

“IT’D BE EASIER TO LAUNCH A HELLFIRE MISSILE AT A NON- CITIZEN THAN A CITIZEN”

The whole point of Joe Lieberman’s tea-bagger bait Terrorist Expatriation Act, according to his Republican House co-sponsor Charlie Dent, is to make it easier to launch Hellfire missiles at people. And Lieberman, too, ties his citizenship-stripping measure to Obama’s targeting of an American citizen with a predator drone.

Taking on critics who say his proposal goes too far, Lieberman pointed to news reports that President Barack Obama signed an order enabling the US military to kill US citizens like radical US-Yemeni cleric Anwar al-Awlaki.

“If the president can authorize the killing of a United States citizen because he is fighting for a foreign terrorist organization,” he said, “we can also have a law that allows the US government to revoke Awlaki’s citizenship.”

Lieberman said his proposal would make it harder for US nationals who cast their lot in with extremists, and train overseas, to return and carry out an attack, and if they do would make it possible to try them in military court.

“They will not enjoy the rights and privileges of American citizenship in the legal proceedings against them. That, I believe, will make America safer,” he said at a press conference with three other lawmakers.

"The US military may have more options to use necessary force to neutralize the threat, such as Anwar al-Awlaki, without the concerns associated with targeting an American citizen," said Republican Representative Charlie Dent.

"I suspect it'd be easier to launch a Hellfire missile at a non-citizen than a citizen," said Dent, referring to a weapon sometimes fired from US aerial drones at suspected terrorists.

Now, there's a lot to loathe about this bill. Shane Kadidal describes the many ways in which it is illegal here.

But what I find most astounding about it is that Lieberman ties this not to actual military preparations against the United States (as he claims in his comments to Andrea Mitchell) but simply to "providing material support or resources to a foreign terrorist organization." And while I'd be willing to consider the merits of deporting Congressman Peter King or former top Chiquita executives like Carl Lindner and Roderick Hills (though following the logic of Elena Kagan, we'd also have to deport Attorney General Holder), I'm also cognizant that the way the government currently uses material support charges, it is prone to ensnare people who donate socks or money, sometimes in the name of charity.

The logical endpoint of this, then, in the addled little brains of Joe Lieberman and Charlie Dent, is that we should consider drone strikes on brown people who might have a good faith belief that they're engaging in charity. And not just that we should consider drone strikes, but we should try to make it easier to execute those drone strikes.