

Addressing the Honorable German Parliament:

Cian Westmorland and I have put together arguments that make it clear mounting weapons on any drone platform is not only unnecessary and unethical, but it places German troops in more danger than if the very same weapons were mounted on the ground more or less proximal to where hostilities occur.

This is a new day where arming drones will, and has, changed the very nature of war. We believe Germany can take the ethical high ground and lead the world in the principled use of emerging platforms used in warfare today. Germany's unique place in history, having learned the lessons brought forth by the Nuremberg Trials, positions Germany powerfully to lead the world in the ethical use these technologies. Those on trial at Nuremberg were not just following orders; these men were the proponents and some actually performed the atrocities that were carried out.

Germany has a unique opportunity to take another step away from this history by now making the ethical decision not to arm drones at this time. We believe not arming drones will bring the world closer to the ethical use of technology that has the potential to keep troops safer, without terrorizing peoples and countries, as armed drones do. Arming drones removes the ability for surrender or retreat thus turning the drone into a weapon of terror.

Our reasoning is demonstrated in the following comments and questions. I hope you take them to heart and include them in your discourse.

Respectfully,
Cian Westmorland and Lisa Ling

Why shouldn't missiles or other ordnance be placed on Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV's)?

Installing missiles on the UAV transforms it from a defensive surveillance device to an offensive weapon and by extension, changes it's primary nature from reconnaissance to killing. This will not make the troops any safer.

Placing missiles on UAV's creates a device that causes terror; in effect this is terrorism and would place Germany in the position of being a terrorist state. It is not necessarily firing the weapon that causes the most terror to those living below armed UAV's; it is the anticipation that anyone around them, or they themselves could be the next victim of a strike at any time and without warning. That terror is constant and ever present when armed UAV's loiter above. People "living under armed drones" know there is no retreat or surrender. This foments terrorism from the affected populations because a logical conclusion for them is that it is no more dangerous placing an IED than it is shopping for groceries. There is no military or strategic utility in creating this additional danger, it is clear that this is threatening to, not only the local population, but military personnel as well.

Mounting the missiles on a ground-based platform, not from an armed UAV, would be more effective for troop protection. The target could still be marked from an unarmed surveillance UAV. This does not create the hatred and blowback from the local population that an armed UAV loitering above for days at a time does. Additionally, less time to act means less time to critically assess any action and the absence of a critical assessment makes wrongful killing inevitable. Firing from an Armed UAV is immediate and would not allow the missile flight time necessary to abort.

Imagine if there was an armed UAV above you right now and can fire ordnance anywhere, at any time, without warning, even directly at you and everyone around you. How would you go about your daily activities? Would you not be terrified wherever you were? Would you not be living in a state of constant fear, resenting the nation where the armed drones above you originated? There is no way to avoid an armed UAV, no surrender, no uniform you could wear, not even waving a white flag exempts you or your loved ones from being targeted and almost certain death. This is terror!

Placing ordnance on a UAV makes war easier. There is no need to justify sending troops, the public looks at drones as unmanned when in actuality, drones are hyper-manned. Unlike a helicopter or a plane, the people who are on duty for a drone mission are numerous however, the two public papers I am aware of from the German Ministry of Defense presented to the Bundestag on July 3rd and on November 25 2020, make no mention of who or how many people consist of a German Armed UAV team. Only two members are mentioned, the pilot and one other.

Drones often miss crucial details about the area they observe as is common when viewing a two-dimensional screen. This was clearly demonstrated over and over again by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) like Reprieve, ECCHR, Airwars and others. They consistently reported the wrong target killed, or multiple iterations of the same target being killed in different drone strikes on different dates.