

Drones may violate international law

May 24 2013, by Kelly Wiese Niemeyer

(Phys.org) —As President Obama gives a speech on national security—including defending U.S. use of drones to combat terrorism—Leila Sadat, JD, international law expert and professor of law at Washington University in St. Louis, argues that such targeted killing by unmanned planes may violate international humanitarian law. Legalities aside, she also questions whether it promotes U.S. interests abroad. Sadat wrote about the subject in her article, "America's Drone Wars," published in the *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*.

Sadat notes that drone strikes have become a major part of U.S. military strategy and counterterror operations, but writes that the U.S. use of [drones](#) raises several troubling legal questions, such as what is the legal foundation for government use of lethal force and whether drone strikes are considered acts of aggression against other countries. She finds that the Obama administration largely continued the policy and legal rationale of former President George W. Bush regarding drones.

The U.S. argues there are no geographical constraints in the war on terror, Sadat writes, but adds that most authorities reject that idea.

"The process used by the executive branch to determine who and when to target human beings for death can be summarized in two words: 'trust us,'" she wrote in the article.

But while she believes the administration is cautious, mistakes still can occur, and innocent civilians get killed, raising legal, political and

diplomatic worries for the U.S.

"Some of these 'mistakes' end up as YouTube videos ... which serve as recruitment devices for al-Qaeda and its associates, and fuel anti-American sentiment in areas where drones are operating," Sadat wrote.

More information: [law.case.edu/journals/JIL/Docu ...
ts/45CaseWResJIntlL1%262.12.Article.Sadat.pdf](http://law.case.edu/journals/JIL/Documents/45CaseWResJIntlL1%262.12.Article.Sadat.pdf)

Provided by Washington University in St. Louis

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