



Dennis Kucinich Makes a Serious Push to Ban Govt. Assassinations of US Citizens

By Jeremy Scahill

August 13, 2010 "The Nation" -- Lawyers for US citizen Anwar al-Awlaki, who has reportedly been targeted for assassination by the CIA and Joint Special Operations Command, had to fight the US government to have the right to represent him. On Wednesday, following a lawsuit by the ACLU and the Center for Constitutional Rights, the Treasury Department issued a license to the pro-bono lawyers. Now the battle for due process begins. In a statement, al-Awlaki's new lawyers said the license would "allow us to pursue our litigation relating to the government's asserted authority to engage in targeted killings of American civilians without due process."

Al-Awlaki is originally from New Mexico and now lives in Yemen. He has been accused of providing inspiration for Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the alleged "underwear bomber," and Major Nidal Malik Hasan, the alleged Fort Hood shooter.

Most lawmakers have been mute about the Obama administration's policy to target a US citizen for assassination. Representative Jane Harman, who serves on the Homeland Security Committee, said recently that Awlaki is "probably the person, the terrorist, who would be terrorist No. 1 in terms of threat against us." One of the few who has spoken against the policy is Ohio Democrat Dennis Kucinich. "The assassination policies vitiate the presumption of innocence and the government then becomes the investigator, policeman, prosecutor, judge, jury, executioner all in one," Kucinich told me in April. "That raises the greatest questions with respect to our constitution and our democratic way of life." He called the policy "extrajudicial."

Kucinich is putting his money where his mouth is. He just announced he has introduced legislation to "prohibit the extrajudicial killing of United States citizens." The bill states that "No one, including the President, may instruct a person acting within the scope of employment with the United States Government or an agent acting on behalf of the United States Government to engage in, or conspire to engage in, the extrajudicial killing of a United

States citizen." It adds: "the authority granted to the President in the Authorization for Use of Military Force...following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, is not limitless."

The bill would require the president to submit to the Intelligence Committees a report "on the identity of each United States citizen that is on the list of the Joint Special Operations Command or the Central Intelligence Agency as 'high value individuals' or 'high value targets'."

Targeted killings are not a new Obama administration policy. Beginning three days after his swearing in, President Obama has authorized scores of lethal drone strikes, including against specific individuals, in Pakistan and Afghanistan, surpassing the Bush era numbers. The elite Joint Special Operations Command maintains a list of individuals, including US citizens, which it is authorized to assassinate. In January, Dana Priest reported in the Washington Post that the CIA had US citizens on an assassination list, but the Post later ran a correction stating that only JSOC had "a target list that includes several Americans." The policy of the CIA targeting al-Awlaki, a US citizen, for assassination, therefore, appeared to be a new development, at least in terms of public awareness of approved government assassinations.

Read the full bill **H. R. 6010**. At present the bill has only five co-sponsors.

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