

A Shadowy War's Newest Front: A Drone Base Rising from Saharan Dust

Rising from a barren stretch of African scrubland, a half-finished drone base represents the newest front line in America's global shadow war. Air Base 201, near Agadez, Niger, will be used to stalk or strike extremists deep into West and North Africa, a region where most Americans have no idea the country is fighting. This represents a largely undeclared American military buildup outside the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, often with murky authorities and little public attention, unfolding in remote places like Yemen, Somalia and, increasingly, West Africa.

The Agadez base is now the largest "airman-built" project in Air Force history. It will cost over \$100 million just to build, and then a whopping \$30 million to operate each and every year through 2024, the end of its 10-year contract, totaling an estimated \$280 million.

Secrecy and Expanding Warfare

Questions about whether the American military is seeking to obscure the expanding scope of operations in Africa surfaced in March when it was revealed that the United States had carried out four airstrikes in Libya between September and January that the military's Africa Command had failed to disclose at the time. "It's essential that the American public is aware of, engaged in, and decides whether or not to support American military operations in countries around the world, including Niger," said Senator Chris Coons, Democrat of Delaware, who visited Niger with four other senators in April.

Building a new base in this remote, landlocked country nearly twice the size of Texas marks the latest chapter in the military's contentious history of drone operations around the world. It comes as American drone strikes, after tapering off somewhat in places like Pakistan, are on the rise in Yemen, Somalia and Libya. Where American and Nigerian officials see enhanced security in drone operations — for surveillance, strikes or protecting Special Forces patrols — others fear a potentially destabilizing impact that could hand valuable recruiting propaganda to an array of groups aligned with Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, and that could increase the militants' menace. "Eliminating jihadi military leaders through drone operations could temporarily disorganize insurgent groups," said Jean-Hervé Jezequel, deputy director of the International Crisis Group's West Africa project in Dakar, Senegal. "But eventually the void could also lead to the rise of new and younger leaders who are likely to engage into more violent and spectacular operations to assert their leadership."

"Skepticism is high regarding U.S. intentions in the region," stated a report from the polling firm ORB International in 2012. Niger is now a

hotbed of extremist groups — including Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham-Islamic State West Africa, ISIS-Greater Sahara, ISIS-Libya, and Boko Haram — according to the U.S. State Department. **Most of the organizations weren't operating in Niger or didn't even exist when ORB conducted its polling.** (*emphasis added.*)

Excerpted from ---

[1] The Intercept, "[The U.S. is Building a Drone Base In Niger That Will Cost More Than \\$280 million by 2024](#)"

[2] The New York Times, "[A Shadowy War's Newest Front: A Drone Base Rising From Saharan Dust](#)"

[3] The Intercept, "[U.S. Military Surveys Found Local Distrust in Niger. Then the Air Force Built a \\$100 Million Drone Base](#)

Killing by Remote Control

Drone warfare is nothing more than killing by remote control, destroying lives from a safe distance of thousands of miles. It is cowardly, immoral, and despite what its advocates want you to believe, it isn't even "precise." The Trump administration has significantly expanded the "Unmanned Aerial Warfare" program begun under the President Clinton and escalated by President Bush and President Obama. Trump has removed the already faulty restrictions that were previously in place to guard against civilian casualties, which have increased exponentially since 2017. And yet, this isn't even an issue discussed in the political campaigns of today. It no longer makes the news. As American citizens, we are told little about it.

Since 1999, the New Haven Sunday Vigil has been held here every week from 12-1pm at Broadway, Park and Elm Streets in New Haven, CT, to emphatically say NO to the state of permanent, ongoing war against the world being waged by our government and its allies- a war which is terrorizing the planet and destroying lives in order to consolidate enormous power and wealth in the hands of a very few people.

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JOIN US TO RESIST THIS ENDLESS WAR!

<https://newhavensundayvigil.wordpress.com>

One thing you can do: call on Congress to repeal the Authorization for the Use of Military force (AUMF), the post-9/11 Congressional act that is used to justify the use of armed drones. Contact your Senator and Representative now, especially if they are running for re-election.