

AL-AWLAKI FAMILY: LET'S MAKE A DEAL

Glenn Greenwald just tweeted this fairly unsurprising article reporting that Anwar al-Awlaki's family would like the US to take him off their kill lists.

His father, Nasser al-Awlaki, a former minister of agriculture and rector at the University of Sanaa, called on the US on Sunday to end the hunt for his son.

"If Washington stops targeting [him] by threatening to abduct, capture, or kill him, Anwar will cease his statements and speeches against it," he told Al Jazeera.

Somehow, I think a lawsuit challenging the legal basis under which the US would kill a US citizen with no due process would be a lot more effective than this sort of offer.

What's even more interesting about the story, however, is the claim from Yemen that there is not sufficient evidence to target al-Awlaki.

But Yemeni authorities said on Saturday that they had not received any evidence from the US to support allegations that the US-born al-Awlaki is recruiting for an al-Qaeda offshoot in Yemen.

"Anwar al-Awlaki has always been looked at as a preacher rather than a terrorist and shouldn't be considered as a terrorist unless the Americans have evidence that he has been involved in terrorism," Abu Bakr al-Qirbi, the Yemeni foreign minister, said.

His announcement came after a powerful Yemeni tribe threatened to use violence against anyone trying to harm al-Awlaki.

Recall that David Ignatius reported last month that the idea of targeting al-Awlaki first came from Yemen, not DC. Yemen requested that the US government conduct an intelligence collection-capture-kill operation against al-Awlaki last October.

Last October, the Yemeni government came to the CIA with a request: Could the agency collect intelligence that might help target the network of a U.S.-born al-Qaeda recruiter named Anwar al-Aulaqi?

What happened next is haunting, in light of subsequent events: The CIA concluded that it could not assist the Yemenis in locating Aulaqi for a possible capture operation. The primary reason was that the agency lacked specific evidence that he threatened the lives of Americans – which is the threshold for any capture-or-kill operation against a U.S. citizen. The Yemenis also wanted U.S. Special Forces' help on the ground in pursuing Aulaqi; that, too, was refused.

Now, if powerful tribes are promising violence if al-Awlaki is targeted, I can imagine that Yemen might want to deny not only making this request, but also that sufficient intelligence exists to kill al-Awlaki.

But it raises the question of whether there really is any intelligence justifying al-Awlaki's targeting. If Yemen, who first asked for us to move against al-Awlaki, now claims it has no justification to do so, then who does have intelligence justifying such an act?