

KEEP YOUR DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE RIGHT NEXT TO YOUR ASSASSINATION CARDS

✖ Call me crazy, but this is probably not exactly the kind of treatment Thomas Jefferson was thinking the Declaration of Independence would receive 234 years after he wrote it.

Many nights an item prompts a call to wake the NCTC director, Michael Leiter, 41, the junior member of the nighthawks. He displays a copy of the Declaration of Independence, next to a deck of baseball-style cards of high-value terrorist targets: "I keep the ones who are dead on top. It's a little macabre, but that's the world we live in." When the NCTC calls in the middle of the night, he is often half-awake.

Among those cards, after all, is probably the one that signifies that the President has approved, with no due process, an order to assassinate US citizen Anwar al-Awlaki. That's the kind of thing that Jefferson objected to when he called the following "Despotism":

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

[snip]

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

[snip]

For depriving us in many cases, of the
benefits of Trial by Jury:

[snip]

For taking away our Charters, abolishing
our most valuable Laws, and altering
fundamentally the Forms of our
Governments:

While I'm making wildarsed Fourth of July
guesses, let me also suggest that this kind of
security porn—a 24-style terror play in 9
acts—is probably not exactly what Thomas
Jefferson imagined as the role of the free press
when he so furiously defended it.