

THE ADMINISTRATION'S HALF-STRIPTEASE OF ANWAR AL-AWLAKI'S ROTTING CORPSE

This article, which claims the “Obama administration is planning to reveal publicly the legal reasoning behind its decision to kill” Anwar al-Awlaki, also reveals that Administration debates about whether to do so likened such necessary transparency to a “Full Monty.”

It came down to what Denis McDonough, the deputy national-security adviser, cheekily called the “half Monty” versus the “full Monty,” after the British movie about a male striptease act.

Though it looks like, instead of real disclosure, the Administration is mooning us. They’ve decided to provide some of the legal argument—which Charlie Savage already gave us. But none of the actual proof that Awlaki was what they have claimed in anonymous quotes to journalists: an operational leader.

An early draft of Holder’s speech identified Awlaki by name, but in a concession to concerns from the intelligence community, all references to the al Qaeda leader were removed. As currently written, the speech makes no overt mention of the Awlaki operation, and reveals none of the intelligence the administration relied on in carrying out his killing. (White House spokesman Tommy Vietor declined to comment).

This is simply an asinine compromise. We all know the Administration killed Awlaki. We all know the Administration used a drone strike to do so. Savage’s article surely provides far more

detail on the legal argument than they'll give in a speech.

The problem—the problem that strikes at the very heart of democratic accountability—is that the Administration plans to keep secret the details that would prove (or not) that Awlaki was what the Administration happily claims he is under the veil of anonymity, all while claiming that precisely that information is a state secret.

The Administration seems to be planning on making a big speech on counterterrorism—hey! it's another opportunity to brag again about offing Osama bin Laden!—without revealing precisely those details necessary to distinguish this killing, and this country, from that of an unaccountable dictator.

The CIA seems to have dictated to our democratically elected President that he can't provide the kind of transparency necessary to remain a democracy. We can kill you—they appear to be planning to say—and we'll never have to prove that doing so was just. You'll just have to trust us!