

Drones Deportations Drugs

The “3 Ds” of why Obama has been worse than Bush

The presidential elections are gearing up for real... and there is the rising chorus yet again of those who say that whatever problems there are with Obama and the Democrats, the “alternative”—the Republicans—is unthinkable and much, much worse. But the reality is that Obama as president has been even worse than Bush in some key ways for the masses of people in the U.S. and around the world. Here are three of the ways that Obama has outdone Bush in fascistic, brutal, reactionary moves in service of the U.S. capitalist-imperialist system.

Drones—Murder from the Air

Obama has overseen a huge leap in the use of pilotless drones by the U.S. military and CIA to kill people in a growing number of countries. When Obama took office, the war by drones was confined to Pakistan, where Bush had authorized 44 strikes over the previous five years. Under Obama, there have been 260 drone strikes in Pakistan alone as of early 2012—almost six times the number ordered by Bush. Obama has expanded the drone war, including to Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, and Iran. The drones are deployed from dozens of secret facilities in the Middle East, Africa, and Southwest Asia—with the operational hubs within the U.S., thousands of miles away from where the drones actually kill people.

While the whole drone program is veiled in secrecy, Obama defended it by saying that the drone attacks are “precision strikes against al Qaeda and their affiliates” and that “drones have not caused a huge number of civilian casualties.” This is either an outright lie, or a

cold-blooded expression of utter disregard for human lives, especially in a Third World country. According to a report by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism in England this February, “since Obama took office three years ago, between 282 and 535 civilians have been credibly reported as killed including more than 60 children. A three month investigation including eye witness reports has found evidence that at least 50 civilians were killed in follow-up strikes when they had gone to help victims. More than 20 civilians have also been attacked in deliberate strikes on funerals and mourners.”

Obama is now expanding the war in Yemen with loosened-up rules on drone strikes. According to the *Washington Post*, the “new authority approved by President Obama ... allows the CIA and the military to fire even when the identity of those who could be killed is not known...” This can only mean *more* civilians murdered in what Obama calls “precision strikes.”



2011, Jalalabad, Afghanistan. A home destroyed by a drone crash.

Deportations—the War on Immigrants

The Gestapo-like targeting of immigrants within the U.S. and the intense militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border started before Obama—but he has escalated this offensive to new levels. Statistics released last October revealed that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had deported almost 400,000 people in fiscal year 2011—the highest number of deportations in a single year since ICE was formed 10 years ago. More than a million people—mostly Latinos—have been forced out of the U.S. since Obama became president.

A key part of Obama’s anti-immigrant offensive is a federal program called Secure Communities, under which local police send the fingerprints of *every person they arrest* to the Department of Homeland Security. Secure Communities has expanded to about 1,600 local police forces, and Obama plans to spread it to *all* local jurisdictions by 2013.

Those suspected of being undocumented are sent to ICE detention centers. There is a network of 250 such detention centers around the country. Exposés about these ICE prisons have revealed widespread brutality, sexual abuse, and racist treatment against vulnerable detainees who have no access to lawyers or other help.

Secure Communities is supposedly targeted at people who have committed serious felonies. But in reality, it has led to mass deportations of people whose only “crime” is to cross the border without official papers in search of work so they and their families can survive. People have been suddenly separated—perhaps forever—from their kids and spouses, after being stopped for things like minor traffic violations. ICE says such deportees are “collateral”—bringing to mind how the U.S. justifies civilians killed in drone strikes as “collateral damage.”

Drugs—the War on Medical Marijuana

Medical marijuana is widely recognized as a substance that can be very helpful to cancer patients and others in relieving pain, promoting appetite, and helping them sleep. But while medical pot is legal in 16 states and the District of Columbia, it remains illegal under federal law. As a presidential candidate, Obama promised to end Bush’s war on medical marijuana. But according to a recent *Rolling Stone* magazine piece, “over the past year, the Obama administration has quietly unleashed a multiagency crackdown on medical cannabis that goes far beyond anything undertaken by George W. Bush. The feds are busting growers who operate in full compliance with state laws, vowing to seize the property of anyone who dares to even rent to legal pot dispensaries, and threatening to imprison state employees responsible for regulating medical marijuana. With more than 100 raids on pot dispensaries during his first three years, Obama is now on pace to exceed Bush’s record for medical-marijuana busts.”

In Northern California, for example, the U.S. Attorney, according to *Rolling Stone*, “recently shuttered one of the oldest dispensaries in the state, a nonprofit that serves a high percentage of female patients in Marin County, which has the nation’s highest rate of breast cancer. She has threatened to seize the properties that landlords rent to legal pot dispensaries. And in San Francisco, she targeted Divinity Tree, a cooperative run by a quadriplegic who himself relies on prescribed cannabis for relief from near-constant muscle spasms.”

There are an estimated 730,000 patients in the U.S. who rely on medical marijuana recommended by their doctors—Obama’s crackdown is imperiling their lives and causing tremendous and needless suffering.



2008 at the U.S./Mexico border. The number of deportations has risen dramatically since then under Obama.