

OBAMA'S REVERSE IMAGINARY FRIEND, THE ASSASSINATION ROBOT

The Obama Administration is getting more and more like that crazy old man in the park talking to an imaginary friend. Only it works in reverse. It sends out real people to engage in hours of conversations with other real people about a real topic and then pretends both were pretend.

It sends John Brennan to the Senate for 3.5 hours where he has conversations about drones over and over with people, never once claiming not to understand what they mean when they discuss drones and/or targeted killing.

He responds to Ron Wyden's questions about how to be more transparent on drones.

WYDEN: So it was encouraging last night when the president called and indicated that, effective immediately, he would release the documents necessary for Senators to understand the full legal analysis of the president's authority to conduct the targeted killing of an American.

[snip]

Let me now move to the public side of oversight, making sure that the public's right to know is respected. One part of oversight is Congressional oversight and our doing our work. The other is making sure that the American people are brought into these debates, just like James Madison said, this is what you need to preserve a republic.

And I want to start with the drone issue. In a speech last year, the president instructed you to be more open with the public about the use of drones

to conduct targeted killings of Al Qaeda members.

So my question is, what should be done next to ensure that public conversation about drones, so that the American people are brought into this debate and have a full understanding of what rules the government's going to observe when it conducts targeted killings?

BRENNAN: Well, I think this hearing is one of the things that can be done because I think this type of discourse between the executive and the legislative branch is critically important.

I believe that there need to be continued speeches that are going to be given by the executive branch to explain our counterterrorism programs. I think there is a misimpression on the part of some of American people who believe that we take strikes to punish terrorists for past transgressions. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We only take such actions as a last resort to save lives when there's no other alternative to taking an action that's going to mitigate that threat.

[snip]

WYDEN: One other point with respect to (inaudible) public oversight. If the executive branch makes a mistake and kills the wrong person or a group of the wrong people, how should the government acknowledge that?

BRENNAN: I believe we need to acknowledge that. I need – we need to it knowledge it to our foreign partners. We need to acknowledge it publicly.

He responds to Susan Collins' questions about the efficacy of the targeted killing program.

COLLINS: In a recent speech that you gave at the Wilson Center, you said, quote, "Our unqualified preference is to only undertake lethal force when we believe that capturing the individual is not feasible." Yet a study by The New American Foundation as well as numerous press reports indicate that in if first two years of President Obama's administration there were four times the number of targeted killings than in eight years of President Bush's administration.

Is your testimony today that the huge increase in number of lethal strikes has no connection to the change in the Obama administration's detention policy? Because, obviously, if we're capturing a terrorist we have the opportunity to interrogate that individual, and perhaps learn about ongoing plots. But if the strike is done that opportunity is lost. Are you saying today, that it is totally unconnected to the Obama administration's shift in its detainee policy?

BRENNAN: I can say unequivocally, Senator, that there's never been occasion that I'm aware of, where we had the opportunity to capture a terrorist and we didn't and we decided to take a lethal strike.

And he responds to Angus King's suggestion for a FISA Court for Drones (and/or Targeted Killing)

KING: And the area I want to spend a little bit of time on is the drone policy, and particularly as it relates to American citizens.

[snip]

I'd like to suggest to the committee that we consider a FISA-type process – a FISA court-type process where an

American citizen is going to be targeted for a lethal strike. And I understand you can't have co-commanders in chief, but having the executive being the – the prosecutor, the judge, the jury and the executioner all in one is very contrary to the traditions and the laws of this country.

BRENNAN: Senator, I think it's certainly worth of discussion. Our tradition – our judicial tradition is that a court of law is used to determine one's guilt or innocence for past actions, which is very different from the decisions that are made on the battlefield, as well as actions that are taken against terrorists. Because none of those actions are to determine past guilt for those actions that they took.

The decisions that are made are to take action so that we prevent a future action, so we protect American lives. That is an inherently executive branch function to determine, and the commander in chief and the chief executive has the responsibility to protect the welfare, well being of American citizens.

So the concept I understand and we have wrestled with this in terms of whether there can be a FISA-like court, whatever – a FISA-like court is to determine exactly whether or not there should be a warrant for, you know, certain types of activities.

[snip]

But the actions that we take on the counterterrorism front, again, are to take actions against individuals where we believe that the intelligence base is so strong and the nature of the threat is so grave and serious, as well as imminent, that we have no recourse except to take this action that may

involve a lethal strike.

And yet in spite of the fact that Brennan talks about lethal strikes over and over, the government maintains that none of these conversations – none of these mentions of lethal strikes – amounts to an admission that the government is, in fact, conducting lethal strikes.

Plaintiffs also cite the transcript of the confirmation hearing of John Brennan, the nominee for Director of Central Intelligence. They assert that “the nominee . . . and members of the committee extensively discussed various aspects of the CIA’s targeted killing program” However, plaintiffs identify no statement in which Mr. Brennan allegedly confirms purported CIA involvement in the use of unmanned aerial vehicles for “targeted killing.” Rather, plaintiffs cite instances in which members of Congress mentioned “targeted killing,” and general discussions of “targeted killing” that do not address the involvement of any particular agency.

Well, fine. If John Brennan believes these to be imaginary conversations with an imaginary oversight committee, then it’s clear he is mentally ill-equipped to deal with the stress of running the CIA.

Shit. James Jesus Angleton drove himself nuts talking to imaginary counterspies, at least.

John Brennan has, according to the Administration, already driven himself crazy just talking to actual brick and mortar Senators.

What’s most interesting, however, is that this apparently batshit crazy man talking to ghosts, John Brennan, is going to have to deal with a woman, Dianne Feinstein, who said this, as one

of his primary overseers.

FEINSTEIN: I have been calling and others have been calling the rank – the vice chairman and I on the use of target – for increased transparency on the use of targeted force for over a year, including the circumstances in which such force is directed against U.S. citizens and noncitizens alike.

I've also been attempting to speak publicly about the very low number of civilian casualties that result from such strikes. I have been limited in my ability to do so. But for the past several years, this committee has done significant oversight of the government's conduct of targeted strikes and the figures we have obtained from the executive branch which we have done our utmost to verify, confirm that the number of civilian casualties that have resulted from such strikes each year has typically been in the single digits. When I asked to give out the actual numbers, I'm told, "you can't", and I say, "why not?" "Because it's classified. It's a covert program. For the public, it doesn't exist." Well, I think rationale, Mr. Brennan, is long gone and I'm going to talk to you and my questions a little bit about that because I think it's very important that we share this data with people.

This apparently batshit crazy person (according to the Administration, not me) is telling the Chair of the Committee that oversees the CIA that she's delusional, the programs she's talking about don't exist.

There's a lot of crazy old people talking on benches in DC, I guess.