

Why Should AP Withhold Name of Country Where US Might Launch Drone & Kill Another US Citizen?

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Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Terrorism](#)

Late in the afternoon, the Los Angeles Times went ahead and [released the name](#) of the country: Pakistan. That it explains the concern. There definitely are special operations forces from the US operating covertly in the country and the US cannot call too much attention to them without risking blowback.

A United States citizen, who happens to be an alleged member of al Qaeda, is reportedly planning attacks on Americans who are overseas. The Associated Press reports, based on the comments of four anonymous United States officials, that President Barack Obama's administration is contemplating how it can legally add this citizen to a "kill list" so he could be killed by a drone.

First and foremost, [this news report](#) again presents the issue of assassinating an American without due process. Hina Shamsi of the American Civil Liberties Union's National Security Project [articulates](#):

The government's killing program has gone far beyond what the law permits, and it is based on secret evidence and legal interpretations. The targeted killing of an American being considered right now shows the inherent danger of a killing program based on vague and shifting legal standards, which has made it disturbingly easy for the government to operate outside the law.

Shamsi points out that the Obama administration continues to fight against "basic transparency" about the people who are being killed in addition to insulating the government from "accountability for the wrongful killings of US citizens," which the ACLU has [challenged](#) in a lawsuit.

What AP further reports is that the alleged American terror suspect is in a country, which "refuses US military action on its soil." Obama's new policy for "American suspected terrorists overseas" also is being interpreted as prohibiting assassinations by the CIA. The US military, however, could kill the suspect if the Justice Department was able to conceive a legal basis for placing him on a "kill list."

He is not on a "kill list," [at the moment](#). Two of the anonymous officials view him as an "al-Qaida facilitator who has been directly responsible for deadly attacks against U.S. citizens overseas and who continues to plan attacks against them that would use improvised explosive devices."

Knowing where he is currently located would help one understand this story appropriately.

So, in what country would certain officials like to be able to launch an attack?

The Associated Press has agreed to the government's request to withhold the name of the country where the suspect is believed to be because officials said publishing it could interrupt ongoing counterterror operations.

It seems reasonable to question this decision by the AP to not publish. The decision bears a distinct similarity to refusing to print that a secret drone base is located in a certain country when covering the issue of drones, which US media organizations have previously done.

If it is illegal to add the person to a list and the government cannot come up with a legal way to launch a US military attack because the country opposes it, why should a media organization play the role of not "interrupting" this "ongoing counterterror operation"?

Just how many alleged American members of al Qaeda are there? This report disseminated on the Internet could now aid an "enemy" in figuring out some details on the extent to which he is being tracked and monitored for assassination in order to stop him from launching more attacks on Americans overseas. So, it would seem if AP really wants to protect counterterror operations from "interruption" they would simply not publish the story at all.

Marcy Wheeler [suggests](#) this story is coming from staffers of members of Congress. Mike Rogers, House Intelligence Committee chairman, is mentioned because he complained last week that a "number of terrorist suspects were all but out of reach under the administration's new rules that limit drone strikes based on the target's nationality or location."

One official apparently told AP "the president could make an exception to his policy and authorize the CIA to strike on a onetime basis or authorize the Pentagon to act despite the possible objections of the country in question." It would seem the goal of this story is to publicize the fact that the Obama administration is refusing to take what Rogers and others think is appropriate action to kill another US citizen with a drone.

Additionally, there are some details in the story that likely indicate, as Wheeler also suggested, a primary issue may be the American is targeting US military service members in the country where he is located. Of course, that does not help the US government when this country's government "refuses US military action" (which is an anti-septic way of describing military intervention).

The person the Obama administration is considering targeting has possibly attacked US special operations forces. According to journalist Nick Turse, [such forces](#) are in at least 100 countries.

AP's story could be of value to the public if it did not amount to a kind of quid pro quo transaction between the anonymous officials quoted: You give me this news headline that America wants to kill another US citizen and we'll write this story in such a way to help you advance your political agenda.

When considering what was revealed in a story published by journalists Jeremy Scahill and Glenn Greenwald about ["unreliable metadata" being used to kill people](#) with drones, how is this not helping to insulate the government from further scrutiny that it should have to face?

Is it really the duty of a media organization to help the US government conceal the name of a country where secret and illegal operations are being considered (and may possibly, in some respect, be ongoing)?

The government will always say the publication of such information would threaten national security and pose a risk to American lives. It can rarely prove this claim. So, the excuse should not proscribe the right to publish information that could give citizens a better idea of how their government is operating on the edges and outside the boundaries of law to kill a US citizen away from any declared conflict zone.

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