

For Immediate Release

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Press Release of the Information Centre on Militarisation United Nations UAV armament accelerates and legitimizes arms race

The "Information Centre on Militarisation" (IMI) is a German NGO and the recipient of the 2011 Aachen peace prize. As a member organisation of the German Drone Campaign "against the deployment of UAV technology used for military, surveillance and oppressive purposes" (<http://drohnen-kampagne.de/>), IMI criticizes the decision of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to begin deploying unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in UN missions.

Beginning in September, three unarmed surveillance drones (UAVs) are to be deployed by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO). In addition, a feasibility study has been commissioned to explore the possibility of equipping UN troops in the Ivory Coast with UAVs, and the heads of the UN missions in Lebanon and in South Sudan have expressed interest in obtaining drones

The UN is thereby accelerating and legitimizing the arms race to further develop a new technology which will have consequences that have rightly been warned of by the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. With the decision to deploy drones, the DPKO is ambushing the beginning efforts to contain and control the spread of unmanned weapons systems.

“The further arming of UN missions with drones cannot be a substitute for a political concept,” according to Thomas Mickan of IMI. In 2011 UN troops intervened in the civil war in the Ivory Coast, and especially in the Republic of the Congo, according to Mickan, the lack of a clear political concept is evident, “The country has been left entirely to international military forces and is now even to be used as a testing ground for new weapons systems“, says Mickan. Typically in discussions regarding UN military operations, even the illusion of permanent surveillance of a conflict zone leads almost automatically by a subsequent call to reinforce the UN mission with a „more robust mandate,“ he adds. In addition it can be predicted that the use of drones will lower of the threshold for further military interventions, thus further eroding the principle of the sovereignty of developing countries of the Global South. “This is not an unusual development for UN missions these days,” says Mickan. “They begin with surveillance and protection mandates which are then continually widened, made 'more robust'. Then they cross national borders and internationalize conflicts.” It is clear that by deploying drones, the UN would be accelerating this trend.

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