A top-secret document shows how the watchlist looks on internal systems used by drone operators.

An MQ-1 Predator unmanned aircraft.
With thanks to Sven Lindqvist's *A History of Bombing*, which served as a template for this narrative.

1.32 Collection, Nomination, Consolidation and the Use of the Terrorist Watchlist to Perform Screening Processes. The following is a chart depicting the collection, TERRORIST nomination, consolidation and screening processes:

A chart from the “March 2013 Watchlisting Guidance.”
WHO’S ON THE WATCHLIST

All figures taken from an August 2013 slide produced by the National Counterterrorism Center.
An August 2013 slide from the National Counterterrorism Center.

**2001**

16 PEOPLE ON THE NO-TRANSPORT LIST

**2013**

47,000 PEOPLE ON THE NO-FLY LIST

Two charts from “Directorate of Terrorist Identities (DTI): Strategic Accomplishments 2013.”
Most of the time drone operators are trying to kill someone specific. They call these people, the people being hunted, “objectives.”

What does an objective look like? Here’s an example.

This timeline was for a man named Bilal el-Berjawi. Intelligence agencies watched him for years, then the British government stripped him of his citizenship.

After calling his wife, who had just given birth in a London hospital, Berjawi was killed by an American drone strike. Some people thought the call might have given away his location, but the drones already knew where he was.

This was his car.
When drone operators hit their target, killing the person they intend to kill, that person is called a “jackpot.”

When operators miss their target and end up killing someone else, they label that person EKIA, or “enemy killed in action.”

The insignia of the Joint Special Operations Command.
A slide from a classified Pentagon study outlines the air and naval assets of the secret task force charged with hunting down, killing, and capturing high-value individuals in Somalia and Yemen.

Michael G. Vickers, former undersecretary of defense for intelligence, was a powerful figure in the world of covert operations.

On May 23, 2013, President Obama gave his first formal address on drone strikes, at the National Defense University in Washington.
A still from a home video of Abdulrahman Awlaki playing with his younger siblings in the family’s courtyard in 2009. The sixteen-year-old U.S. citizen was killed in a drone strike on October 14, 2011, in Yemen.

Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, was an architect of JSOC’s “find, fix, finish” doctrine.
PHASE I:
IDENTIFICATION AND FUNCTION OF VARIOUS LOCK FAMILIES
WARD, BIT KEY, DISC TUMBLER AND PIN TUMBLER LOCKS
WHEEL AND DIAL COMBINATION LOCKS
PADLOCK BYPASS TECHNIQUES
FOREIGN PADLOCK DEFEAT EXERCISE
SIMPLEX AND MECHANICAL PUSH BUTTON LOCKS
SCHLAGE WAFER LOCK PICKING AND DECODING
KEY CASTING AND KEY IMPRESSIONING
BUILDING ENTRY OPERATIONS AND DOOR HARDWARE BYPASS TECHNIQUES
TUBULAR KEY AND CRUCIFORM KEY LOCKS
MASTER KEY SYSTEM EXPLOITATION
PIN TUMBLER DECODING AND SIGHT READING
DIGITAL DOOR HARDWARE AND CLICK LOCKS
KEY MENSURATION AND USE OF CODE MACHINES AND KEY DUPLICATORS
WORKING WITH PIN TUMBLER CYLINDERS - MORTISE, RIM, EUROPROFILE, KEY-IN-KNOB
HOTEL MAG-STRIPE CARD KEY CLONING
RFID CREDENTIAL CLONING
WORKING WITH EUROPROFILE CYLINDERS
PICKING AND DECODING ROTATING DISC TUMBLER LOCKS
PICKING AND IMPRESSIONING DIMPLY KEY LOCKS
ADVANCED KEY IMPRESSIONING TECHNIQUES

PHASE II:
VISUAL DECODING OF EDGE CUT AND HIGH SECURITY AUTOMOBILE KEYS
PICKING, DECODING, GENERATING KEYS TO EUROPEAN FORD / JAGUAR TIBE LOCKS
GENERATING KEYS TO AUTOMOTIVE DIMPLY KEY LOCKS
VISUAL TUMBLER DECODING TECHNIQUES
ADVANCED AUTOMOTIVE KEY IMPRESSIONING
USE OF VARIOUS MECHANICAL PICKING AND DECODING TOOLS
AUTOMOTIVE KEY GENERATION – STANDARD AND HIGH SECURITY VEHICLE LOCKS
USE OF HAND HELD CLIPPERS TO GENERATE HIGH SECURITY KEYS BY CODE
USE OF ELECTRONIC CODE MACHINES TO GENERATE AND DUPLICATE HIGH SECURITY KEYS
SELECTED TRANSPONDER BYPASS TECHNIQUES
VEHICLE ACCESS AND KEY GENERATION PRACTICAL EXERCISES

PHASE III:
PHYSICAL RESTRAINT ESCAPE TECHNIQUES, TOOL CONSTRUCTION AND CONCEALMENT
MITIGATION OF OVERSEAS OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS
TACTICAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS
CTR IN SUPPORT OF BUILDING ENTRY AND KEY GENERATION OPERATIONS
CTR IN SUPPORT OF VEHICLE ACCESS OPERATIONS
OPEN SOURCE TOOLS AND DATA BASES IN SUPPORT OF CTR OPERATIONS
RESTRICTED DATA BASES IN SUPPORT OF CTR OPERATIONS
USE OF TECHNICAL COLLECTION TOOLS IN SUPPORT OF KEY GENERATION MISSIONS
CULMINATING TEAM TACTICAL EXERCISES

U.S. military descriptions of the “skill set” required for advance force operations.
Over a period of four and a half months in 2012, U.S. forces used drones and other aircraft to kill 155 people in northeastern Afghanistan. Nineteen were jackpots; the remaining, 136 people, were classified as EKIA.

Note the “%” column. It specifies the number of jackpots (JPs) divided by the number of operations: a 70 percent success rate. But it ignores well over a hundred other people killed along the way.

This means that almost nine out of ten people killed in these strikes were not the intended targets.
THE KILL CHAIN

CORA CURRIER

Gen. James MattisCentcom
Commander

Leon Panetta
Secretary of Defense

Eric Holder
Attorney General

Hillary Clinton
Secretary of State

Timothy Geithner
Secretary of the Treasury

Steven Chu
Secretary of Energy

Tom Donilon
National Security Adviser

Janet Napolitano
Secretary of Homeland Security

Gen. Martin Dempsey
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

STEP ONE: CHOOSING A TARGET

Principals Committee
According to a Pentagon study obtained by The Intercept, President Obama signed off on 60-day authorizations to kill suspected terrorists, but did not sign off on individual strikes. This graphic shows the officials who would have been involved in approving targets in Yemen in early 2012, according to the chain of command laid out in the study.
A slide from a May 2013 Pentagon presentation shows the chain of command for ordering drone strikes and other operations carried out by JSOC in Yemen and Somalia.
THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

Step One: Choosing a Target

Gen. Martin Dempsey Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Gen. James Mattis Centcom Commander

JSOC Task Force

Tom Donilon National Security Adviser

Hillary Clinton Secretary of State

Timothy Geithner Secretary of the Treasury

Leon Panetta Secretary of Defense

Eric Holder Attorney General

Steven Chu Secretary of Energy

Janet Napolitano Secretary of Homeland Security

△ Principals Committee
According to a Pentagon study obtained by The Intercept, President Obama signed off on 60-day authorizations to kill suspected terrorists, but did not sign off on individual strikes. This graphic shows the officials who would have been involved in approving targets in Yemen in early 2012, according to the chain of command laid out in the study.
The ISR study recommended more captures, rather than killings, because of the intelligence that could be gleaned from interrogations and collected materials.

A slide from the ISR study recounts the hunt for an alleged al Qaeda member (likely Fahd Saleh al-Anjaf al-Harithi), showing that two others died in a botched attempt to kill him.
Since the first drone strike in Yemen in 2002, hundreds of people have been killed in U.S. operations in Yemen and Somalia, many of them innocent civilians. The tallies shown here were compiled by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism from reports of both CIA and JSOC drone strikes and other operations. The large range in the estimates is due to the inherent difficulties of collecting data on airstrikes in war zones. The identities of the “people killed” were often unknown and may include civilians as well as suspected terrorists or militants. The United States almost never publicly acknowledges individual operations.
A top-secret slide confirms the central role Germany plays in the U.S. drone war.

Transatlantic cables connect U.S. drone pilots to their aircraft half a world away.

President Barack Obama and Chancellor Angela Merkel.
A top-secret slide deck obtained by The Intercept shows the complex architecture of the U.S. drone program.
Yemenis gather around a burned car after it was torched by a drone strike on January 26, 2015. Among the dead was a teenage boy.

Hellfire missiles, the explosives fired from drones, are not always fired at people. In fact most drone strikes are aimed at phones. The SIM card provides a person’s location; when turned on, a phone can become a deadly proxy for the individual being hunted.

When a night raid or drone strike successfully neutralizes a target’s phone, operators call that a “touchdown.”
U.S. MILITARY DRONE AND SURVEILLANCE NETWORK IN AFRICA 2012–2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>AIRCRAFT / PERSONNEL</th>
<th>CONFIRMED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Djibouti (Lemonnier)</td>
<td>10× MQ-1 (Predators), 4× MQ-9 (Reapers), 6× U-28, 2× P-3MS, 8× F-15E</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Arba Minch, Ethiopia</td>
<td>1× MQ-1 (Predator), 1x MQ-9 (Reaper)</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Manda Bay, Kenya</td>
<td>2× MFW (Medium Fixed-Wing)</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Nairobi, Kenya</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Indian Ocean (on ships)</td>
<td>ScanEagle/Fire Scout detachment, Armada Sweep system</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCATION</td>
<td>AIRCRAFT / PERSONNEL</td>
<td>CONFIRMED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kismayo, Somalia</td>
<td>Up to 40 people</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niamey, Niger</td>
<td>MQ-1 (Predators)</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baledogle, Somalia</td>
<td>30 to 40 people</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seychelles</td>
<td>MQ-9 (Reapers)</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti (Chabelley)</td>
<td>MQ-9 (Reapers), MQ-1 (Predators)</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entebbe, Uganda</td>
<td>PC-12 aircraft</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso</td>
<td>PC-12 aircraft</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N’Djamena, Chad</td>
<td>MQ-1 (Predators)</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>MQ-1 (Predators), 90–300 people</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Camp Lemonnier, a base in Djibouti, has been a focal point of the U.S. Military’s drone operations in Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. A secret Pentagon study obtained by The Intercept lists the drones as well as surveillance and attack aircraft that operated out of Lemonnier in 2012 as part of the military’s targeted killing program.
“Baseball cards” (BBCs) are the military’s method for visualizing information; they are used to display data, map relationships between people, and identify an individual’s so-called pattern of life.

This isn’t quite what a baseball card looks like, but they are said to include much of the following information.
A secret NSA document describes the assassination of Anwar al Awlaki, a U.S. citizen.

Excerpt from a 2005 NSA document.
A Pentagon chart showing that as of June 2012 manned spy planes accounted for the majority of flights over Yemen, even though drones were more efficient, since they could spend more time over a target. Over Somalia the military used a mix of manned and unmanned aircraft.

When the military was focused on a “finish” (kill) operation, drones were taken off the surveillance of other targets.
A slide from the ISR study notes that deadly strikes in Yemen and Somalia reduce the amount of intelligence for future operations.

The military relies heavily on intelligence from electronic communications, much of it provided by foreign governments, but acknowledges that the information is "neither as timely nor as focused as tactical intelligence."
A man walks past destroyed buildings in Zinjibar, capital of Abyan Province in southern Yemen, on December 5, 2012.

Cell phone data was critical for finding and identifying targets, yet a chart from the ISR study shows that the military had far less information in Yemen and Somalia than it was accustomed to having in Afghanistan.
A chart comparing the surveillance capabilities of the various drones and aircraft flying over Yemen and Somalia in 2012.
Drones are not magical. They have to take off from somewhere. Increasingly that somewhere is on the continent of Africa.

But where exactly?

As of 2012, the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) had bases in Djibouti, Kenya, and Ethiopia. JSOC operated eleven Predators and five Reaper drones over the Horn of Africa and Yemen.

After crashing multiple Predator drones near Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, the U.S. military moved operations to a more remote airstrip in Chabelley, Djibouti.

Here’s a snapshot of how the United States views its surveillance capabilities on the continent of Africa more broadly.
Blackfin I/II survey equipment.

“Can get you in a lot of trouble.” Review by Nathan Wessler, staff attorney with the ACLU’s Speech, Privacy, and Technology Project:

“From the maker of the Stingray, this device provides the added power to listen in on calls and read text messages. Also useful for kicking nearby phones off the network (you can choose between just blocking a single target phone or scrambling the signals of all phones in the area). Take note: Wiretapping calls and text messages requires a special ‘superwarrant’ signed by a judge. Playing around with a Blackfin without adequate court supervision can get you in a lot of trouble.”

Cyberhawk Battlefield Data Recovery/SSE.

“More than enough data to map an entire social network.”
Review by Jennifer Lynch, senior staff attorney, Electronic Frontier Foundation:

“Are you trying to break the next big criminal syndicate? If so, the Cyberhawk may be your go-to device. It’s able to get data off over 79 cellphones, including saved and dialed numbers, SMS messages, pictures, calendar entries, and even sound files. That’s more than enough data to map the entire social network of an organization—even if your targets use throwaway ‘burner’ phones. And the best thing about it? It uses software and components made right here in the United States. But better get a warrant to search those phones—in 2014, the Supreme Court said it’s the law.”
Spartacus II Ground-Based Geolocation (Vehicular).

“Can be easily moved from plane to car to body.”
Review by Jennifer Lynch, senior staff attorney, Electronic Frontier Foundation:

“You’ll feel like a powerful Greek gladiator with the Spartacus II. It’s the smallest high-powered dual-band system on the market and can be moved easily from a plane to a car or even to your body—all without changing the system. While the $180,000 price tag might put it out of reach for smaller agencies, its cross-border capabilities could make it easy to acquire with DHS funding. And if it’s used at the border, you might not even need to get a warrant before you use it.”

DRT 1101B Survey Equipment.

“Up to 10,000 targets.”
Review by Jennifer Lynch, senior staff attorney, Electronic Frontier Foundation:

“Are you trying to monitor a huge political protest? Look no further than DRT. Nicknamed ‘dirt boxes,’ these devices can locate up to 10,000 targets and can process multiple analog and digital wireless devices all at the same time. They’re even capable of intercepting and recording digital voice data. The best thing about the devices is the fact that no one may ever know you’ve used one. Just be careful—if your targets do figure out you’ve used a DRT box, and you haven’t gotten a warrant, they may be able to convince a judge to throw out all the evidence you’ve collected on them after you used the device. You can mount DRT models like this one in an aircraft to fly over the crowd.”
The military worries about what it calls the “tyranny of distance” in its efforts to maximize orbits. An orbit, in this context, refers to a cycle of continuous, unbroken coverage of a target. Compared to the traditional battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. drones have to travel farther to reach their “named areas of interest,” or NAIs, in Yemen and Somalia.

Here’s where the United States appears to have “finished” people in Yemen.
A video produced by al Shabaab purports to show Berjawi’s mangled vehicle in the aftermath of the drone strike that killed Church Street Market near Edgware Road, northwest London. September 29, 2015.

A secret case study details the surveillance and assassination of “Objective Peckham,” Bilal el-Berjawi, in January 2012.

Bilal el-Berjawi holding an AK-47 rifle in a martyrdom video produced after his death by al Shabaab’s media wing.

For many years lawyers and human rights advocates have wondered about the chain of command in cases of non-battlefield assassinations. Who authorizes them? Do they fall within the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), or through some other authority?

The secret documents are not comprehensive on this point, but they suggest a linear chain—all the way up to the president of the United States (POTUS).

A village security force commander and coalition special operations forces identify insurgent fighting positions during a daylong firefight in Nuristan Province, Afghanistan, April 12, 2012.
A summary of operations conducted from January 2012 through February 2013 as part of Operation Haymaker, a U.S. military campaign in northeastern Afghanistan aimed at

A breakdown of 2011–12 mission statistics for Task Force 3-10, a U.S. special operations task force responsible for missions in Afghanistan at that time.
U.S. special operations personnel prepare to board a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter during a mission in Kunar Province, Afghanistan, February 25, 2012.

A 2012 U.S. military request for an airstrike targeting Qari Munib, an alleged Taliban subcommander operating in northeastern Afghanistan.
A 2012 U.S. military request for an airstrike targeting Qari Munib, an alleged Taliban subcommander operating in northeastern Afghanistan.
A storyboard detailing a 2012 U.S. drone strike targeting Qari Munib, an alleged Taliban subcommander.

A "link analysis" purporting to detail alleged Taliban subcommander Qari Munib's ties to other militant figures.
Cyber and military intelligence specialists monitor U.S. Army networks in the Cyber Mission Unit’s Cyber Operations Center at Fort Gordon, Georgia.

A slide detailing Operation Haymaker’s “functional teams,” which included personnel from a range of U.S. military units and intelligence agencies.
The slide titled “Manhunting Basics” takes a lighthearted approach to the core mission of the Haymaker campaign: finding and killing specific individuals.

**Manhunting Basics**

- **HUMINT** These aren’t the terrorist you’re looking for
- **IMINT** FMV is your friend ... and enemy
- **SIGINT** May I ask who’s calling, please?
- **ABI** More layers are preferred
- **SNA** More connections aren’t always best
- **IPB** Yep, IPB
- **F3EA** Can we stop adding letters?

**Kinetic v. Direction Action**

A slide reporting a robust presence of human intelligence sources in the district of Waygal, a “historic” al Qaeda sanctuary in northeastern Afghanistan.
A comparison of raids (described as “enabled ops”) and airstrikes (described as “kinetic strikes”) reveals significant differences in the total number of prisoners taken versus individuals killed during an intensified period of Haymaker operations.

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**Senior Nuristan Taliban Detainee**
Ahmad (OBJ BRANDYWINE)

“Hands down, the scariest/most intimidating message for the Taliban, at any level, from fighter to Taliban senior leadership, is anything to do with drones or aerial bombings. The Taliban has no way to defend against them and they are certain to end in absolute destruction of whatever their target is.”

A quote attributed to an alleged Taliban detainee describes the psychological impact of living under the threat of U.S. airstrikes.

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A slide reveals the Haymaker campaign’s limited strategic achievements.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>Rank_MW</th>
<th>GROUP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JAMIL UR-RAHMAN</td>
<td>LEAD HILL</td>
<td>TB/AQ FAC</td>
<td>Commander</td>
<td>EKIA</td>
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<td>SAKHR AL-TAIFI</td>
<td>VILONIA</td>
<td>AQ</td>
<td>Deputy emir</td>
<td>EKIA</td>
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<td>SKANG</td>
<td>AQ/TB</td>
<td>Commander &amp; facilitator</td>
<td>EKIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>MUSA</td>
<td>POSTAL SERVICE</td>
<td>TB/AQ FAC</td>
<td>Commander &amp; facilitator</td>
<td>EKIA</td>
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<td>HANZALLAH</td>
<td>COLLISON</td>
<td>AQ</td>
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<td>EKIA</td>
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<td>YUSUF</td>
<td>MIRAMAX</td>
<td>AQ/HUJI</td>
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<td>TOUCHSTONE</td>
<td>AQ/HUJI</td>
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<td>CHATHAM BARS</td>
<td>AQ</td>
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<td>POST MORTEM</td>
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<td>HAMIDI</td>
<td>WIND RIVER</td>
<td>TB/AQ FAC</td>
<td>Sub-Commander &amp; facilitator</td>
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<td>AMMAR</td>
<td>ANARCHY</td>
<td>LeT</td>
<td>Commander</td>
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<td>ABDULLAH</td>
<td>HEARTBREAK RIDGE</td>
<td>AQ</td>
<td>Commander</td>
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<td>DOST MOHAMMAD</td>
<td>DAKOTA</td>
<td>TB</td>
<td>Shadow governor</td>
<td>EKIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>TURAB aka KHANJAR</td>
<td>KNIFE GAME</td>
<td>AQ/TB</td>
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<td>EKIA</td>
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<td>QARI MUNIB</td>
<td>LETHAL BURWYN</td>
<td>TB</td>
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<td>HAJI MATI</td>
<td>RONAN</td>
<td>Salafist</td>
<td>Commander</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOWRA</td>
<td>VIKING</td>
<td>Salafist</td>
<td>Commander</td>
<td>EKIA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TB — Taliban  
AQ — al-Qaeda  
AQ FAC — al Qaeda facilitator  
HUJI — Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami  
LeT — Lashkar-e-Taiba  
TTP — Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan  
EKIA — enemy killed in action
A wounded Afghan boy receives treatment at a hospital in Kunar Province on February 13, 2013, after a NATO airstrike killed ten civilians.
U.S. intelligence agencies hunt people primarily by locating their cell phone. Equipped with a simulated cell tower called Gilgamesh, a drone can force a target's phone to lock onto it and then use the phone's signals to triangulate that person's location.

Here is what a watchlist looks like.
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Here is what a watchlist looks like.