

## Sir David Omand to head new commission on the security impact of drones

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Sir David Omand, the UK's former Security and Intelligence Co-ordinator and director of GCHQ, is to chair the University of Birmingham's latest policy commission.

The commission, entitled "The Security Impact of Drones: challenges and opportunities for the UK" will be launched at fringe events at the Labour and Conservative Party conferences.

The Labour Party launch will take place at 5.30pm on Monday 23rd September 2013, Kings East Room, De Vere Grand Hotel, Brighton.

Sir David has said: "Every new technology comes with challenges as well as opportunities, and unmanned air vehicles are a case in point. They have great civil potential, for example in agriculture, environmental monitoring, policing and safety. But in the wrong hands they could be a means of terrorist attack, and an easy way for paparazzi to stalk celebrities.

"On the battlefield they help keep our troops safe but how far would we go in future in sanctioning their use for surveillance? Does the fact that the pilot is in an armchair on the ground and not in the air make it less likely there will be mistakes made in targeting or more likely through the detachment from being on the scene? These questions deserve study and consideration of all the available evidence, without rushing to judgment."

The use of armed drones, or as Air Forces prefer to call them, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) is on the increase. The United Kingdom is using armed drones as part of its campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan, a policy that has attracted publicity centred on the civilian casualties that such actions cause. What is less frequently remarked upon is the role armed UAVs have played in protecting UK military personnel on the ground. How should we balance the conflicting moral choices involved in conducting these counter-terrorist and counter-insurgency operations?

The Commission will focus on these questions related to the Global War on Terror, as well as the wider impact of drone technology on future UK and international security.

Professor Nicholas Wheeler, Director of the Institute for Conflict, Cooperation and Security and academic lead on the Commission, said: "This commission will provide a unique opportunity to bring together a distinguished group of practitioners and academic experts to engage with a topic that has profound implications for future national and international security. One of the key roles of such a Commission will be to cut through some of the over-simplifications and misconceptions that shape the current debate."

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For more information please contact Deborah Walker, PR Manager for Policy and Social Affairs, University of Birmingham on 0121 414 9041 or 07776 465138 or email [d.s.walker.1@bham.ac.uk](mailto:d.s.walker.1@bham.ac.uk) (mailto:d.s.walker.1@bham.ac.uk) Out of Hours please call 07789 921165 or email [pressoffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:pressoffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk) (mailto:pressoffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk)

### Notes to Editors

1. This is the sixth Birmingham Policy Commission launched by the University of Birmingham

2. The Commissioners are:

- Professor Sir David Omand GCB, (Chair) Visiting Professor Department of War Studies, King's College London
- [Professor Nicholas J. Wheeler \(/staff/profiles/government-society/wheeler-nicholas.aspx\)](#), academic lead, Professor of International Relations, Director of the Institute for Conflict, Cooperation and Security (ICCS), University of Birmingham
- Lt Gen (Retd) Sir Paul Newton Director of Strategy and Security Institute, University of Exeter
- Ms Jennifer Gibson Staff Attorney, Reprieve
- Mr Paul Schulte Senior Visiting Fellow, Centre for Defence Studies, King's College London
- Sir Brian Burrige Vice President, Strategic Management, Finmeccanica UK
- Professor Michael Clarke Director General, Royal United Services Institute
- Sir David Veness Honorary Professor of Terrorism Studies, Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, University of St Andrews
- [Professor Mark Webber \(/staff/profiles/government-society/webber-mark.aspx\)](#) Professor of International Politics, University of Birmingham
- [Professor David H. Dunn \(/staff/profiles/government-society/dunn-david.aspx\)](#) Professor of International Politics, University of Birmingham
- [Professor Stefan Wolff \(/staff/profiles/government-society/wolff-stefan.aspx\)](#) Professor of International Security, University of Birmingham
- [Dr Peter Gray \(/staff/profiles/history/gray-peter.aspx\)](#) Senior Research Fellow in Air Power Studies, University of Birmingham
- Professor Elizabeth Wilmshurst Associate Fellow, International Law, Chatham House
- Professor Keith Hayward Head of Research, Royal Aeronautical Society & Associate Fellow, Royal United Services Institute

3. The Labour Party launch will take place at 5.30-7pm on Monday 23rd September at the Kings East Room, De Vere Grand Hotel, Brighton.

4. The Conservative Party launch will be chair by Sir David Omand at 5.30-7pm on Monday 30th September at Cobden 2, Manchester Central Convention Complex, Manchester.