

WHITE HOUSE COUNSEL KATHY RUEMMLER VOWS NOT TO LET THE WHITE HOUSE BE DEFEATED BY ACTUAL CITIZENS

In an article describing how—in the guise of “flexibility”—the White House has continued the seeming relentless grab for unchecked executive power, White House Counsel Kathy Ruedmiller offers a terribly cynical explanation for the Administration’s asinine levels of secrecy regarding its drone strikes.

But in an interview, White House Counsel Kathy Ruedmiller acknowledged Mr. Obama has developed a broader view of executive power since he was a senator. In explaining the shift, she cited the nature of the office.

“Many issues that he deals with are just on him, where the Congress doesn’t bear the burden in the same way,” she said. “Until one experiences that first hand, it is difficult to appreciate fully how you need flexibility in a lot of circumstances.”

[snip]

Ms. Ruedmiller said Mr. Obama tries to publicly explain his use of executive power, but says certain counterterrorism programs like the drone campaign are exceptions. Opening them to public scrutiny would be “self-defeating,” she said.

The WSJ doesn’t explain what she meant when invoking “self-defeat.” But her stance was described in a Daniel Klaidman article on the

Administration's decision, at a meeting in the Situation Room last November, to release more information about the targeted killing of Anwar al-Awlaki.

Another senior official expressing caution about the plan was Kathryn Ruemmler, the White House counsel. She cautioned that the disclosures could weaken the government's stance in pending litigation. *The New York Times* has filed a lawsuit against the Obama administration under the Freedom of Information Act seeking the release of the Justice Department legal opinion in the Awlaki case. (The department has declined to provide the documents requested.)

That is, Ruemmler's not making an argument about the efficacy of the drone strikes themselves; al Qaeda already knows who's responsible for the arms raining down on their heads.

Rather, Ruemmler doesn't want to be "defeated" by journalists, civil liberties organizations, and ordinary citizens seeking to at least understand, if not limit, executive power.

Kathy Ruemmler's not waging her counterterrorism war against al Qaeda when she warns of self-defeat. She's waging her counterterrorism war against us.