

LAT: THE CIA HASN'T YET ADDED AL-AWLAKI TO ITS KILL LIST

The most interesting thing about Greg Miller's story on whether Anwar al-Awlaki has been added to the CIA's list of assassination targets is how it differs from the two stories already written on this subject. Miller says that al-Awlaki has not yet been added to the list.

No U.S. citizen has ever been on the CIA's target list, which mainly names Al Qaeda leaders, including Osama bin Laden, according to current and former U.S. officials. But that is expected to change as CIA analysts compile a case against a Muslim cleric who was born in New Mexico but now resides in Yemen.

Anwar al Awlaki poses a dilemma for U.S. counter-terrorism officials. He is a U.S. citizen and until recently was mainly known as a preacher espousing radical Islamic views. But Awlaki's ties to November's shootings at Ft. Hood and the failed Christmas Day airline plot have helped convince CIA analysts that his role has changed.

That accords with what ABC reported on January 25.

White House lawyers are mulling the legality of proposed attempts to kill an American citizen, Anwar al Awlaki, who is believed to be part of the leadership of the al Qaeda group in Yemen behind a series of terror strikes, according to two people briefed by U.S. intelligence officials.

One of the people briefed said opportunities to "take out" Awlaki "may have been missed" because of the legal

questions surrounding a lethal attack which would specifically target an American citizen.

But not with what Dana Priest wrote on January 27.

Both the CIA and the JSOC maintain lists of individuals, called "High Value Targets" and "High Value Individuals," whom they seek to kill or capture. The JSOC list includes three Americans, including Aulaqi, whose name was added late last year. ~~As of several months ago, the CIA list included three U.S. citizens, and an intelligence official said that Aulaqi's name has now been added.~~ [Update, February 17, 2010: WaPo has since **retracted** the report that CIA had US citizens on its kill list.]

I'd suggest Priest's initial focus on JSOC (though Miller, too, confirms that al-Awlaki is on JSOC's list) may explain this flurry of articles describing the government's ultra-secret kill list(s). That is, Priest's focus on JSOC may suggest the long-brewing turf war between JSOC and CIA on such issues is bubbling up to the surface. That also might explain the spin of the other two article. ABC's article seems designed to force someone's hand by painting the CIA as incompetent for missing al-Awlaki in the past. And it might explain CIA spokesperson Paul Gimigliano's snippiness about the public nature of this debate.

CIA spokesman Paul Gimigliano declined to comment, saying that it is "remarkably foolish in a war of this kind to discuss publicly procedures used to identify the enemy, an enemy who wears no uniform and relies heavily on stealth and deception."

Now, whatever the differences in the article Miller doesn't appear to have asked some of the

obvious questions any more than Priest or ABC. If we haven't even tried indicting al-Awlaki yet (particularly with all the increased presence we've got in Yemen to pick him up), then how do we have enough information to assassinate him? And why didn't our vaunted surveillance system pick up this apparently growing threat from al-Awlaki?

As to what new information has come up to merit al-Awlaki's placement on the kill list (whether CIA's or JSOC's)?

But it was his involvement in the two recent cases that triggered new alarms. U.S. officials uncovered as many as 18 e-mails between Awlaki and Nidal Malik Hasan, a U.S. Army major accused of killing 13 people at Ft. Hood, Texas. Awlaki also has been tied to Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Nigerian accused of attempting to detonate a bomb on a Detroit-bound flight.

At least on first report, the emails were not sufficiently damning to concern the FBI. Has that changed? And the phrase "Awlaki has been tied"—you're going to put someone on a kill list using a passive construction? Really?