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**“Death from Above: Drones and Targeted Killings.”**

**Center for National Policy**

**Tuesday, October 9, 12:00pm – 1:00 pm**

**Center for National Policy, One Massachusetts Ave, NW, Suite 333, Washington, D.C., 20001**

On Thursday, the Center for National Policy hosted a panel discussion entitled, "Death from Above: Drones and Targeted Killings." The panel featured **Peter Bergen**, Director of the National Security Studies Program at the New America Foundation, and **Christopher Swift**, Adjunct Professor of National Security Studies at Georgetown University. **Gregory Aftandilian** moderated the event.

**Peter Bergen** started with a discussion on the history of drone usage, mentioning that the U.S. did not use armed drones until after the attacks of 9/11, and their usage has increased significantly under the Obama administration. He went on to discuss the usage of drones in Pakistan.

**Christopher Swift** focused on his fieldwork in Yemen, where he described the drones' al-Qaeda targets as now "operating on their own home turf." In the United States, Swift said, there are two common beliefs about drones: the human rights perspective that thinks "drone strikes are creating more al-Qaeda militants," and the U.S. government perspective that believes "drone strikes are helping us set up a strong Yemeni government." However, Swift noted, neither of these opinions are quite accurate. First, al-Qaeda's recruitment in Yemen thrives due to harsh economic conditions and concerns over government corruption. Additionally, "Yemenis resent the drone strikes," Swift said, because they see the "U.S. standing up to a government that's not responsive to the population." Swift mentioned multiple conversations wherein tribal leaders in Yemen said they would support drone strikes if there were no civilian casualties, no more force than necessary was used, and they targeted only foreign fighters and leaders, not Yemenis. Swift addressed the change from positive strikes, which focus on a specific target after collecting a large amount of intelligence, to signature strikes, which are based on local patterns and focus on a group at large. Swift emphasized that "drones don't change the need for having very clear intelligence" on the ground, and that "we cannot fight this kind of war by remote control."

During the Q&A, Swift and Bergen both agreed "we've got to have some visibility on the ground" to ensure drone strikes do not harm civilians. Swift also suggested dialing back signature strikes until there is better intelligence, while Bergen emphasized the importance of additional public debate on the subject.