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Article 1.

The Washington Post

The stage is set for a deal with Iran

[David Ignatius](#)

April 18 -- The [nuclear talks with Iran](#) have just begun, but already the smart money in Tehran is betting on a deal. That piece of intelligence comes from the Tehran stock index; the day after the talks opened, it posted its largest daily rise in months and closed at a record high.

Tehran investors may be guilty of wishful thinking in their eagerness for an agreement that would ease the economic sanctions squeezing their country. My guess is that they probably have it right. So far, Iran is following the script for a gradual, face-saving exit from a nuclear program that even Russia and China have signaled is too dangerous. The Iranians will bargain up to the edge of the cliff, but they don't seem eager to jump.

The mechanics of an eventual settlement are clear enough after Saturday's first session in Istanbul: Iran would agree to stop enriching uranium to the 20 percent level and to halt work at an underground facility near Qom built for higher enrichment. Iran would export its stockpile of highly enriched uranium for final processing to 20 percent, for use in medical isotopes.

In the [language of these talks](#), the Iranians could describe their actions not as concessions to the West but as "confidence-building" measures, aimed at demonstrating the seriousness of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's public pledge in February not to commit the "[grave sin](#)" of building a nuclear weapon. And the West would describe its easing of sanctions not as a climb down but as "reciprocity."

The basic framework was set weeks ago, in an exchange of letters between the chief negotiators. Catherine Ashton, who represents the "P5+1" group of permanent ██████ Security Council members and Germany, proposed a "[confidence-building exercise](#) aimed at facilitating a constructive dialogue on the basis of reciprocity and a step-by-step approach."

The Iranian negotiator, Saeed Jalili, [responded](#) that because the West was willing to recognize Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy, "our talks for cooperation based on step-by-step principles and reciprocity on Iran's nuclear issue could be commenced." Jalili's status as personal representative of the supreme leader was important, too.

"Step-by-step" and "reciprocity" are the two guideposts for this exercise. They mark a dignified process for making concessions, much like the formula that President Obama used in his January 2009 [inaugural address](#) when he first signaled his outreach to Iran: "We seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu played his expected role in this choreography, criticizing the negotiators for agreeing to another round of talks on May 23 in Baghdad without getting concessions in return. “My initial impression is that Iran has been [given a freebie](#),” Netanyahu said. “It has got five weeks to continue enrichment without any limitation, any inhibition.” A perfect rebuff — just scornful enough to keep the Iranians (and the Americans, too) worried that the Israelis might launch a military attack this summer if no real progress is made in the talks.

The Iranians don’t seem ready, for now, for a broad outreach to the United States. Jalili rejected a private bilateral meeting with U.S. Undersecretary of State Wendy Sherman.

The Iranians seem to be preparing their public for a deal that limits enrichment while preserving the right to enrich. In an interview Monday with the Iranian student news agency, Foreign Minister [Ali Akbar Salehi](#) explained that “making 20 percent fuel is our right,” but that “if they guarantee that they will provide us with the different levels of enriched fuel that we need, then that would be another issue.” Salehi seemed to be reviving a 2009 Turkish plan to export Iran’s low-enriched uranium abroad, and receive back 20 percent fuel for its Tehran research reactor, supposedly to make the isotopes. That earlier deal collapsed because of opposition from Khamenei, who apparently is now ready to bargain.

Jalili struck the same upbeat tone in comments printed in the [Tehran Times](#). “We witnessed progress,” he said, explaining that the supreme leader’s religious edict renouncing nuclear weapons “created an opportunity for concrete steps toward disarmament and nonproliferation.” He said “the next talks should be based on confidence-building measures, which would build the confidence of Iranians.”

Translation: The Iranians expect to be paid, in “step-by-step” increments, as they move toward a deal. At a minimum, they will want a delay of the U.S. and European sanctions that take full effect June 28 and July 1, respectively. That timetable gives the West leverage, too — to keep the threatened sanctions in place until the Iranians have made the required concessions. It’s a well-prepared negotiation, in other words, and it seems likely to succeed if each side keeps to the script and doesn’t muff its lines.

Council on Foreign Relations

'New Atmosphere' In Iran Negotiations

Interview with [Ray Takeyh](#)

April 17, 2012

Iran and the P5+1 group [the United States, Britain, Russia, China, France, and Germany] met over the weekend in Istanbul, and after it ended, there were positive statements from both sides as they announced [an agreement](#) to meet again in Baghdad on May 23. Is there a new mood in all of these negotiations? The last time the two sides talked, the talks broke up with [negative comments](#) all around.

I think there is perhaps a new atmosphere. By that, I mean that all of the parties involved, and particularly the United States and Iran, and to some extent, probably even Israel [which is not a party to the talks], would like to take a step back and relieve some of the tensions that have surrounded this Iranian nuclear issue in the past couple of months. Everyone wants to calm this situation down a little bit, and the best way of doing that is to have a process that you can point to and express some degree of optimism about the prospects for that process. So this actually reduces tensions in some ways.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued [a statement](#) when the talks concluded, saying that Iran got a "freebie" for five weeks to keep processing uranium. This led to a tiff with President Obama, who [said](#) the Iranians are facing severe sanctions, so it's not a "freebie." Are there still tensions between the United States and Israel on this?

Just before these meetings, Ehud Barak, the Israeli defense minister, gave [an interview](#) in which he said it is imperative for Iran to stop producing 20 percent enrichment and close the [Fordo facility](#) that's nestled in the mountains. The Israeli expectations are that more progress should be made on areas of their concern and sensitivity. This particular meeting obviously

did not produce such an outcome--maybe the next meeting will not produce such an outcome either--so the pace that Israelis want to see Iran's nuclear trajectory arrested at would be different from the 5+1's, simply because Israelis are more concerned and sensitive about some of those technologies.

What's your sense of Iranian policy on this? Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says that nuclear weapons are "a sin," but do you think Iran's policy is still to develop nuclear weapons?

I think their policy at the very least is to develop all the ingredients that a nuclear weapons arsenal requires. There is a debate on whether they'll cross the threshold when they get there. That probably will determine an entire spectrum of issues that are not obvious today--what is taking place in the region, what is taking place in the Persian Gulf, what is taking place in Iran itself domestically. The commitment to have a multifaceted expansive nuclear infrastructure is not something that they seem to be stepping away from, at least not yet.

How is Iran doing right now in the region? With Syria in deep trouble, is Iran feeling more isolated than ever?

There are several ways of looking at this. First of all, there is [a] sort of cold war taking place in the Middle East today between Iran and Saudi Arabia. And that cold war is playing itself out to some extent in Iraq, certainly in Syria, Lebanon, and so forth. And when Iranians look at the region, they seem to feel--and increasingly, others are joining them in that opinion--that the Bashar al-Assad regime may prove in fact more durable, that he may somehow survive this insurrection and this wave of protest, and if Assad survives and can somehow fortify his rule, then he's even more tightly bound to Iran than he was before because he has no other real interlocutors. He's been expelled from the Arab League, sanctioned by the international community, censured by every other international body. The rise of Islamist movements doesn't necessarily mean that they want to emulate Iran, but the messy politics in Egypt is better for Iran than former President Hosni Mubarak's opposition to Iran. The region is turbulent and preoccupied with Islamist concerns, and there is a political conflict with Saudi Arabia that is playing itself out. So, it is a challenging regional

environment. But from the Iranian perspective, they have dealt with turbulent regional environments before, and they have some experience in navigating it. Now, I don't think Iran was ever the strong, powerful regional actor that it is sometimes portrayed, and I don't think today it is this feeble, isolated state, as some people suggest.

When President Obama talks about Iran now, he talks about Iranians suffering immensely from sanctions put on by the United Nations and Western powers. Is the oil embargo that crippling?

The sanctions that have been imposed on Iran are indeed quite significant, particularly with the oncoming European sanctions that will prohibit [the] purchase of Iranian oil starting in July. Iran can lose about one-third of its oil exports--about eight hundred thousand barrels. They may be able to make some up if they are prepared to sell at a discount. But there is no question that the country is subject to economic distress. I don't know what "crippling" looks like, but it is certainly a country beset by significant economic difficulty.

Would that explain the sort of upbeat mood that's been created over the last couple of days? Back in January and February, we had sharp warnings back and forth, such as closing the Strait of Hormuz.

The tone has certainly changed, in part because the Iranians understand that the harsh tone was not serving them well. Second of all, two factors have come together that have impacted their decision-making--it is impossible to disaggregate them--which is more important: the unprecedented economic distress or the threat of Israeli military strike? People can account for how they view Israel's likelihood to strike Iran--whether they agree, disagree, think it will happen or not happen. But if you're an Iranian defense planner, you have to take that with some degree of seriousness, and you have to figure out how it is that you can mitigate the possibility of Israeli strike, even if you do not think that possibility is very high. So having a different approach, or at least a different tone toward negotiations--being receptive to a negotiating process, and potentially even putting even some curbs on a specific aspect of your enrichment activity, limiting the 20 percent enrichment--may actually

alleviate your economic difficulties, but also forestall a potential Israeli military strike.

Of course, in this political campaign year, the last thing the United States wants is an Israeli strike, I assume.

I would say that at this particular point, most international actors, certainly those that are involved in negotiating with Iran--the Europeans, the Russians, the Chinese, the United States, and most of the international actors, probably don't want a military conflict whose consequences are unpredictable in the Gulf. I would add to the United States many other countries that share that disposition, because it's potentially destabilizing and could lead to cascading violence, and some of the dire consequences that are sometimes attributed to this particular act make everyone hesitant about it.

Do you think this softer negotiating approach will be followed by any internal easing in Iran? There's been no sign of any easing of the domestic crackdown, has there?

No. I think the domestic crackdown will persist, for several reasons: the Iranian regime is even more suspicious of its citizens, given these sort of manifestations of people power that have taken place in the Middle East. The Arab awakening had two implications for Iran: it essentially suggested that aroused citizenry, mobilized, can actually effect government change. That's not a good message for the Iranian ruling class. On the other hand, it has led to a surge of Islamist parties in most of the Middle East, in which the Iranians have taken a more benign view towards Tunisia, Egypt, or what have you. So it's a double-edged sword, but I would say at this particular point that the tone and the posture of the accommodations they have taken abroad have not translated into a similar domestic political opening.

[Ray Takeyh](#), Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies, Council on Foreign Relations

The Brotherhood's Walking Korans

[Hillel Fradkin and Lewis Libby](#)

April 18, 2012 -- After some 80-plus years of trial and frustration, the Muslim Brotherhood has achieved its greatest triumphs to date. In Egypt, the Brotherhood won parliamentary elections emphatically, and now, despite prior claims to the contrary, it has announced a candidate for President of Egypt. How does the Brotherhood understand this moment? Do these events herald a new appreciation of the virtues of democracy, or will the Brotherhood still be guided by the visionary goal of an "Islamic State" that seeks unity in obedience to its Supreme Guide and senior leadership? That goal was expressed by the Brotherhood's founder, Hassan al Banna, in a famous formula:

"Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our Leader. The Qur'an is our Constitution. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope."

Some scholars -- for example, the French expert Oliver Roy -- argue that the contemporary Brotherhood is no longer seriously attached to Banna's vision, but has abandoned as misguided the fruitless quest for the Islamic State. The Brotherhood will be still further transformed and "moderated," Roy told columnist David Ignatius by the experience of actual governance: "Democratic culture does not precede democratic institutions; democratic culture is the internalization of these institutions."

In this view, the Brotherhood will conclude that a new path, as well as a new spirit, is required -- and most importantly a benign spirit and path. A recent visit by Brotherhood representatives -- part of a so-called "charm offensive" -- reportedly left Obama Administration officials cautiously optimistic about the Brotherhood undergoing such a benign evolution. According to Ignatius, President Obama has placed a "cosmic wager" on such a new, mellow Brotherhood emerging. A wager it certainly is, but the odds would seem rather long if one is to judge by the views of the Brotherhood's recently-named candidate to be president of Egypt, Khairat al Shater. Shater was, until his nomination, the deputy head of the Brotherhood and as such its chief operating officer. Among his responsibilities was the direction of the Brotherhood's program of Nahda or

renaissance. Shater provided a remarkably full and clear account of his views in a speech on Nahda he gave in Alexandria to a large gathering of Brotherhood faithful in April 2011. Shater rejected -- root and branch -- any notion of the Brotherhood seeking a new vision, spirit and path. He emphatically reaffirmed Banna's goal and mission which he described as "Restoring Islam in its all-encompassing conception; ... the Islamization of life, empowering of God's religion; establishing the Nahda of the Ummah [the global Muslim community] and its civilization on the basis of Islam and [ultimately] the subjugation of people to God on Earth."

Equally emphatically he reaffirmed the wisdom of Banna's "method" and its success -- a success which was revealed rather than contradicted by recent events. Banna's method was to "build" in progressive order beginning from the "Muslim individual" and proceeding through the "Muslim family, the Muslim society, the Islamic government, the global Islamic State and [eventually] reaching the status of 'preeminence' or 'mastership' [Ustathiya] with that State." Shater sees that process, which had already done so much to transform Muslim society, as self-evidently entering the next phase, that of Islamic government, just as Banna had foreseen.

Similarly the present success also vindicated the instrument Banna had created to pursue this method -- to wit the Society of the Muslim Brothers - - and its mode of organization and operation. The latter was distinguished by the careful hierarchical organization of its various sub- groups and the strict discipline exercised by the Supreme Guide and its Bureau of Guidance. This had enabled it to pursue its mission productively through many long years, including periods when it was subject to extreme oppression. No other group of Muslims, however pious and however devoted they might be to the general goal of the Brotherhood, was like it in style or accomplishments. All of these things -- mission, method and organization -- were as Shater put it "constants" and not "variables" and not subject to change. Nor did they ever need to be, since they were derived from the highest and most successful model ever -- that of the prophet Muhammad, his companions and successors. Following this model, the Brotherhood had created individual members who were "a walking Qur'an; whose faith, worship, manners, relationships, behavior, thoughts and

emotions were identical to the Islam that Muhammad received from God Almighty."

So too had it adhered to the guidance of Omar bin Al-Khattab, the second caliph, who had stated that "there is no religion without a Society, no Society without an Imam and no Imam without obedience." On this basis, Shater observed, Omar had been the architect of the greatest of the early Muslim conquests and the global Islamic state which had endured for a 1000 years. Brotherhood organization and discipline had followed this model.

But what of the "variables" which Shater did admit existed? Were there new circumstances which might require new methods and policies in pursuit of "Brotherhood work?" Indeed there were according to Shater -- for example, the Brother's establishment of a political party -- the Freedom and Justice Party. This was unprecedented in Brotherhood history. But Shater was at some pains to emphasize that this and other possible innovations were entirely secondary. In particular, political parties as a whole were of alien Western origin and a mode of political conflict. They thus enjoyed no particular sanctity. Indeed, as modes of political conflict, Western-style parties violate the unity and harmony which is the goal of Muslim politics. If they were useful in the present circumstances, fine; if not, they could and would be dispensed with. Of course Shater is only one man and there might be others in the Brotherhood who hold different views. In fact it is known that there are, especially among the young. In his speech, Shater acknowledged them and professed to understand them. Still he cautioned them to remember that they were inexperienced; worse still that their experience belonged to an era which lacked the brutal experience of men like himself who had spent much time in prison and suffered other great injustices. It was important to take the long view and in any event necessary for them in light of the principle of Brotherhood discipline. The Brotherhood could and did entertain debate about the "variables." But such debate was resolved through its highest organs and once decisions were taken they were obligatory. That was a "constant." The dominant view of the Brotherhood still sees the "democratic institutions" to which Roy and others refer as a distasteful means to power, one which could be discarded as soon as the unity of obedience to a rightful leadership could be achieved. Thus, so long as Shater and his followers dominate the

Brotherhood -- and his authority may well increase if he is elected president -- we may question the wisdom of the President's wager.

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Article 4.

Foreign Affairs

Alawites for Assad: Why the Syrian Sect Backs the Regime

Leon Goldsmith

April 16, 2012 -- Since the start of the revolt in Syria, the country's Alawites have been instrumental in maintaining President Bashar al-Assad's hold on power. A sect of Shia Islam, the Alawites comprise roughly 13 percent of the population and form the bulk of Syria's key military units, intelligence services, and ultra-loyalist militias, called shabiha ("ghosts" in Arabic). As the uprising in Syria drags on, there are signs that some Alawites are beginning to move away from the regime. But most continue to fight for Assad -- largely out of fear that the Sunni community will seek revenge for past and present atrocities not only against him but also against Alawites as a group. This sense of vulnerability feeding Alawite loyalty is rooted in the sect's history. The Alawites split from Shia Islam in ninth-century Iraq over their belief in the divinity of the fourth Islamic caliph, Ali bin Abi Talib, a position branded as heresy by the Sunnis and extremist by most Shias. The community began as a small collection of believers, and over the following centuries it suffered almost constant discrimination and several massacres at the hands of Sunni Muslims. In 1305, for example, following a clerical fatwa, Sunni Mamluks wiped out the Alawite community of the Kisrawan (modern Lebanon). As late as the mid-nineteenth century, in retaliation for the rebellion of an Alawite sheikh, the Ottomans ruthlessly persecuted the Alawites, burning villages and farms across what little territory they held.

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Despite this long-standing persecution, the Alawites fought to integrate into modern Syria. In 1936, as the French mandate waned, Alawite religious leaders convinced their anxious followers to incorporate themselves into the new, overwhelmingly Sunni, Syrian state. Over the next several decades, Alawites moved away from the mountains to pursue educational and employment opportunities in the cities. Between 1943 and 1957, Alawite migration tripled the population of Hama, and between 1957 and 1979 it quadrupled the size of Latakia.

Many Alawites also joined the military. Since Ottoman times, Sunni Arabs had largely spurned army careers, but Alawites welcomed the opportunity for stable income. By 1963, they made up 65 percent of noncommissioned officers in the Syrian army. The rise of Alawites in Syrian society throughout the 1960s was assisted by political infighting among the Sunnis and the Baath Party coup of 1963, which united working-class Alawites and Sunnis under one banner.

Although Sunnis initially tolerated the growing clout of the Alawite community, resentment resurfaced when Hafez al-Assad, an Alawite and the father of the current president, seized power in 1970. When he proposed a new constitution three years later that mandated a secular state and allowed the presidency to be awarded to a non-Muslim, Sunnis protested across the country. In early 1976, with religious tensions flaring, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood launched its uprising against what it called the "heretic" Alawite regime. The Alawites, harboring their long-standing fear of rejection and persecution by the Sunni community, rallied around Assad. The two sides hardened for battle, and over the next six years Assad relied on his sect to beat back the Brotherhood revolt.

In February 1982, the struggle reached its climax in Sunni-dominated Hama. Seeking to end the rebellion, Assad massacred the Sunni population of the city, killing as many as 20,000 residents. Alawites blamed the Muslim Brotherhood for the disaster, largely convinced that Sunnis had and would always reject their efforts to integrate. Even liberal Alawites, who criticized Assad's aggressiveness at the outset of the revolt, remained

silent in the aftermath of the Hama massacre. They had been transformed from victims into perpetrators.

Since the Hama slaughter of 1982, the Alawites have consolidated their control of the country. According to the Syria scholar Radwan Ziadeh, they comprise the vast majority of Syria's roughly 700,000 security and intelligence personnel and military officer core. In fact, they constitute so much of the country's security apparatus that Syrians are said to often put on an Alawite accent when apprehended by intelligence officers in the hope of receiving better treatment.

The Alawites' loyalty to Assad today is hardly assured, however. Despite popular notions of a rich, privileged Alawite class dominating Syria, the country's current regime provides little tangible benefit to most Alawite citizens. Rural Alawites have struggled as a result of cuts in fuel subsidies and new laws restricting the sale of tobacco -- their primary crop for centuries. Indeed, since the provision of basic services by the first Assad in the 1970s and 1980s, most Alawite villages -- with the exception of Qardaha, the home of Assad's tribe, the Kalbiyya -- have developed little. Donkeys remain a common form of transport for many, and motor vehicles are scarce, with dilapidated minibuses offering the only way to commute to the cities for work.

Some Alawites are explicitly breaking ranks. Last September, for example, three prominent Alawite sheikhs, Mohib Nisafi, Yassin Hussein, and Mussa Mansour, issued a [joint statement](#) [2] declaring their "innocence from these atrocities carried out by Bashar al-Assad and his aides, who belong to all religious sects." According to Monzer Makhouz, an Alawite member of the Syrian National Council, a leading opposition group, Alawites are joining protests in the coastal cities of the Alawite territory. And in recent weeks, evidence has emerged of defections of Alawite soldiers and intelligence officers, seemingly from less privileged Alawite tribes, who have described themselves as "[Free Alawites](#)" and called for other Alawites to join them. The fall of Assad presents several possible scenarios for the Alawites. It could launch a comprehensive reconciliation process, drive them back to their mountain refuge in northwestern Syria, or lead to open conflict with the Sunnis. No matter what, the Alawites face a dilemma. If Assad collapses, the community will have to fend off the criticisms of supporting the regime for this long. Sticking with Assad may increase the odds of an

unforgiving Sunni retribution, but it at least keeps the sectarian conflict at bay -- that is, as long as Assad remains.

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Article 5.

Project Syndicate

The Paranoid Style in Chinese Politics

Minxin Pei

17 April 2012 – Henry Kissinger, who learned a thing or two about political paranoia as Richard Nixon’s national security adviser and Secretary of State, famously said that even a paranoid has real enemies. This insight – by the man who will be known forever for helping to open China to the West – goes beyond the question of whether to forgive an individual’s irrational behavior. As the scandal surrounding Bo Xilai’s dramatic fall from power shows, it applies equally well to explaining the apparently irrational behavior of regimes.

Most reasonable people would agree that the world’s largest ruling party (with nearly 80 million members), with a nuclear-armed military and an unsurpassed internal-security apparatus at its disposal, faces negligible threats to its power at home. And yet the ruling Communist Party has remained brutally intolerant of peaceful dissent and morbidly fearful of the information revolution.

Judging by the salacious details revealed so far in the Bo affair, including the implication of his wife in the murder of a British businessman, it seems that the Party does indeed have good reason to be afraid. If anything, its hold on power is far more tenuous than it appears. Bo, the former Party chief of Chongqing, has come to symbolize the systemic rot and dysfunction at the core of a regime often viewed as effective, flexible, and resilient.

Of course, corruption scandals involving high-ranking Chinese officials are common. Two members of the Party Politburo have been jailed for bribery

and debauchery. But what sets the Bo scandal apart from routine instances of greed and lust is the sheer lawlessness embodied by the behavior of members of China's ruling elites. The Bo family, press reports allege, not only has amassed a huge fortune, but also was involved in the murder of a Westerner who had served as the family's chief private conduit to the outside world.

While in power, Bo was lauded for crushing organized crime and restoring law and order in Chongqing. Now it has come to light that he and his henchmen illegally detained, tortured, and imprisoned many innocent businessmen during this campaign, simultaneously stealing their assets. While publicly proclaiming their patriotism, other members of China's ruling elites are stashing their ill-gotten wealth abroad and sending their children to elite Western schools and universities.

The Bo affair has revealed another source of the regime's fragility: the extent of the power struggle and disunity among the Party's top officials. Personal misdeeds or character flaws did not trigger Bo's fall from power; these were well known. He was simply a loser in a contest with those who felt threatened by his ambition and ruthlessness.

The vicious jockeying for power that the party faces during its leadership succession this year, and the public rift that has resulted from Bo's humiliating fall, must have gravely undermined mutual trust among the party's top leaders. China's history of political turmoil, and the record of failed authoritarian regimes elsewhere, suggests that a disunited autocracy does not last very long. Its most dangerous enemy typically comes from within.

Moreover, the amateurish manner in which the Party has handled the Bo scandal indicates that it has no capacity for dealing with a fast-moving political crisis in the Internet age. While political infighting obviously might lie behind the Chinese government's hesitancy and ineptness in managing the scandal, the Party undermined its public credibility further by initially trying to cover up the seriousness of the affair.

After Wang Lijun, Bo's former police chief, very publicly sought asylum in the United States' consulate in Chengdu, a city some four hours from Chongqing, the Party thought that it could keep the Bo skeleton in the closet. Using language that would make George Orwell blush, officials declared that Wang "suffered from exhaustion from overwork" and was

receiving “vacation-style treatment”; in fact, he was being interrogated by the secret police.

What made the Party’s top brass lose face – and sleep – was the failure of China’s famed “Great Firewall” during the Bo saga. Attempts to censor the Internet and mobile text services failed miserably. Chinese citizens, for the first time in history, were able to follow – and openly voice their opinions about – an unfolding power struggle at the very top of the Party almost in real time.

Fortunately for the Party, public outrage over the lawlessness and corruption of leaders like Bo has been expressed in cyberspace, not in the streets. But who knows what will happen when the next political crisis erupts?

China’s leaders, we can be sure, are asking themselves precisely that question, which helps to explain why a regime that has apparently done so well for so long is so afraid of its own people.

It is difficult to say whether a paranoid with real enemies is easier to deal with than one without any. But, for China’s government, which rules the world’s largest country, paranoia itself has become the problem.

Overcoming it requires not only a change of mindset, but a total transformation of the political system.

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Article 6.

Rolling Stone

The Rise of the Killer Drones: How America Goes to War in Secret

Michael Hastings

April 26th, 2012 -- One day in late November, an unmanned aerial vehicle lifted off from Shindand Air Base in western Afghanistan, heading 75 miles toward the border with Iran. The drone's mission: to spy on Tehran's nuclear program, as well as any insurgent activities the Iranians might be supporting in Afghanistan. With an estimated price tag of \$6 million, the

drone was the product of more than 15 years of research and development, starting with a shadowy project called DarkStar overseen by Lockheed Martin. The first test flight for DarkStar took place in 1996, but after a crash and other mishaps, Lockheed announced that the program had been canceled. According to military experts, that was just a convenient excuse for "going dark," meaning that DarkStar's further development would take place under a veil of secrecy.

The drone that was headed toward Iran, the RQ-170 Sentinel, looks like a miniature version of the famous stealth fighter, the F-117 Nighthawk: sleek and sand-colored and vaguely ominous, with a single domed eye in place of a cockpit. With a wingspan of 65 feet, it has the ability to fly undetected by radar. Rather than blurring out its location with a constant stream of radio signals – the electronic equivalent of a trail of jet exhaust – it communicates intermittently with its home base, making it virtually impossible to detect. Once it reached its destination, 140 miles into Iranian airspace, it could hover silently in a wide radius for hours, at an altitude of up to 50,000 feet, providing an uninterrupted flow of detailed reconnaissance photos – a feat that no human pilot would be capable of pulling off.

Not long after takeoff – a maneuver handled by human drone operators in Afghanistan – the RQ-170 switched into a semiautonomous mode, following a preprogrammed route under the guidance of drone pilots sitting at computer screens some 7,500 miles away, at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada. But before the mission could be completed, something went wrong. One of the drone's three data streams failed, and began sending inaccurate information back to the base. Then the signal vanished, and Creech lost all contact with the drone.

Today, even after a 10-week investigation by U.S. officials, it's unclear exactly what happened. Had the Iranians, as they would later claim, hacked the drone and taken it down? Did the Chinese help them? If so, had they pulled off a sophisticated attack – breaking open the drone's encrypted brain and remotely piloting it to the ground – or a cruder assault that jammed the drone's signal, causing it to crash? Or did the drone operators back at Creech simply make a mistake, sparking a glitch that triggered the aircraft to land? "After a technical fuck-up, people panic and start trying to fix it, doing things they shouldn't have done," says Ty Rogoway, a drone

expert who runs an industry website called Aviation Intel. "It was fishy from Day One."

What we do know is that the government lied about who was responsible for the drone. Shortly after the crash on November 29th, the U.S.-led military command in Kabul put out a press release saying it had lost an "unarmed reconnaissance aircraft that had been flying a mission over western Afghanistan." But the drone wasn't under the command of the military – it was operated by the CIA, as the spy agency itself was later forced to admit.

Ten days after the crash, the missing drone turned up in a large gymnasium in Tehran. The Iranian military displayed the captured aircraft as a trophy; an American flag hung beneath the drone, its stars replaced with skulls. The drone looked nearly unscathed, as if it had landed on a runway. The Iranians declared that such surveillance flights represented an "act of war," and threatened to retaliate by attacking U.S. military bases. President Obama demanded that Iran return the drone, but the damage was done. "It was like when someone from Apple left a prototype of the next iPhone at a bar," says Peter Singer, a defense specialist at the Brookings Institute and the author of *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century*. "It was a propaganda win for Iran."

The incident also underscored the increasingly central role that drones now play in American foreign policy. During the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the military conducted only a handful of drone missions. Today, the Pentagon deploys a fleet of 19,000 drones, relying on them for classified missions that once belonged exclusively to Special Forces units or covert operatives on the ground. American drones have been sent to spy on or kill targets in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Syria, Somalia and Libya. Drones routinely patrol the Mexican border, and they provided aerial surveillance over Osama bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. In his first three years, Obama has unleashed 268 covert drone strikes, five times the total George W. Bush ordered during his eight years in office. All told, drones have been used to kill more than 3,000 people designated as terrorists, including at least four U.S. citizens. In the process, according to human rights groups, they have also claimed the lives of more than 800 civilians. Obama's drone program, in fact, amounts to the largest unmanned

aerial offensive ever conducted in military history; never have so few killed so many by remote control.

The use of drones is rapidly transforming the way we go to war. On the battlefield, a squad leader can receive real-time data from a drone that enables him to view the landscape for miles in every direction, dramatically expanding the capabilities of what would normally have been a small and isolated unit. "It's democratized information on the battlefield," says Daniel Goure, a national security expert who served in the Defense Department during both Bush administrations. "It's like a reconnaissance version of Twitter." Drones have also radically altered the CIA, turning a civilian intelligence-gathering agency into a full-fledged paramilitary operation – one that routinely racks up nearly as many scalps as any branch of the military.

But the implications of drones go far beyond a single combat unit or civilian agency. On a broader scale, the remote-control nature of unmanned missions enables politicians to wage war while claiming we're not at war – as the United States is currently doing in Pakistan. What's more, the Pentagon and the CIA can now launch military strikes or order assassinations without putting a single boot on the ground – and without worrying about a public backlash over U.S. soldiers coming home in body bags. The immediacy and secrecy of drones make it easier than ever for leaders to unleash America's military might – and harder than ever to evaluate the consequences of such clandestine attacks.

"Drones have really become the counterterrorism weapon of choice for the Obama administration," says Rosa Brooks, a Georgetown law professor who helped establish a new Pentagon office devoted to legal and humanitarian policy. "What I don't think has happened enough is taking a big step back and asking, 'Are we creating more terrorists than we're killing? Are we fostering militarism and extremism in the very places we're trying to attack it?' A great deal about the drone strikes is still shrouded in secrecy. It's very difficult to evaluate from the outside how serious of a threat the targeted people pose."

The idea of aerial military surveillance dates back to the Civil War, when both the Union and the Confederacy used hot-air balloons to spy on the other side, tracking troop movements and helping to direct artillery fire. In 1898, during the Spanish-American War, the U.S. military rigged a kite

with a camera, producing the first aerial reconnaissance photos. When airplanes were introduced to warfare in the First World War, they charted the same pattern later followed by drones – technology deployed first as a means of surveillance, then as a means to kill the enemy.

During World War II, Nazi scientists experimented with radio-controlled missiles for their bombardment of England – creating, in essence, the first kamikaze drones. But it wasn't until the end of the 1950s, when America and Russia were competing to conquer space, that scientists figured out how to fly things without a human onboard: launching satellites, for instance, or remotely controlling the path of rockets and missiles. There were also significant technological shifts that began to make drones feasible. "We were building smaller engines and guidance systems, and we were upgrading our communication and computing abilities," says Goure. The first use of modern drones came during the Vietnam War, when the Pentagon tested unmanned aerial vehicles for what the military called ISR: intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. "Vietnam was decisive to the development of drones as the perfect tools to perform dangerous missions without the risk of losing a pilot," says aviation historian David Cenciotti. By the war's end, drones had flown some 3,500 recon missions in Vietnam. The Air Force also developed two attack drones – the BGM-34A and BGM-34B Firebee – but never used them in combat: The sensors weren't yet capable of identifying and hitting camouflaged targets with the accuracy the military needed.

In the years after Vietnam, many of the technological advances on drones were made by Israel, which has used them to monitor the Gaza Strip and carry out targeted assassinations. During the 1980s, the Israeli air force sold several of its models to the Pentagon, including a drone called the Pioneer. The Pioneer, which could be launched from naval vessels or from military bases, had a flight range of 115 miles. The Americans quickly put it to use during the First Gulf War: In one of the more absurd moments of the conflict, a group of Iraqi soldiers surrendered to a Pioneer, waving white bedsheets and T-shirts at the drone as it circled overhead. The Pioneer would eventually be used in more than 300 missions in the Persian Gulf, and would later be deployed in efforts to stabilize Haiti and the Balkans during the 1990s.

By 2000, the Pentagon was pushing for a massive expansion of the drone program, hoping to make a third of all U.S. aircraft unmanned by 2010. But it was the War on Terror that finally enabled the military to weaponize drones, giving them the capability to take out designated targets. The first major success of killer drones was a Predator strike on a convoy in 2002, which assassinated the leader of Al Qaeda in Yemen. By 2006, the Pentagon had upped its goal, aiming to convert 45 percent of its "deep-strike" aircraft into drones. "Before drones, the way you went after terrorists was you sent your troops," says Goure. "You sent your Navy, you sent your Marines, like Reagan going after Qaddafi in the Eighties. You bombed their camp. Now you have drones that can be operated by the military or the CIA from thousands of miles away."

The low cost and lethal convenience of drones – death by remote control – have made them a must-have item for advanced military powers and tin-pot despots alike. The global market for unmanned aerial vehicles is now \$6 billion a year, with more than 50 countries moving to acquire drones. Over the past decade, the military has tested a wide variety of unmanned aircraft – from microdrones that run on tiny batteries to those with 200-foot wingspans, powered by jet fuel or solar energy. The drones used in Iraq and Afghanistan – the Predator and the Reaper – look like large model planes and cost \$13 million apiece. A drone the size of a 727, the Global Hawk, was used after the tsunami in Japan and the earthquake in Haiti to provide rescue operations with a bird's-eye view of the disasters. One of the largest drones in development today is the SolarEagle, designed by Boeing and DARPA, the experimental research wing of the Defense Department. With a wingspan of more than 400 feet, the SolarEagle will be able to stay in the air for five years at a time, essentially replacing surveillance satellites, which are costly to put into orbit.

At first, many pilots resisted the advance of drones, viewing them as nothing but a robotic replacement for highly trained fighter jocks. "There is a strong cultural struggle," says Doug Davis, director of the Global Unmanned Aircraft Systems Strategic Initiatives program at New Mexico State University, the nation's only civilian test area for drones. "No one likes to think of being phased out of their job." The tensions were only exacerbated when the Air Force selected drone operators on a "nonvoluntary basis," yanking them out of a cockpit and placing them in a

control room against their will. Now, given the high profile and future prospects of drones, pilots are lining up to operate them, volunteering for an intensive, one-year training course that includes simulated missions. "There is more enthusiasm for the job," says Lt. Gen. David Deptula, a fighter pilot who ran the Air Force's surveillance drone program until 2010. "Many pilots are excited about operating these things."

For a new generation of young guns, the experience of piloting a drone is not unlike the video games they grew up on. Unlike traditional pilots, who physically fly their payloads to a target, drone operators kill at the touch of a button, without ever leaving their base – a remove that only serves to further desensitize the taking of human life. (The military slang for a man killed by a drone strike is "bug splat," since viewing the body through a grainy-green video image gives the sense of an insect being crushed.) As drone pilot Lt. Col. Matt Martin recounts in his book *Predator*, operating a drone is "almost like playing the computer game *Civilization*" – something straight out of "a sci-fi novel." After one mission, in which he navigated a drone to target a technical college being occupied by insurgents in Iraq, Martin felt "electrified" and "adrenalized," exulting that "we had shot the technical college full of holes, destroying large portions of it and killing only God knew how many people."

Only later did the reality of what he had done sink in. "I had yet to realize the horror," Martin recalls.

Both the Pentagon and the CIA like to brag about drone strikes that have successfully taken out enemy combatants in the War on Terror. The RQ-170 Sentinel was deployed in the raid that killed bin Laden, and U.S. officials boast of eliminating two more of Al Qaeda's top operatives in Pakistan in recent months. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has called drones "the only game in town," and President Obama recently dismissed concerns about civilian casualties, insisting that he is not ordering "a whole bunch of strikes willy-nilly."

But for every "high-value" target killed by drones, there's a civilian or other innocent victim who has paid the price. The first major success of drones – the 2002 strike that took out the leader of Al Qaeda in Yemen – also resulted in the death of a U.S. citizen. More recently, a drone strike by U.S. forces in Afghanistan in 2010 targeted the wrong individual – killing a well-known human rights advocate named Zabet Amanullah who actually

supported the U.S.-backed government. The U.S. military, it turned out, had tracked the wrong cellphone for months, mistaking Amanullah for a senior Taliban leader. A year earlier, a drone strike killed Baitullah Mehsud, the head of the Pakistani Taliban, while he was visiting his father-in-law; his wife was vaporized along with him. But the U.S. had already tried four times to assassinate Mehsud with drones, killing dozens of civilians in the failed attempts. One of the missed strikes, according to a human rights group, killed 35 people, including nine civilians, with reports that flying shrapnel killed an eight-year-old boy while he was sleeping. Another blown strike, in June 2009, took out 45 civilians, according to credible press reports.

Obama actually inherited two separate drone programs when he took office – and at the urging of Vice President Joe Biden, who has pressed hard for a greater emphasis on counterterrorism tactics, he has dramatically expanded them both. The first program, under the purview of the Pentagon, is focused primarily on providing reconnaissance and airstrikes to protect U.S. troops on the ground. "The major success of the drones is in keeping American soldiers alive," says Goure. The Pentagon's program, which operates more or less in the open, is based at more than a dozen military centers around the globe, from Nevada to Iraq. In one large hangar at Al Udeid Air Force Base in Qatar, three JAG lawyers are on call around the clock, ready to sign off on drone strikes. The lawyers, who are required to take a class about complying with the Geneva Conventions, follow standard operating procedures similar to those used in calling in a traditional airstrike. "There's a set of legal checks and balances that the Air Force does each time," says Pratap Chatterjee, an investigative reporter who sits on the board of Amnesty International. "It's an open secret – the manual is online."

A video presentation of the targeting process exposed by Chatterjee offers a window into the military's decisionmaking apparatus. The footage, taken from a drone strike in Iraq or Afghanistan and used as part of a "post-strike analysis," shows two men setting up and firing a mortar at a U.S. military base. A "target package" – information hastily assembled by U.S. soldiers – identifies the men as insurgents, and provides details on the location of the strike and the proximity to civilian areas. When the insurgents drive away from the base, the drone follows them until military commanders watching

the real-time images determine that they have reached an area where collateral damage will be limited. Then the drone unleashes a laser-guided missile called a Hellfire AGM-114 with 100 pounds of yield. "You're going to destroy the car, but you're not going to create a crater," Col. James Bitzes can be heard explaining on the video. "It's very, very accurate." The entire strike, from identifying the insurgents to launching the missile, is over in a matter of minutes.

The CIA's drone program, by contrast, has evolved in secrecy. Agency lawyers are required to sign off on drone strikes, but the process remains classified, and oversight is far less restrictive than that provided on the military side. To make matters even murkier, the CIA is conducting its drone strikes in places where the U.S. is not officially at war, including Yemen, Somalia and Pakistan. "If you're in Afghan territory, it's going to be the Air Force calling in the strike," says a former CIA official with knowledge of the drone program. "If you're fully within Pakistan, it's going to be left to the CIA."

According to John Rizzo, who served as chief counsel at the CIA for six years, the process of approving drone strikes effectively required him and 10 other lawyers at the agency to "murder" people from the CIA's counterterrorism center in Langley, Virginia. Most of the lawyers are either down the hall from the CIA director's office on the seventh floor – the "power floor," as it's known within the agency – or embedded in different services, including those designated as "clandestine" and "forward deployed." When the agency wants to launch a drone strike, Rizzo explained in an interview with Newsweek, it asks a lawyer to provide legal cover for the assassination by signing off on a five-page dossier laying out the justification for the attack. The cable usually contains a list of 30 people targeted for death. Occasionally, the memos are rejected for not containing enough information. More often, Rizzo would approve the kill, writing the word "concur" following the phrase, "Therefore we request approval for targeting for lethal operation." In his six years as chief counsel, Rizzo says, he signed off on about one kill list per month. Drone assaults on high-value targets – known as "personality strikes" – usually require approval from a lawyer like Rizzo, the CIA chief and sometimes the president himself. But the CIA's more common use of drones – known as "signature strikes" – involves attacks on groups of

alleged militants who are behaving in ways that seem suspicious. Such strikes are reportedly the brainchild of the CIA veteran who has run the agency's drone program for the past six years, a chain-smoking convert to Islam who goes by the code name "Roger." In a recent profile, The Washington Post called Roger "the principal architect of the CIA's drone campaign." When it comes to signature strikes, say insiders, the decision to launch a drone assault is essentially an odds game: If the agency thinks it's likely that the group of individuals are insurgents, it will take the shot.

"The CIA is doing a lot more targeting on a percentage basis," says the former official with knowledge of the agency's drone program.

But to countries like Pakistan, what America considers a legitimate strike against terrorists appears to be little more than a militarized version of homicide. "From the perspective of Pakistani law, we probably committed a murder," says the former CIA official. "We commit espionage every day, breaking the laws of other countries." To absolve itself in the most sensitive strikes, the CIA has become skilled at using lawyers to cover its tracks. "They use paper when it is going to help them," says the former official. "Or they get on the secure phone. Or they get in an elevator casually with a lawyer and ask for his advice, like, 'There's nothing preventing me from destroying those tapes, is there?'"

From the moment Obama took office, according to Washington insiders, the new commander in chief evinced a "love" of drones. "The drone program is something the executive branch is paying a lot of attention to," says Ken Gude, vice president of the Center for American Progress. "These weapons systems have become central to Obama." In the early days of the administration, then-chief of staff Rahm Emanuel would routinely arrive at the White House and demand, "Who did we get today?"

To Obama – a man famous for valuing both precision and restraint – drones represented a more targeted way of waging war, one with the potential to take out those guilty of conducting terrorism while limiting U.S. casualties. "Fewer U.S. personnel are at risk," says Brooks, the legal scholar who advised the Pentagon. "The technology makes it seem logical to go with the choice that reduces the cost of using lethal force." A senior U.S. official with intimate knowledge of the drone program says that remote-control strikes are particularly helpful in Pakistan, where there's fierce resistance to any overt U.S. presence. "We can do drone strikes

without any help from the Pakistanis," says the official, noting that the missions also provoke no "political cost" in the U.S.

Over the past year, however, the president's increasing reliance on drones has caused a growing rift within the administration. According to sources in the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan, Ambassador Cameron Munter was furious that the CIA was conducting drone strikes without consulting him over the potential diplomatic fallout. The strikes had stopped briefly in January 2011 after Raymond Davis, a CIA contractor, was taken into custody for killing two Pakistanis in broad daylight; the day after Davis was released, the CIA drone strikes began again. Munter, according to U.S. officials, complained to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and senior military officials about the drone program, and his concerns were brought to the White House. At issue was a particularly deadly drone strike in March 2011 that the Americans claimed killed 21 militants, and the Pakistanis claimed killed 42 civilians.

The crisis sparked a miniature blowup in the White House between the president's national security team and the CIA. Last spring, National Security Adviser Tom Donilon ordered a review of the drone program – not to halt it, but to figure out a way to deploy drones that might ease the concerns of Munter and other diplomats. The prospect of any additional oversight, however modest, set off alarms at the CIA. When first confronted with the idea of the review, according to administration officials, the agency flipped out. "One CIA guy gave Donilon the 'You want me on that wall' speech," says a senior U.S. official familiar with the exchange, referring to the scene in the movie *A Few Good Men* in which a Marine commandant played by Jack Nicholson argues that he's above the law. Donilon tried to assuage the CIA's fears. "No – you know that's not right," he told the official, according to a White House source who witnessed the exchange. "We all are on the same side here, trying to make the country safe."

At the center of the debate was Obama's newly appointed CIA chief, Gen. David Petraeus. Petraeus sided with the White House, recognizing the need to strike a balance between maintaining a strong relationship with Pakistan and aggressively pursuing a military strategy that includes drone strikes. "Petraeus wants to be more careful," says one senior U.S. official involved in the drone program. Agency veterans struck back, complaining to The

New York Times that the drone program had ground to a halt under Petraeus. Much of the slowdown, in fact, was due to political necessity: A NATO airstrike that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers in November 2011 had forced the CIA to put drone strikes on a temporary hiatus. But the media campaign appears to have had the intended effect: Two days after the Times story appeared, drone strikes in Pakistan resumed.

In the end, though, the CIA lost the larger battle over drones. After Donilon completed the White House review, Ambassador Munter and the State Department were granted more say in decisions over the timing and targeting of drone strikes. Although the move was intended to provide more civilian oversight of covert attacks, it outraged human rights activists, who blasted the White House for putting a U.S. ambassador in the position of signing off on extralegal death warrants in a foreign country. "Giving a civilian diplomat veto power on an assassination campaign is incredible," says Clive Stafford Smith, the executive director of Reprieve, a human rights group that is suing over the use of drones. "Can you imagine what the reaction would be if the Pakistani ambassador in Washington was overseeing a campaign of targeted killing in America?"

It remains unclear what role the White House itself plays in selecting the names that wind up placed on the kill lists. Some U.S. officials have described a secret panel within the National Security Council that keeps a list of targets to kill or capture. The panel, which has no paperwork authorizing its existence, is said to involve top counterterrorism adviser John Brennan, who was a staunch advocate of the Bush administration's decision to torture prisoners at Guantánamo. Other U.S. officials familiar with the targeting process say the idea of a secret panel overstates the case. The NSC, they insist, isn't involved in the vast majority of drone strikes on a daily basis – especially the majority of "signature strikes" launched by the CIA. That means the CIA still has broad authority to curate its own kill lists, with limited oversight from the White House. As one former CIA official put it: "The NSC decides when the president needs to be involved – and what fingerprints to leave, if any."

The 72-year-old man, a Fulbright scholar who spent 11 years living in New Mexico and Minnesota, had been expecting the news of his son's death. After all, it had already been falsely reported several times over the past two years. So Nasser al-Awlaki couldn't claim to be shocked on a Friday

afternoon last fall when a cable news outlet reported that his worst fear had finally been realized: His son Anwar al-Awlaki, a U.S. citizen and alleged member of Al Qaeda, had been killed on September 30th, 2011 – the first American to be specifically targeted by a drone strike.

In the days following the killing, Nasser and his wife received a call from Anwar's 16-year-old son, Abdulrahman al-Awlaki, who had run away from home a few weeks earlier to try to find his now-deceased father in Yemen. "He called us and gave us his condolences," Nasser recalls. "We told him to come back, and he promised he would. We really pressed him, me and his grandmother."

The teenage boy never made it home. Two weeks after that final conversation, his grandparents got another phone call from a relative. Abdulrahman had been killed in a drone strike in the southern part of Yemen, his family's tribal homeland. The boy, who had no known role in Al Qaeda or any other terrorist operation, appears to have been another victim of Obama's drone war: Abdulrahman had been accompanying a cousin when a drone obliterated him and seven others. The suspected target of the killing – a member of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula – is reportedly still alive; it's unclear whether he was even there when the strike took place.

The news devastated the family. "My wife weeps every day and every morning for her grandson," says Nasser, a former high-ranking member of the Yemenite government. "He was a nice, gentle boy who liked to swim a lot. This is a boy who did nothing against America or against anything else. A boy. He is a citizen of the United States, and there are no reasons to kill him except that he is Anwar's son."

Anwar al-Awlaki was born in 1971 in Las Cruces, New Mexico, where Nasser was earning a master's degree in agricultural economics from New Mexico State University. As an adult, he lived in Colorado and Virginia, becoming an imam at an Islamic center in Falls Church. After September 11th, he began peddling the most noxious brands of jihadist rhetoric, coming very close to calling for attacks on the West. At least one of the 9/11 hijackers was said to have visited his mosque. He had left the United States for good in 2002, his father says, because ██████ been "interrogated many times" by the FBI about his connections to terrorist groups.

Once in Yemen, Anwar made a series of propaganda videos for Al Qaeda that were widely viewed on YouTube. According to U.S. authorities, he also communicated directly with two individuals who committed acts of terrorism, including Nidal Hasan, the U.S. Army officer accused of gunning down 13 people and wounding 32 others at Fort Hood in 2009, and Umar Farouk Abdulmuttallab, the so-called Underwear Bomber. After a two-year manhunt, the CIA tracked Anwar down and launched a drone strike that killed him and another American citizen, Samir Khan, along with two others. The day al-Awlaki was killed, President Obama hailed his death as another victory in the War on Terror, calling it a "major blow" and a "significant milestone."

Anwar's son, who was born in Denver, had also grown up in America. (After his death, U.S. officials claimed he was 20 or 21, until his family provided his birth certificate from a Colorado hospital.) He had left the United States with his father at the age of seven, and lived with his grandparents in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen. Like others in the southern part of the country, he lived in terror of the constant buzz of drones overhead. "Every night, they don't sleep," says his grandfather. "They make unbelievable noise, and people are suffering."

Based on press reports, Nasser had suspected for more than a year that his son had been put on a kill list by the Obama administration. What made Anwar al-Awlaki unique was that he was still an American citizen – a status that posed a legal and ethical dilemma for lawyers at the White House and the State Department. The administration lawyers – many of whom had been outspoken critics of George W. Bush's policies against terrorists – spent months figuring out how to justify the killing of a U.S. citizen. By the summer of 2010, two attorneys in the Justice Department – Marty Lederman and David Barron – had authored a secret memo, select portions of which were leaked to the Times. An American, they argued, was eligible for targeted killing if he met certain criteria that the administration refused to reveal. The top legal adviser to the State Department, Harold Koh, also defended the policy of targeted killing. "It is the considered view of the administration," he declared in a speech in March 2010, "that targeting practices, including lethal operations conducted with the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, comply with all applicable law, including the laws of war."

The irony that Koh – a former dean of Yale Law School who spent years lambasting George W. Bush for violating international law with his policies of torture and extraordinary rendition – now proclaimed the right of his own administration to assassinate an American citizen was not lost on either his friends or his critics. "Many of the people like Harold Koh and Marty Lederman who were criticizing Bush, and who should be criticizing targeted killings now, went into the Obama administration," says Mary Ellen O'Connell, a law professor at Notre Dame who has known Koh for 25 years. "They are close friends to those in the administration – and it's hard to criticize your friends." Says another lawyer who knows Koh well: "Harold turned out to be someone who put his personal relationships with Clinton and Obama ahead of the law. That has been a surprise to us." Rizzo, the CIA attorney who signed off on Bush's "enhanced interrogation" techniques, is even blunter in mocking the Obama administration for its intellectual dishonesty on drone strikes. "Stalking and killing a big-name terrorist evidently is less legally risky, and is viewed in many quarters as far less morally objectionable, than capturing and aggressively interrogating one," Rizzo wrote in a journal published by the right-wing Hoover Institution.

For Nasser al-Awlaki, the news that his son was on a list for targeted killing was a matter of life and death. In August 2010, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit on behalf of Nasser to prevent the U.S. government from killing his son – the first legal action taken against the drone program in the United States. The ACLU argued that "a targeted killing policy under which individuals are added to kill lists after a bureaucratic process and remain on these lists for months at a time plainly goes beyond the use of lethal force as a last resort to address imminent threats." The policy also goes "beyond what the Constitution and international law permit," the ACLU alleged.

The case, *Nasser al-Awlaki v. Barack Obama*, was argued before U.S. District Judge John Bates in November 2010. The transcript from the hearing reads like a Kafkaesque parody of a trial. The government's lawyer, Douglas Letter, repeatedly invoked the privilege of state secrecy, arguing that "as far as the allegations there is a kill list, et cetera, we're not confirming or denying." He also observed that Anwar would no longer be under the threat of "lethal force" if he turned himself in – an implicit non-

acknowledgment that al-Awlaki was on a secret kill list. Jameel Jaffer, a lawyer for the ACLU, pushed back against the government's case, worrying that the president of the United States was being granted the sole and expansive power to decide "the question of whether an American falls within the category of people who can be assassinated." In the hearing's most surreal moment, the judge dismissed the case, ruling that Nasser had no legal standing to file a lawsuit on his son's behalf until Anwar was actually killed.

The Obama administration has repeatedly refused to release the secret Justice Department memo that outlines its legal justification for the attack on al-Awlaki. But on March 5th, in a speech at Northwestern University, Attorney General Eric Holder finally broke the official silence. A targeted killing against a U.S. citizen is legal, he said, only if the citizen cannot be captured, poses an imminent threat of violent attack against the U.S., and qualifies as a legitimate target consistent with the laws of war. "When such individuals take up arms against this country and join Al Qaeda in plotting attacks designed to kill their fellow Americans," Holder declared, "there may be only one realistic and appropriate response."

Brushing aside criticisms from civil libertarians, Holder rejected the idea that the due-process provision of the Constitution requires the president to get permission from a federal court before killing a U.S. citizen. And in a brazenly political double standard, he insisted that Congress had given the president the go-ahead to use lethal methods under a resolution passed a week after September 11th that authorizes the use of all necessary force to prevent future acts of terrorism against the United States – the exact same resolution that the Bush administration used to justify its illegal policy of torture and extraordinary rendition.

In the end, it appears, the administration has little reason to worry about any backlash from its decision to kill an American citizen – one who had not even been charged with a crime. A recent poll shows that most Democrats overwhelmingly support the drone program, and Congress passed a law in February that calls for the Federal Aviation Administration to "accelerate the integration of unmanned aerial systems" in the skies over America. Drones, which are already used to fight wildfires out West and keep an eye on the Mexican border, may soon be used to spy on U.S. citizens at home: Police in Miami and Houston have reportedly tested them

for domestic use, and their counterparts in New York are also eager to deploy them. Given the NYPD's record of civil rights abuses, it's not hard to envision drones buzzing high above Zuccotti Park to provide surveillance on Occupy Wall Street, or being used to surreptitiously monitor the activities of Muslim-American students.

Many who oversee the drone program, in fact, seem to have little but contempt for those who worry about the potential dangers presented by drones. At a human rights seminar at Columbia University last summer, John Radsan, a former attorney for the CIA, admitted that the agency has no interest in debating the legal niceties of drone strikes. "The CIA is laughing at you guys," he told the assembled human rights lawyers. "You're worried about international law, and the CIA is laughing." A White House official I spoke with is even more dismissive. "If Anwar al-Awlaki is your poster boy for why we shouldn't do drone strikes," the official tells me, "good fucking luck."

If the targeted killing of al-Awlaki doesn't inspire sympathy, given his alleged connections to Al Qaeda, then consider the case of Tariq Aziz, a 16-year-old boy from Pakistan. In April 2010, one of Tariq's cousins was killed in a drone strike. Believing that his cousin was innocent, and not involved in any insurgent activities, Tariq joined a group of tribal elders last October at a meeting in Islamabad organized by Reprieve, the human rights group. Neil Williams, a volunteer for Reprieve, spent an hour speaking with Tariq at the meeting.

"We started talking about soccer," Williams recalls. "He told me he played for New Zealand. The teams they played with from the village had all taken names from football clubs, like Brazil or Manchester United." Tariq and other teenagers at the meeting told Williams how they lived in fear of drones. They could hear them at night over their homes in Waziristan, buzzing for hours like aerial lawn mowers. An explosion could strike at any moment, anywhere, without warning. "Tariq really didn't want to be going back home," Williams says. "██████ hear the drones three or four times a day."

Three days after the conference, Williams received an e-mail. Tariq had been killed in a drone strike while he was on his way to pick up his aunt. It appears that he wasn't the intended target of the strike: Those who met

Tariq suspect he was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, especially since his 12-year-old cousin was also killed in the blast. The Obama administration has no comment on the killing of Tariq Aziz, even though his death raises the most significant question of all. Drones offer the government an advanced and precise technology in its War on Terror – yet many of those killed by drones don't appear to be terrorists at all. In fact, according to a detailed study of drone victims compiled by the Bureau for Investigative Journalism, at least 174 of those executed by drones were under the age of 18 – in other words, children. Estimates by human rights groups that include adults who were likely civilians put the toll of innocent victims at more than 800. U.S. officials hotly dismiss such figures – "bullshit," one senior administration official told me. Brennan, one of Obama's top counterterrorism advisers, absurdly insisted last June that there hadn't been "a single civilian" killed by drones in the previous year.

For Nasser al-Awlaki, who lost his teenage grandson to a predator drone, such denials are almost as shocking as the administration's deliberate decision to wage a remote-control war that would inevitably result in the deaths of innocent civilians. "I could not believe America could do this – especially President Obama, who I liked very much," he says. "When he was elected, I thought he would solve all the problems of the world."

Michael Hastings is a Rolling Stone contributing editor and the author of [The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Story of America's War in Afghanistan](#).