



## Episode 538: The Bipartisan Mainstreaming of Drone Warfare

Guest: Laurie Calhoun

**WOODS:** Quite a provocative and in-your-face title. I love in-your-face titles. Just get to the point. *We Kill Because We Can* is the main title, and the subtitle is *From Soldiering to Assassination in the Drone Age*. This thing is provocative from page one, so I almost don't — there's so much that I would like to ask you, and I want to make sure we do justice to the book. Of course we're going to link to it on the show notes page, which today is [TomWoods.com/538](http://TomWoods.com/538), but let's start off with just talking about the phenomenon of the use of drones, and how they have gone from a peculiar oddball thing that was a curiosity in 2002 to being a very, very common instrument of U.S. foreign policy today.

**CALHOUN:** Yes, it's a little bit shocking in my view, what has happened. Essentially the lethal drones were used initially in covert operations, and what happened is they were used over and over and over again over about a 10-year period when the government did not acknowledge the use of lethal drones or targeting killing publicly. And by the time that 10-year period had elapsed, it had really become a standard operating procedure, so everyone in the administration thinks it's just a tool you reach for, and this is how you deal with terrorism. You probably heard the Leon Panetta quote, "It's the only game in town," when he came into the directorship of the CIA.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**CALHOUN:** But the fact is we never debated any of this. We never had the debate, because they were covert for so long, and by the time Obama finally said in January of 2012, yeah, we're doing this; we're killing people using lethal drones, everyone had already kind of accepted it and shrugged and just went on with whatever they were doing — with a few notable exceptions; for example, Rand Paul. But in terms of like a public debate among politicians, we never had it.

**WOODS:** Yeah, and now, as you say, people don't even really — it's hardly even mentioned by anybody. And that's a bipartisan thing. I don't hear Democrats talking about drones.

**CALHOUN:** No, you don't and people have just accepted something like *The New York Times* headlines' version of the story, which always says "Four suspected militants killed," and people are so used to reading that kind of headline, I think they actually

elide the word "suspect" from their reading, and they just assume, oh good, we got some more terrorists. But the reality is all of these people being killed are suspects, and so it's actually a very disturbing development in the history of warfare and in the history of, I would say, criminal justice as well. It's really an amalgamated attempt to deal with terrorism and to, on the one hand, say these people are suspects, and on the other hand, they're soldiers, but we're just going to kill them without any due process, without warning them, without providing them with opportunity to surrender. We're just going to kill them. Why? Because we can.

**WOODS:** Well, let me say what, of course, you know is the standard response to that, which is that we're dealing today with an especially wily, non-state enemy. There is no headquarters that we can bomb and then the regime will surrender and hostilities will end. We're dealing with individuals, very shady, every-changing organizations, and so unfortunately it's going to be a little bit messy, and we have to do this. And if we weren't doing this, we would be doing something that you would find even more objectionable than drones, so shut up and accept it.

**CALHOUN:** Yeah, that is the standard line, well articulated. And my response is, first of all, the choices aren't a) lethal drones or b) Tomahawk missiles. That's how it's always set up. We either have to have a full scale invasion, take over Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, Libya, Syria, take over all of them with our Army, or we have to go in with drones. This is a false dichotomy, first of all. It's not the case that we would be going into any of these places beyond Iraq and Afghanistan with troops on the ground, because the people are not posing a huge threat to the United States. They're small factions in tribal regions, and basically they're suspected of complicity in terrorism, but it's — I'm glad you raised the word "shady," because the evidence for these people's supposed guilt of plotting to destroy the United States is based on information provided by bribed locals.

And we know from Guantanamo Bay when we use bribery to pull in all these men and incarcerate them without charges for many years that it turned out that 86% of those men were innocent. They had no actual connection to terrorist networks; they just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

What's happening with the lethal drones is that, because we "kill don't capture" and take no prisoners, people want to assume that all these people are guilty. The reality is very different, I believe, based on the states at Guantanamo Bay and the fact that the very same types of intelligence are used for drone strikes as was used for rounding up suspects for detention.

**WOODS:** All right, so we have to extrapolate from a case like Guantanamo — is that because we really don't have any way — once people have been basically obliterated by a drone strike, there's no way to go in and assess who's who and what really happened, so we can't really form accurate percentages in terms of are we really getting terrorists? Are we able to assess those numbers?

**CALHOUN:** Well, that's an excellent question. And what has happened is the administration in one way acknowledges the difficulty of getting the truth, but their solution is not to be skeptical or agnostic about the identity of some of these people killed; instead, what they have done is to define all men of military age who are killed in drone strikes as unlawful combatants and fair game for targeting. In other words, if you are an able-bodied male in one of these tribal regions over which lethal drones hover and you are killed, whether or not your name is known, whether or not you have any known association with al Qaeda, they write you into history as an enemy combatant killed in action.

And they offer this kind of bizarre explanation that, well, we assume that they are combatants unless we're given some reason not to believe that they're combatants, but of course that never happens, and it couldn't happen, because the people are killed on the basis of suspicious activities — namely, being where they are among other people who have already been killed or are related in some way to al Qaeda or some other group — so there's no way for these people to be exonerated posthumously. They can't exonerate themselves pre-posthumously, because they don't know that they're being hunted down to be killed, and many of them are not even on target lists, but they end up getting killed, because they're looking for someone else. They want to kill someone, and they end up killing a cluster of other people, and then if the people actually killed happen to be men of military age, they're written off as unlawful combatants.

**WOODS:** The very first one of these strikes apparently was in Yemen back in 2002, and I hadn't known the details of that until I read them in your book, about the complicity of the president of Yemen, who no doubt like a lot of rulers around the world doesn't want to be on the bad side of the U.S. and is willing to go to extremes in some cases to keep the U.S. happy. And he apparently gave his consent to the strike on the condition that some kind of cover story would be devised to account for what happened to the people, and then Wolfowitz went and blew the whole cover. Flesh that out for us.

**CALHOUN:** That's exactly what happened. Saleh collaborated with the United States throughout his presidency in Yemen and basically gave them free rein to kill whoever they wanted to on Yemen sovereign soil. At the time of the November 3rd, 2002 strike, the agreement was this is a covert operation; there's going to be some sort of cover story; it's going to be accidental. But then Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz decided to vaunt the strike as a sort of victory in the War on Terror. And it was a huge political success. I mean, everyone thought, oh, this is so wonderful; we can get rid of these evil terrorists without harming our soldiers, without sacrificing our soldiers, and everyone thought it was a great idea.

Saleh was, I believe, perturbed about the revelation, because of course it was not favored by his constituents. I mean, he basically was acting as a monarch and allowing the United States to kill anyone they wanted to on Yemen soil. And so yeah, it was a little bit tricky. But Saleh actually continued to collaborate with the United States and lots of drone strikes were carried out in Yemen up until the recent coup, which I

believe was precipitated by the drone campaign, because there was just so much unrest and so much anger over the central authorities' provision to the United States of the permission to kill all these people.

But yeah, exactly. It was covert. So in Chapter Two I talk about "From Black Ops to Standard Operating Procedure," no one talked about these drone strikes between that strike, November 3rd, 2002, which was discussed openly by Paul Wolfowitz, and then everyone else talked about it, but then up until January 2012. No one talked about them. If you asked the administration, they all said, oh, we can't talk about it; you know, state secret's privilege; we won't talk about it; we can't talk about it; we can neither deny nor confirm that these people have been killed — you know, when people brought forth data about collateral damage, etc., they just consistently denied it.

And it was ironically President Obama himself in a Google talk chat in January 2012 in advance of the presidential election that he started talking about it. And so they said, oh, I guess — people were like, oh wow, I guess it's not really covert anymore; I guess it's overt. But of course he used this to paint himself as strong on defense: look what I'm doing to keep you safe. And since then, people have just accepted it. Everyone in the administration accepts it. Certainly anyone who remained in the administration has been a lethal drone advocate from 2002 on. A lot of people left the CIA, but the people who have come in are all enthusiasts, and so now it's just considered standard operating procedure.

**WOODS:** Naturally somebody's going to ask you what do you recommend instead. We've got a lot of bad guys out there; it's not always easy to apprehend them, and some of them do wish us ill, and it's quite clear in what they say that they wish us ill, so we have to do something.

**CALHOUN:** Yeah, I'm not so sure that most of these people are so close to Osama bin Laden. The problem is we're conflating all of these groups. There are militants; there are dissidents; there are terrorists; there are all these different types of people who are angry out there. A lot of the people being killed are actually militants whose aspirations are very local, and the central government authority in a case such as Yemen is using his collaboration with the United States to eliminate political enemies. These are people who would never make it to U.S. shores, most of them. Even if they hate the United States, as some of them may very well, because of our ongoing interventions, they don't have the means to harm the United States. They're not, as the politicians always want to say, an existential threat. It's just preposterous to claim that they are. These people are not Osama bin Laden, but unfortunately they've all been conflated into a single group of evil terrorists.

And look at the cases of Afghanistan and Iraq. A lot of those people perceive themselves to be defending themselves against the occupiers — and they were. Now, they ended up joining ranks with al Qaeda terrorists, some of them, but in fact a lot of the men killed really perceived themselves to be defending their own homeland. And what has happened since then is that everyone is just sort of thrown into the same barrel. They're all evil terrorists akin to Osama bin Laden. I reject that premise. I think

it's false. I think it's politically palatable, because politicians can say, oh, look at all these people we've killed; we're keeping you safe. When in fact, the blowback is going to come later down the line, and we, the taxpaying citizens, are the ones who are going to suffer as a result of these programs.

**WOODS:** Now, you point out here what a number of people have said, which is that we have examples of people who have taken up arms in one way or another as a result of a drone strike and the loss of a relative or some close person, and they cite that expressly. And these are people who hadn't been involved in anything before.

**CALHOUN:** That's right.

**WOODS:** So there is the concern that are you in fact — you kill one person, and you radicalize two.

**CALHOUN:** There's a huge amount of data for this. I mean, lots of NGO groups and human rights groups have gone into these territories and interviewed people. A very recent study by Alkarama based in Switzerland found in Yemen the fall of 2014 that among the people living under lethal drones, there were forms of collateral damage which are really not acknowledged by the administration. The administration likes to say that collateral damage is body count, and if you consider that collateral damage is exhausted by civilian body count, it looks like drones are a great idea, because the body count is very low relative to full-scale wars. It's somewhere between several hundred and several thousand. People differ on the stats, and it also depends on whether you exclude the possibility of a military-aged male as a civilian. But even the worst stats, even if lots of these people have been civilians, the body count is in the thousands. It's not hundreds of thousands, and so people say, what are you talking about? Of course drones are the answer.

But they're completely ignoring these other facets of collateral damage, which I refer to as second-order collateral damage or even third-order collateral damage. And second-order collateral damage is the harm done to people who are not killed on the strikes but they're left bereft of their loved ones, their community members, their homes, their vehicles, etc., those people have been harmed by the drones but they survive, and they're in many cases traumatized; they are afraid for the future. What Alkarama found in their very insightful study is that both bereft survivors and people who have not lost anyone are equally afflicted by psychological ailments, such as fear, anxiety, paranoia, and above all anger. And what they found is that among these people in the communities where lethal drones hover, young boys in particular, whether they have lost a family member or not, tend to become very angry about this, and they are prime candidates for signing up to join forces to undertake jihad in collaboration with some of these terrorist factions.

So absolutely, there's the question are we creating more terrorists than we're eliminating, and we have an abundance of evidence for this. And it actually seems just to be a matter of common sense. If you think about how you would feel if your own neighborhood were being, I don't know, hit by missiles periodically, every now and

then some house just disappears, and you're living there, well, what Alkarama found and other organizations have corroborated this is that the people have difficulty planning for the future, because they're not sure that they'll be here tomorrow. They have difficulty experiencing former sources of joy. They basically live in a sort of paranoid state, because they never know if they're going to be next in line.

And as a result of this, some of the people are just traumatized; they're just psychological wrecks. Others become very angry and take up arms and vow to retaliate against this. Lots of the people, lots of the jihadists from the Bush era have said explicitly, as you noted, that they are retaliating to the drone strikes and that they will not stop until the drone strikes stop.

**WOODS:** All right, I'm going to play devil's advocate. What I've heard in response to this from time to time is for people who are worried about the so-called blowback effects of U.S. intervention around the world, the answer is we didn't worry about that when we were fighting the Nazi regime in Germany. We didn't say, well, if we bomb them they're going to get even angrier at us. We just leveled them, and you don't hear anymore Nazis anymore. That would be what they would say.

**CALHOUN:** Well, if you want to undertake full on genocide and kill all brown-skinned people in these areas, yeah, you will eliminate the problem of jihadist terrorists. But we have to step back and ask what exactly we are doing, because in addition to killing the worst of the worst, the people who would if they could grow up to be Osama bin Laden, we're also eliminating simultaneously the best of the best, because we're eliminating people who are standing up against their central government authority, often which are very tyrannical and oppressive. So we're actually eliminating the possibility of democracy arising in these places where we collaborate with central government authorities who allow us to kill whomever we like, and they are using it for their part to cement their position of power. So it actually, the story is very different when you look at it from a longer-range perspective.

Let's take a case such as Nelson Mandela. Nelson Mandela was considered a terrorist by the South African government when he was thrown in prison where he stayed for 27 years. When he emerged, he was one of the greatest forces for peace in all of human history. Now, if lethal drones had existed when Nelson Mandela was pegged as a terrorist by the South African government, he would have been destroyed, and what I believe is happening now is we're destroying people who actually want to change their societies for the better, because we're lumping them all together in the same category as Osama bin Laden-like terrorists.

In fact, there have been lots of terrorists throughout history who have had positive programs. I mean, if you want to talk about World War II, who were the Partisans in France if not a group of civilian-clothed dissidents, right? And you have to look at each particular case. It's not the case that anyone who opposes the central government of their land is automatically wrong and automatically evil. That's just a false premise.

**WOODS:** But it is a premise that we're taught to absorb, because we are taught from American history that of course anybody who has ever stood up to the U.S. government for any reason has obviously always been crazy and always deserved what they got, is the narrative that everybody gets in school, and we stand up and salute and we pledge and so on and on. Now, what I like about this book is that it's not just — although it would be great to have a book that is just specifically about drones and the moral questions connected to it — but you take some very radical positions in here in your discussions of the military itself as an institution, the culture of the military, the suicide and drug problems that we see with the servicemen, the difficulty of because of the nature of the military having an opposing view and just following orders and so on. Can you tell us something about what you're driving at in that discussion in your book?

**CALHOUN:** Yeah, when I talk about the drug use and the suicides I am expressing concern that in part the rampant prescription of drugs to both soldiers and veterans is having the effect of suppressing dissent among the troops themselves. So when you have someone like Brandon Bryant, who's an apostate drone operator, going around the world and saying, look, this is a mistake, we shouldn't be doing this, we're killing people, we don't know who they are, we're killing women and children, he's standing alone. Like, there are no other drone operators, as far as I know, who are doing this. And most of the people who are troubled by what they're doing in the military, whether they're drone operators or whether they're regular soldiers, what happens when they're diagnosed with PTSD now in the 21st century is that they're doled out a whole bunch of drugs. And tons of these soldiers have tragically taken their own lives. No one's really looking into the interactive effects or the contributions made by the drugs to the soldiers' decisions to take their own lives.

But what I want to say is that this new use of drugs has the effect of not only making it easier for soldiers to kill but also suppressing the pangs of conscience which my emerge in them, as a result of which some veterans always become opposed to war.

**WOODS:** Yeah, now that's — gosh, there's so much left to talk about, and I feel like I'm trespassing on your time here. I was really, really blown away by that video excerpt that we all saw several years ago that became known as — it was called "Collateral Murder" —

**CALHOUN:** Yes.

**WOODS:** And this was Private Manning, helped to get that to us. And you know, anytime you see something like that, where the people who are engaged in the killing are just moral monsters — there's no way to excuse their behavior, their speech, their obvious desire to kill these people, it's astonishing. But anytime you point out a case like this, you get told, well, there are always going to be a few bad apples. It's a shame that we have a few bad apples like this.

**CALHOUN:** They say that, but in the case you cite, "Collateral Murder," the event was investigated by the powers that be, and they concluded that the soldiers had acted in

conformity with their ROE, with their rules of engagement. So it's not a case of bad apples. They don't think that those people were bad apples, as appalling —

**WOODS:** I'm sorry, I didn't even realize that. Somehow I forgot about that.

**CALHOUN:** Oh no, that's what's even more appalling, that the people —

**WOODS:** So they're not even considered bad apples. They're perfectly good apples.

**CALHOUN:** Exactly. Those are the good apples. So if those are good apples, what in the world are the bad apples?

**WOODS:** Well, can you describe — in case people have forgotten this, can you describe exactly what these good apples did?

**CALHOUN:** Sure. Yeah, it's shocking; I have to say the first time I saw it, I really felt sick to my stomach. What happened was there were some *Reuters* journalists and civilians walking in, I believe, it was the New Baghdad neighborhood of Baghdad. And some soldiers above in an Apache helicopter, they interpreted the camera equipment which these guys were carrying as guns. They were AK-47s, they were RPGs; they were sure these were insurgents, terrorists, whatever you want to call them. So they decided to take them out. They got the go ahead, and they shot these people.

And some of them were only wounded in the first round, and so one of them was reaching — was crawling, obviously severely injured, dragging himself along the ground, and one of the soldiers in the helicopter was cheering him on saying, "Come on buddy, all you've got to do is touch a weapon." So he was waiting for him to reach for his camera tripod thinking that it was a rifle so that he could finish him off in conformity with his rules of engagement. So if you're reaching for a weapon, that means that you're still an active combatant, and you can just, you know, whack the guy.

So it was so disturbing, because the guy exhibited this thirst to kill an already wounded man, and I take this as indicative of a whole culture of killing, which I label lethal centrism, the focus on killing more and more people as quickly and efficiently as possible and also the use of body count as your sole measure of success. And so the collateral damage just illustrates all of these facets in the drone age. That wasn't a drone killing, but it exhibits the same sort of quest to kill that you find among "well adjusted" drone operators. That's what they do. That's their profession. Their profession is to hunt down and kill people. They even say that they're hunting. So it's no longer a case that the military is trying to defend themselves, because these drone operators are not in any physical danger. They're thousands of miles away working behind screens and pushing buttons on joysticks to kill people who do not threaten them personally with any physical harm.



**WOODS:** It radically changes things that the person who's involved in this has no risk to himself whatsoever. It changes the whole balance of the way war has been conducted in the past.

**CALHOUN:** I absolutely agree with you. It's a paradigm shift, without question. These "soldiers," the drone operators cannot in any reasonable sense construe what they do as acts of literal self-defense. Now, of course people who support the drone program say, well, yes, they are defending themselves and they are defending you, because they're taking out these people who would kill us if they could. Okay, that's the Obama line and the line of all the administrators. But the reality is that if you want to redefine self defense that broadly, that what you're saying is that basically anyone can kill anyone by simply saying, oh, I'm afraid he might harm me in the future. I mean, this is a sort of rationalization which could be used by just paranoid people who take out their local enemies because they look at them suspiciously, right?

**WOODS:** So it's like preemptive war, but on an individual level.

**CALHOUN:** It's absolutely preemptive war, which makes it all the more shocking because Obama so harshly denounced Bush's preemptive war on Iraq. In reality, Obama has carried out preemptive war missile by missile with his drone program, killing people in at least six — probably more — countries, without waging war, without declaring war, without consulting with Congress, and killing these people one missile at a time. It's a strange situation, where on the one hand they're saying it's war, on the other hand they're saying it's not war. So the reason he doesn't have to go to Congress, for example, in Libya he said was because we're not endangering any troops, so therefore it's not really war. But it is war. And they say that it's war when it comes to collateral damage. So you kill innocent people, and the answer's supposed to be, oh, fog of war, collateral damage is inevitable. But it's only war because they're using missiles instead of pistols or strangulation wires or poisons to kill these people. So it's a very strange case of sleight of hand, sleight of linguistic hand, you might say, where you talk about it as war when that's convenient, and then it's not really war when it's inconvenient.

**WOODS:** Yeah. Well, this is how the regime operates in so many areas. Whatever it needs, whether it was in the '30s, whatever program we need to pass, we'll call it this as long as that gets it through the Supreme Court, and once it does, then we'll call it the opposite. You can't trust anything they say on anything. I want to do two more things before I let you go. First is I want to read the very last paragraph before your postface part, the very last paragraph of your book because it's so arresting:

"Supporters of the Predator drone program effectively affirm that war is the conjunction of thousands of summary executions carried out by the decree of the commander in chief. War makers *choose* to wield deadly force while claiming that it is a last resort. When all of the measures under consideration are lethal, drones may be selected as the seemingly lesser of a variety of evils. But drone operators themselves earn handsome salaries for suppressing their own conscience and dispatching human beings whom they have never met, and who never threatened them with death.

Remote control killers situated far from the battlefield know deep down inside that no one would have died on that day at that place had they declined to fire on what became their victims. The brutal and merciless extermination of unwitting suspects denied the right to surrender or appeal because they are assumed to be vermin destroys the bodies of the victims while corroding the souls of their killers."

Whoa. That's a paragraph. That right there is a paragraph. I would like — well, I think in a way our whole conversation has been a reflection on that paragraph, but I want to close with this, what may be a difficult question for you. You point out — and forgive me; I have an addled middle-aged brain, but I feel like at some point in this I read that you sent some writing of yours to, at that time, Senator Obama, because he seemed to be on board with a more peaceful foreign policy. And then you're horrified to discover that he turns around and engages in this sort of drone program. I want to ask you point blank: were you an Obama supporter, and what kind of evolution has taken place in your mind since his election?

**CALHOUN:** Well, yes, you're right; you did correctly recall, I wrote in the preface that I had sent Obama an essay called "The Strange Case of Summary Execution by Predator Drone," which I wrote right after the November 3rd, 2002 annihilation of six men driving down a road in Yemen by the CIA. I sent it to the newly placed president; I sent it at the very beginning of January 2009.

**WOODS:** Okay.

**CALHOUN:** Obviously it never made it to his desk (laughing). And I did vote for him. At that point, the reason why I sent it to him is because I had been seduced by this whole slogan of "Hope and Change," and I was like, great, we're going to turn the corner on this Bush nightmare. And then as the years went on and went on, it became clear that Obama in fact was continuing much of the Bush program, although not quite as brazenly. He wasn't as open about it; he was more secretive about the things that he did.

So yes, I did vote for Obama, and I was really appalled when I learned that he was a part of the "Kill Committee" that met on Terror Tuesdays to consider "flashcards" about nominees to the kill list. That was really shocking. That was as sickening to me as the "Collateral Murder" video, and I really felt that I didn't understand what had happened. You know, it was just incomprehensible to me that he had transformed in this way. But I think what happened, in retrospect, is that he retained a lot of the Bush administration officials, and so when he asked him for advice, they told him, oh, you should do these things, which were of course the things they had already been doing, including drone killing.

So my answer is that he's not the man I thought he was when I voted for him. There's no disputing the fact that he's a completely different creature. I thought that he was going to be a strong leader who would stand on principle. I now believe that he really doesn't have a kind of inner critic, and that he's easily swayed by stronger willed

advisors, and that's how we have ended up with a president who in some ways seems to be contradicting himself left and right.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**CALHOUN:** He'll say he's opposed to this —

**WOODS:** I think he's conflicted. I think in his own mind he's conflicted.

**CALHOUN:** Well, he's accepted the advice of people whom he should have never listened to, beginning with John Brennan, who was the drone killing czar, whom he gave apparently an office in the White House. And then later, you know that Brennan advocated torture under Bush, so Brennan not only was not prosecuted for his part in the torture, but he was promoted to the head of the CIA. So of course since he was the drone killing czar, then drone killing became literally the only game in town. That's what these guys do now. And so I feel like Obama's huge mistake was to accept those sorts of figures as his top advisors, because of course they have a range of ideas about what is feasible and what's doable and what's good to do, and of course they want to promote what they have already been doing. I talk about this in the book as institutional homogenization, which results because in part there's a psychological need for these people to convince themselves that what they're doing is right, and so they do it more and more. And then after a while, what happens, as did happen in the case of drone killing, is it becomes standard operating procedure. Now that's what we do, even though we've never really examined it.

**WOODS:** I don't know if you're familiar with a writer named Diana Johnstone. She writes for *CounterPunch* quite a bit, and she has a book out called *Queen of Chaos: The Misadventures of Hillary Clinton*, and she's attacking Hillary Clinton, not because she wants to raise taxes or something, but she's criticizing her for being an interventionist on foreign policy, for being a hawk on foreign policy.

And I had her own and we talked about Obama, and she agreed with me; she felt like if you compared him to Bush, he does seem less inclined to go to war, and he does seem like he wants to negotiate and so on and so forth, but she said that she did feel like he's easily swayed, and he gets, as you say, swept away by people who are stronger willed than he is.

And I said to her — and it almost sounded like she was trying to excuse it, and I said I can think of people who would have had a strong enough will, who no matter what the establishment is telling them or whoever's pulling the strings or whatever, they would have gone in there and said I'm not bombing or I'm not doing this. I think Dennis Kucinich would not have done it. I think Ron Paul would not have done it.

And she agreed and she said, but people who have that level of fortitude wouldn't have been allowed to get the nomination in the first place. And that just left my jaw on the floor. I thought, well, you know, I don't really know how people get nominations around here, but it always winds up being Bill Clinton or Bob Dole, and

that's just what you're stuck with. It doesn't matter. It's going to be Bill Clinton; it's going to be Mitt Romney, and you're going to sit there and like it. And I don't know why it comes out that way, but it seems like it always does.

**CALHOUN:** Well, that is true, and I agree with your other speaker about Hillary Clinton. I mean, Hillary's a hawk. That's been established. You know, she was threatening Iran way back in 2008, but even in — I don't know if you watched the first Democratic presidential debate. She actually characterized the intervention in Libya as "smart power at its best."

**WOODS:** Unbelievable.

**CALHOUN:** Unbelievable! Because it's true, no soldiers were killed, but four State Department employees were killed. And then she went on to, in a way, blame the victims. She said, oh well, when you have these jobs they're dangerous. (laughing) I couldn't believe it.

**WOODS:** Oh, not only that, but look at what happened to Libya in the wake of it all. Like nobody even cares about that. I don't know what — see, that's to me, that was Bernie Sanders, one of his 8,000 opportunities to basically decapitate Hillary right there and then. And for whatever reason, he just won't do it.

**CALHOUN:** I know. But Bernie also, you know, although we may have hoped that he would be a different candidate, he's come out openly and said that he thinks Obama's doing a good job on foreign policy and basically would follow the Obama approach. And in fact, he used the expression "drone assassination." He didn't say targeted killing. So you mentioned this earlier, how we redefine a term and then things just kind of slide together. So you don't even have to call it targeted killing. He said I'm going to continue the drone assassination program. Bernie Sanders said this. He's the so-called progressive candidate. And the reason, I believe, is he gets his knowledge of what is going on from *The New York Times* headlines, so he sees "suspected militants killed"; he doesn't know any of what's going on on the ground, probably hasn't looked into Libya recently, as you said. Libya's like a nightmare. Talk about terrorist training camp waiting to explode.

**WOODS:** Yeah, exactly. And these are supposed to be in theory the best and brightest we have.

**CALHOUN:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** And I remember in 2008 John McCain was asked about the fact that he had, by his own admission, really not much knowledge of the economy, and said, well, you know, I have Alan Greenspan's book. And like that was his answer. That was supposed to make us feel good. That was the best guy they could come up with? And anyway, it just frustrates me to no end thinking back on those years, that somehow because of ineptitude or what, it's not very well known, but John McCain in New Hampshire beat Ron Paul among anti-war people.

**CALHOUN:** Oh my gosh.

**WOODS:** Now, that is a message problem on McCain's part and on the Ron Paul team's part. Listen, I want to urge people to check out this book. I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was recommended to me by Robert Higgs, who's been a guest on this show a couple of times and who is very much admired by my listeners. The book is *We Kill Because We Can: From Soldiering to Assassination in the Drone Age*. We're going to link to it at [TomWoods.com/538](http://TomWoods.com/538). Well, Laurie, I really, really appreciate your time. I kept you a little longer than I said I would, but I couldn't help myself. It was a great conversation.

**CALHOUN:** Thank you, Tom. I really appreciate it.