

THE DAILY NEWS

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Controversial Drones Debate Comes to a Conclusion



The winning Opposition Team

Synopsis

On Thursday October 29th Radford University's class on Introduction to International Studies had an in-class debate about drones and their use as instruments of foreign policy, especially when used in attacks against civilian targets and in countries with which the United States have not declared war.

The vote by the audience was in favor of the Opposition Team that argued against drones being used in the policy of targeted killings. The judge of the debate and instructor of the course, Dr. Tay Keong Tan, also rated the Opposition Team as the winners.

This decision came after an intense and engaging debate. Both sides defended their arguments to the very end. In the end the Opposition Team, consisting of Zack Wright, Alexis Gonzaludo, Chad Ring, and Gregory Capps, had presented stronger arguments and defeated the Proposition Team's case.

The Opposition's strongest argument was the fact that there have been many documented civilian casualties when drones were used in countries that the U.S. is not at war with. The collateral damage is difficult to account for.

Most recently, in October 2015, a Doctors Without Borders hospital was destroyed in a U.S. drone attack that killed 22 medical workers and civilians and injured many others. The Opposition used this incident to dramatically show how drone attacks are not as precise and civilians can get caught in the cross-fire.

Drone attacks have also been linked to an increase in anti-American sentiment in several countries because they can kill so many civilians and helped terrorist groups in recruitment and in their propaganda against the United States.

Airspace conflicts also come into play as drones often have to fly through the territory of sovereign nations to reach their targets but the commanding officers may not have clearance to use the airspace beforehand. This can lead to international diplomatic conflicts.

Drone strikes are controlled in remote bases (such as Arizona) by pilots behind a computer screen. When the person "pulling the trigger" thousands of miles away and cannot see everyone who is in the area is asked to make the decision to blow up areas 500 meters wide, it creates a psychological disconnect between the controller and the victims.

The Proposition Team brought up the points that drones save soldiers' lives by not requiring "boots on the ground". This is true theory but the Opposition pointed out that their use on civilians may cause new terrorists that will take revenge by attacks on U.S. soil.

The Proposition Team also mentioned that drones offer precise and accurate attacks, kills fewer civilians than most other military weapons, are cheaper than ground wars or manned aerial combat, and can be used as aerial surveillance

At the end of the debate, more of the members of the audience were convinced by the Opposition's arguments. The Proposition did a good job but left too many doubts in our minds about innocent civilians in foreign countries getting killed or maimed.