

# FACT SHEET

# WAR ERODES OUR

# LIBERTIES

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War is often justified by claiming that it is in defense of freedom in the home country and is promoting freedom and democracy abroad. This is usually not the case and, in the case of the war on terror, is patently untrue. War not only denies human rights to those people in the countries directly involved in the conflict, but it also often erodes the civil liberties – including the right to freedom of speech & assembly, due process, and protection from unreasonable searches – of the domestic populations of the aggressor countries. Often this is accomplished by first removing rights from people designated as enemies, and later by applying the same standards to others.

## FORCE OF LAW OR THE LAW OF FORCE?

War erodes the rule of law, and undermines the checks & balances in government. War tends to undemocratically shift power to a president or other executive body, and away from a legislature or judiciary.

Since World War II, U.S. presidents have acquired tremendous powers to operate in secrecy and outside the oversight of Congress. For example, Kennedy used new



structures called the Special Group Counter-Insurgency, the 303 Committee, and the Country Team to consolidate power in the White House, and the Green Berets to allow the president to direct covert military operations. Presidents began asking Congress to declare a state of national emergency as a way around the requirement of a declaration of war. Clinton used NATO as a vehicle for going to war despite



congressional opposition. The trend that moved war powers from Congress to the White House reached a new peak under George W. Bush's administration, when the U.S. Justice Department drafted a memo authorizing any president to single-handedly declare war without congressional pre-approval.<sup>1</sup>

Under the guise of "national security," the U.S. Justice Department has flat out denied trials to victims of torture and other war crimes.<sup>2</sup> A 2012 lawsuit filed by the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) famously shed light on the U.S. government's unlawful targeted killings of U.S. citizens in drone strikes far from any armed conflict zone. The White House claimed the right to kill Americans outside the United States, a direct assault on international law and the constitutional right to due process.<sup>3</sup>

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## MILITARIZATION OF THE POLICE

The United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, France, and others have felt the backlash of the war on terror, which has resulted in a spike of terrorist attacks at home. These attacks have given rise to more oppressive laws in the form of mass surveillance, militarized policing and the draconian border control.

Since the 1990s, over 5 billion dollars worth of military grade weapons and equipment have been transferred to local police forces. The militarization of police results in the disproportionate targeting of communities of color, and perpetuates a culture of violence, aggression, fear, and hostility.<sup>4</sup> The militarization of police results in the disproportionate targeting of

communities of color, and perpetuates a culture of violence, aggression, fear, and hostility. Militarized policing has promoted, rather than prevented violence; in the U.S., 1093 people were killed by the police in 2016 alone.<sup>5</sup>



Rather than protecting our freedoms, war often leads to increased government secrecy, lack of transparency, and a restriction of civil rights and liberties.

#### LEARN MORE AT:

[worldbeyondwar.org/liberties](http://worldbeyondwar.org/liberties)

World BEYOND War is a global grassroots network of volunteers, activists, and allied organizations advocating for the abolition of war and its replacement with an alternative global security system based on peace and demilitarization. Visit WorldBEYONDWar.org to join the global movement to end all wars.

#### REFERENCES

1. Swanson, David. *War Is A Lie*. 2nd ed., Charlottesville, Just World Books, 2016.
2. *Ibid.*
3. "Al-Aulaqi v. Panetta - Constitutional Challenge to Killing of Three U.S. Citizens." *ACLU*, 4 June 2014, <https://www.aclu.org/cases/al-aulaqi-v-panetta-constitutional-challenge-killing-three-us-citizens>
4. Divest from the War Machine. CODEPINK, 2019, <https://www.divestfromwarmachine.org>.
5. "The Counted: People killed by police in the U.S." *The Guardian*, 1 June 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2015/jun/01/the-counted-police-killings-us-database>