might draw us.”

The CMSM statement goes on to elaborate on key themes that respond to this question such as increasing fear in communities, increasing impersonal ways of engaging conflict, avoiding the roots of conflicts and creating more grievances, and diminishing key virtues such as hope, solidarity, courage, justice, and nonviolent peacemaking.

The strategies and tactics we engage become practices, which cultivate the character habits of human persons and societies. Although President Obama asserts that his policy respects the “inherent dignity of every human life,” and John Brennan claims that armed drones satisfy the "principle of humanity," the analysis in the statement indicates some deeper concerns and a fuller vision of "humanity" we should attend to.

The Catholic Compendium of the Social Doctrine quotes Pope John Paul II, who said clearly "that violence is evil, that violence is unacceptable as a solution to problems, that violence is unworthy of [hu]man[s]. Violence is a lie for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings.”

War and violence are evil, as Pope Francis reasserts: “Let us look around: how many wounds are inflicted upon humanity by evil! Wars, violence, economic conflicts that hit the weakest…”

Whether the reader resonates with all or even some of the analysis in the statement, it should be more clear that the use of armed drones is inconsistent with human dignity and, thus, with the fullness of human rights, and even more importantly, human flourishing.

The full statement can be found at this link: Armed Drones: Do They Make us Better People?

---


3 An earlier version of this statement was published in the April 2, 2013 online section of America Magazine, http://americamagazine.org/content/all-things/what-are-drones-doing-us