

DID SUSAN COLLINS SWITCH PARTIES? CAUSE SHE WANTED OLC MEMOS, TOO

I hate to waste an entire post on this.

But the NYT's report last night that President Obama was going to capitulate to the Benghazi truthers rather than turn over memos revealing who and where he has been killing people – as well as all the secondary reporting on it – has made this claim.

Rather than agreeing to some Democratic senators' demands for full access to the classified legal memos on the targeted killing program, Obama administration officials are negotiating with Republicans to provide more information on the lethal attack last year on the American diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya, according to three Congressional staff members.

The strategy is intended to produce a bipartisan majority vote for Mr. Brennan in the Senate Intelligence Committee without giving its members seven additional legal opinions on targeted killing sought by senators and while protecting what the White House views as the confidentiality of the Justice Department's legal advice to the president. It would allow Mr. Brennan's nomination to go to the Senate floor even if one or two Democrats vote no to protest the refusal to share more legal memos. [my emphasis]

On February 4, Susan Collins was among the 11 Senators who signed a letter asking for “any and all legal opinions that lay out the executive branch's official understanding of the

President's authority to deliberately kill American citizens."

Perhaps Collins has been satisfied with the brief glimpse at the two memos it shared with the Committee back on February 7. Perhaps she – the Senator on the Intelligence Committee who asked the best questions about targeted killing efficacy – is not all that interested in the other memos the Administration is hiding, presumably along with uses of targeted killing she isn't being briefed on. Perhaps she no longer supports the hinted hold-up for national security nominees.

But even on the Senate Intelligence Committee, the call for the targeted killing memos was a bipartisan affair (among those not on the committee, Mike Lee and Chuck Grassley also signed the letter, and Rand Paul sent his own demand for the memos). Heck, once upon a time, John Cornyn wanted to legislatively demand the memos.

Demanding that the President reveal what kind of targeted killing programs it supports is no hippie fetish. It is something that members of both parties have supported.