“The World Is America’s Battlefield”

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Elite soldiers drawn from the ranks of the Navy SEALs, Delta Force, former Blackwater and other private security contractors, the CIA’s Special Activities Division, and the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) operate worldwide, with thousands of secret commandos working in more than one hundred countries. Funded through “black budgets,” Special Operations Forces conduct missions in denied areas, engage in targeted killings, snatch and grab individuals, and direct drone, AC-130, and cruise missile strikes. While the Bush administration deployed these ghost militias, President Barack Obama has expanded their operations and given them new scope and legitimacy. This paper, drawing from my book Dirty Wars, examines the consequences of the declaration that “the world is a battlefield.” From Afghanistan to Yemen, Somalia, and beyond, I have investigated the frontlines in this high-stakes investigation in order to explore the depths of America’s global killing machine. I will explain what goes on beneath the surface of America’s covert wars, conducted in the shadows, outside the range of the press, without effective congressional oversight or public debate. As US leaders draw the country deeper into conflicts across the globe, setting the world stage for enormous destabilization and blowback, Americans are not only at greater risk — we are changing as a nation. In my presentation, I will describe the activities of these shadow warriors who prosecute these secret wars and put a human face on the casualties of unaccountable violence that is now official policy: victims of night raids, secret prisons cruise missile attacks and drone strikes, and whole classes of people branded as “suspected militants.”