



News from Veterans For Peace

216 S. Meramec Avenue St. Louis, MO 63105 (314) 725-6005

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VETERANS DENOUNCE OBAMA'S CLAIMED AUTHORITY TO KILL ANYBODY HE WANTS TO, AS LONG AS THEY ARE OVERSEAS.

October 4, 2011

As of September 29, 2011, we are only one step away from a government where the top official can kill anybody, anywhere, any time he feels it necessary – and do it in complete secret.

With last week's lawless killings of two U.S. citizens living in Yemen, Anwar Al-Awlaqi and Samir Khan, among others, President Obama took another step closer to that frightful day by assuming the roles of judge, jury and executioner. The two citizens were reportedly executed by a combined drone strike and [the same unit that killed Osama bin Laden earlier this year.](#)

Veterans For Peace believes these killings, which violated domestic and international law, expose yet another true cost of war – we can see our nation drift ever closer to the terrible waters of tyranny. The Obama administration claims evidence that shows Awlaqi and Khan were violent, implacable foes of the U.S. But isn't one of our most basic beliefs, enshrined in our Bill of Rights, the principle that all accused deserve a fair trial and that all, no matter how dreadful the allegations against them, are innocent until proven guilty? The summary killing of two citizens without trial abandons that principle and charts a course to a totalitarian government.

According to [McClatchy Newspapers](#), "Awlaqi spent his first seven years in the United States, before his family moved back to Yemen. He returned in 1991 to attend Colorado State University, and then earned a master's degree at San Diego State University. He married and had three children in the United States before leaving the country in 2003."

Khan, born in NY, moved with his family to Charlotte, NC in 2004, where he edited an English-language magazine for Al-Qaida. A spokesman for the Islamic Center of Charlotte told the Charlotte Observer last year that Khan's views were "[widely rejected in the local Muslim community](#) (and) Khan was not allowed to speak at any of the major mosques."

The Obama administration said the authority to execute citizens was first given to George W. Bush by Congress after the attacks of 9/11. Consequently, the U.S. Department of Justice argued last October that "The (president's) judgment as to whether force is authorized against (al Qaida) or any other organization is informed by changing circumstances and sensitive intelligence that cannot be disclosed." In other words, Obama contends that the authority to execute citizens without trial still stands, even if circumstances have changed. Furthermore, he is not required to explain anything.

That Justice Department's argument was made in opposition to a [lawsuit](#) filed by the ACLU and the Center for Constitutional Rights on behalf of Awlaqi's father in an attempt to save his son. But Judge John Bates dismissed the lawsuit, stating he lacked the authority to get involved, ruling "There are circumstances in which the (president's) unilateral decision to kill a U.S. citizen overseas is...judicially unreviewable."

ACLU Deputy Legal Director, Jameel Jaffer, said the administration's targeted killing program allows the government to execute American citizens far from any battlefield with no judicial process and on evidence "...kept secret not just from the public but from the courts."

The Obama administration maintains that [none of this matters as long as the proper secret procedures are followed](#). This is indeed a frightening notion.

It is time to bring all of our troops home from Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and elsewhere. We must return to a civil society that takes care of its people, not a militarized one that inches closer to despotism by the day.

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