

WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AT WAR WITH ~~EASTASIA~~ ADHERENTS

Back on September 18, 2001, here's who we declared war against.

the President is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons,

On March 13, 2009, here's how Obama expanded that AUMF to include "associated forces."

The President has the authority to detain persons that the President determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, and persons who harbored those responsible for those attacks. The President also has the authority to detain persons who were part of, or substantially supported, Taliban or al-Qaida forces or associated forces that are engaged in hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners, including any person who has committed a belligerent act, or has directly supported hostilities, in aid of such enemy armed forces. [my emphasis]

Here's how, on Monday, the White House described the speech Obama will make tomorrow on counterterrorism.

On May 23, the President will give a speech at the National Defense University on the Administration's

counterterrorism policy. In his speech, the President will discuss our broad counter-terrorism policy, including our military, diplomatic, intelligence and legal efforts. He will review the state of the threats we face, particularly as al Qaeda core has weakened but new dangers have emerged; he will discuss the policy and legal framework under which we take action against terrorist threats, including the use of drones; he will review our detention policy and efforts to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay; and he will frame the future of our efforts against Al Qaeda, its affiliates and adherents. [my emphasis]

Now, in point of fact, this war against “adherents” is not new. Denis McDonough invoked it in a speech on March 6, 2011.

Preventing radicalization that leads to violence here in America is part of our larger strategy to decisively defeat al Qaeda. Overseas, because of the new focus and resources that the President has devoted to this fight, the al Qaeda leadership in the border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan is hunkered down and it’s harder than ever for them to plot and launch attacks against our country. Because we’re helping other countries build their capacity to defend themselves, we’re making it harder for al Qaeda’s adherents to operate around the world.

Here at home, we’ve strengthened our defenses, with improvements to intelligence and aviation screening and enhanced security at our borders, ports and airports. As we’ve seen in recent attempted attacks, al Qaeda and its adherents are constantly trying to exploit any vulnerability in our open society. But it’s also clear that our

dedicated intelligence, law enforcement and homeland security personnel have disrupted many more plots and saved many American lives.

[snip]

For all these reasons—our stronger defenses at home; our progress against al Qaeda overseas; the rejection of al Qaeda by so many Muslims around the world; and the powerful image of Muslims thriving in America—al Qaeda and its adherents have increasingly turned to another troubling tactic: attempting to recruit and radicalize people to terrorism here in the United States.

[snip]

But with al Qaeda and its adherents constantly evolving and refining their tactics, our understanding of the threat has to evolve as well.

Obama invoked adherents, sort of, shortly thereafter.

Bin Laden and his murderous vision won some adherents.

And John Brennan invoked adherents in speeches on June 29, 2011, September 16, 2011, April 30, 2012, and October 26, 2012.

So the Administration has been at war against al Qaeda adherents (and affiliates, another new category) for some time.

But if I'm not mistaken, tomorrow will mark the most detailed discussion in which the President describes this war that no one declared against adherents. And given that Congress has shown newfound interest in the scope of the AUMF that includes neither adherents nor associated forces, it will be interesting to see how the President describes this expanded war.