

ADMINISTRATION COMPLAINS THAT OTHERS ARE BRINGING TRANSPARENCY IT REFUSES TO ON ITS DRONE STRIKES

In a quote for a WaPo story on the Administration's credibility problems on its Afghanistan claims, a senior Administration official complained that their Afghan plans got leaked before they wanted them to.

There are people at every piece of this – the Taliban, Islamabad, Kabul and Washington” – who object to or are trying to influence elements of the emerging strategy, a senior administration official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to talk more candidly. “They use leaking as a tool.”

Leaking as a tool, even by those in power in DC! Imagine that!?!?

Meanwhile, in the NYT article on the Bureau of Investigative Journalism's report on the way Obama's drone strikes have targeted rescuers and funeral attendees, another senior Administration official launches this cowardly anonymous attack.

A senior American counterterrorism official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, questioned the report's findings, saying “targeting decisions are the product of intensive intelligence collection and observation.” The official added: “One must wonder why an effort that has so carefully gone after terrorists who plot to kill civilians has been subjected to

so much misinformation. Let's be under no illusions – there are a number of elements who would like nothing more than to malign these efforts and help Al Qaeda succeed.”

Mind you, that anonymous coward doesn't actually **dispute** anything in the BIJ report. Instead, he or she just questions the motives of aiming to bring transparency to our drone program, insinuating that doing the hard work of counting the innocent victims of the drone strikes equates to sympathizing with al Qaeda.

Add in fact the NYT article ends with more anonymous comments—on the use of “signature” targeting—that expose the anonymous coward's lies.

However, American officials familiar with the rules governing the strikes and who spoke on the condition of anonymity said that many missiles had been fired at groups of suspected militants who are not on any list. These so-called signature strikes are based on assessments that men carrying weapons or in a militant compound are legitimate targets.

Yet the most troubling part of the BIJ report—aside from the sheer number of casualties—is its count of 50 civilians killed as they tried to help earlier strike targets and 20 civilians killed at funerals of earlier targets.

But research by the Bureau has found that since Obama took office three years ago, between 282 and 535 civilians have been credibly reported as killed including more than 60 children. A three month investigation including eye witness reports has found evidence that at least 50 civilians were killed in follow-up strikes when they had gone to

help victims. More than 20 civilians have also been attacked in deliberate strikes on funerals and mourners. The tactics have been condemned by leading legal experts.

The report notes that it was able to disprove some claims that drones targeted rescuers, which would seem to support the independence of the effort and the good faith motives of those doing the research.

The researchers have found credible, independently sourced evidence of civilians killed in ten of the reported attacks on rescuers. In five other reported attacks, the researchers found no evidence of any rescuers – civilians or otherwise – killed.

And it points to Joby Warrick's highly sourced book as a very deliberate example where the US used funeral as "bait" for another drone strike.

On June 23 2009 the CIA killed Khwaz Wali Mehsud, a mid-ranking Pakistan Taliban commander. They planned to use his body as bait to hook a larger fish – Baitullah Mehsud, then the notorious leader of the Pakistan Taliban.

'A plan was quickly hatched to strike Baitullah Mehsud when he attended the man's funeral,' according to Washington Post national security correspondent Joby Warrick, in his recent book **The Triple Agent**. 'True, the commander... happened to be very much alive as the plan took shape. But he would not be for long.'

The CIA duly killed Khwaz Wali Mehsud in a drone strike that killed at least five others. Speaking with the Bureau, Pulitzer Prize-winner Warrick confirmed what his US intelligence sources had told him: 'The initial target was no

doubt a target anyway, as it was described to me, as someone that they were interested in. And as they were planning this attack, a possible windfall from that is that it would shake Mehsud himself out of his hiding place.'

Up to 5,000 people attended Khwaz Wali Mehsud's funeral that afternoon, including not only Taliban fighters but many civilians. US drones struck again, killing up to 83 people. As many as 45 were civilians, among them reportedly ten children and four tribal leaders. Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud escaped unharmed, dying six weeks later along with his wife in a fresh CIA attack.

In short, this is a real report, based on solid investigative work.

And yet the Administration that admits it uses leaks (and therefore, implicitly, information asymmetry, since they control the classification of all this) maligns those bringing us the transparency that it refuses to offer.

Apparently now, this Administration believes that if you want to learn what is really going on in our war overseas, it amounts to sympathizing with the enemy. And that, by itself tells you something.

Update: In her interview with report author Chris Woods this morning, Amy Goodman asked him about the nasty insinuation.

AMY GOODMAN: I wanted to read to you an excerpt of a quote that just appeared in the *New York Times*. "A senior American counterterrorism official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, questioned the report's findings, saying 'targeting decisions are the product of intensive intelligence collection and observation.' The official added: 'One must wonder why an effort that has so

carefully gone after terrorists who plot to kill civilians has been subjected to so much misinformation. Let's be under no illusions—there are a number of elements who would like nothing more than to malign these efforts and help Al Qaeda succeed.'" So said an unnamed senior American counterterrorism official in response to your report, Chris Woods.

CHRIS WOODS: I think, obviously, that is a disgraceful comment from an unnamed U.S. official. We've presented our findings in good faith. It's all available on TBIJ's [website](#). Our data is transparent. We have linked to all of our sources. Our field investigators have put up their findings. We have eyewitness testimonies. We have a supported interview with the national security correspondent of the *Washington Post* confirming that his U.S. intelligence sources confirmed to him that CIA drones willingly and predictably carried out an attack on a funeral in Pakistan deliberately targeting people there. If the CIA's response—or rather, unnamed security official's response—to that is simply to accuse us of aiding al-Qaeda, then something is going significantly wrong at the CIA and in the wider U.S. intelligence community.

And the BIJ is calling on the CIA's Inspector General to investigate this anonymous smear (not like it would do any good).

The Bureau's managing editor Iain Overton announced tonight that he will be calling for the CIA's Inspector-General to investigate whether Agency officials have been abusing their anonymous status to smear the organisation's legitimate work.

The remarkable attack on the Bureau relates to its extensive investigation into CIA drone attacks on rescuers and funeral-goers in Pakistan. Working with the Sunday Times, the Bureau has published the names of 53 of at least 75 civilians reported killed in such strikes between May 2009 and July 2011.