



responding to you

1 message

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Thank you for taking the time to contact me regarding the issue of unmanned aerial systems, commonly referred to as drones, and their use in counterterrorism operations. I appreciate you taking the time to contact me regarding this important issue.

Over the last few years, the United States has increased the use of drones in counterterrorism operations abroad. In some cases these drones have been used to target and kill terrorists who have been plotting attacks against the U.S. However, a number of concerns have arisen regarding the use of drones to target American citizens at home or abroad. This controversy arose after it was revealed that drones were used to target and kill Anwar al-Awlaki, a cleric who was born in New Mexico, but later ascended to be a senior al Qaeda operative in Yemen. At issue with the operation targeting al-Awlaki was whether sufficient Due Process was granted given he was an American citizen.

In October 2011, I wrote to Attorney General Eric H. Holder asking for information surrounding the legal justification for this operation given the target was an American citizen. Since that initial letter, I have asked the Attorney General twice at public hearings to provide the legal justification for killing American citizens abroad.

Most recently, Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky staged a filibuster on the Senate floor objecting to the nomination of John Brennan to be the Director of Central Intelligence (DCIA) because he failed to answer Senator Paul’s question about whether drones could be used to target an American citizen on U.S. soil. Ultimately, his filibuster led to the Attorney General writing on March 7, 2013, to Senator Paul stating, “It has come to my attention that you have now asked an additional question: ‘Does the President have the authority to use a weaponized drone to kill an American not engaged in combat on American soil?’ The answer to that question is no.”

Senator Paul’s filibuster helped clarify a gray area that the Administration had previously refused to discuss—namely the use of weaponized drones to target American citizens on U.S. soil. I support Senator Paul’s efforts and joined in opposing Mr. Brennan’s nomination for DCIA. I have continued to press the Attorney General and the President, most recently in a February 7, 2013, letter, seeking information about the authority of the President to target American citizens—even those abroad engaged in combat against the United States. I have been informed that the President has agreed to grant access to information regarding this matter to the members of the Judiciary Committee. As the Ranking Member of the Judiciary Committee, rest assured I share your concerns about ensuring that use of drones to target Americans is consistent with the Constitution and I will keep your concerns in mind as I review information regarding this program.

Sincerely,
Chuck

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