



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on December 5, 2012

Does Obama Admin. Operate a Terrorist Catch and Release Program?

Anwar al-Awlaki (pictured) wasn't quite as elusive as he was portrayed by the U.S. government. That is reportedly the information contained in documents obtained by Judicial Watch.



The records obtained by Judicial Watch as result of a [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\) petition](#) served on the State Department reportedly reveal that Awlaki was detained by U.S. authorities on several occasions. The following are highlights of the record of Awlaki's time in U.S. custody. Note: the Judicial Watch report on their findings uses an alternate spelling of Awlaki's name.

The U.S. Embassy in Sanaa, Yemen, was asked on March 24, 2011, to issue a [communication to al-Aulaqi](#), requesting him to "appear in person" to pick up an important letter at the post. The letter issued by the embassy, which included a partial address for al-Aulaqi, was a revocation of his passport: "The Department's [sic] action is based upon a determination by the Secretary that Mr. al-Aulaqi [sic] activities abroad are causing and/or likely to cause serious damage to the national security or the foreign policy of the United States." The embassy was instructed not to inform al-Aulaqi when he came to the embassy that the "important letter" was a passport revocation.

The documents include two ["Privacy Act Release Forms"](#) issued by the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa, Yemen, signed by al-Aulaqi. One was dated November 14, 2006, and the other July 2, 2007 — which indicates that he was held for at least eight months. (Press reports had indicated that al-Aulaqi's arrest was in relation to an al-Qaeda plot to kidnap a U.S. government official.) The documents do not indicate how long al-Aulaqi was detained or why he was released.

In short, Awlaki was detained and released under the Bush administration, and under the Obama administration, the government planned to get him to appear at an embassy (his location was known), hand him a message, and let him go.

[In a statement](#), Judicial Watch president Tom Fitton characterized the federal government's duplicity in the Awlaki case as a "catch and release program for terrorists."

"These documents provide further evidence that the federal government, under both the Bush and Obama administrations, has been operating a 'catch and release' program for terrorists. The idea of inviting Awlaki, a known terrorist, to our embassy in Yemen in order to revoke his passport is beyond belief," Fitton said.

Awlaki was killed by a drone attack on the command of President Obama on September 30, 2011.

Awlaki was placed on the president's infamous kill list after he was suspected of influencing the Ft.



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Hood shooter, Major Nidal Hassan, as well as the so-called Underwear Bomber, Umar Abdulmutallab. No official charges were ever filed against the American-born cleric. The government never attempted to apprehend him and try him for his alleged atrocities. He was placed on a proscription list and murdered.

The hit reportedly went down like this: On September 30, 2011, while Anwar al-Awlaki had stopped to eat breakfast, two unmanned Predator drones fired Hellfire missiles killing him.

Two weeks later, Awlaki's 16-year-old son Abdulrahman was killed in similar manner.

Abdulrahman al-Awlaki was killed in October 2011, and to date the Obama administration has never informed the country of any wrongdoing by this teenager, other than being related to a man (his father) who posted on the Internet anti-American videos that allegedly influenced others to commit crimes. A government-sanctioned assassination of such an individual is repugnant to all those who cherish life, liberty, and the due process that protects them.

Not only was the target of the nighttime drone attack a civilian, but so were the boys sitting with him when two U.S. missiles lit up the area and killed them all. Being merely near a person related to someone accused of being associated with a group allegedly affiliated with an alleged al-Qaeda network is apparently sufficient provocation for becoming "collateral damage" in the U.S. "war on terror."

Citizens and foreigners alike must now recognize that the government of the United States has assumed all power over life and death and has passed law after law legalizing that usurpation. In America today, every man, woman, and child (including unborn children) is required by force of law to appeal to the ultimate arbiter of the right to life for their continuing existence. Should they at any time fail to adequately demonstrate the required level of obedience, then their life, liberty, and property may be confiscated without recourse and seemingly without remorse on the part of those carrying out the sentence.

While one segment of the government was contacting Awlaki to pick up a message, another was targeting him for assassination. Prior to being locked onto by a Predator drone, the senior Awlaki was the target of a CIA plot to pay \$250,000 to a suspected al-Qaeda operative for his help in finding a new wife for Awlaki and planting a surveillance device.

[A Danish newspaper broke the story](#), claiming that the CIA recruited Morten Storm, a Danish Muslim, to carry out the operation. [As reported by an ABC News](#) story referencing the Dutch newspaper story, Storm befriended Awlaki and was asked by the "al-Qaeda mastermind" to find him a European woman to marry. Storm subsequently told the Dutch paper that in 2010 he successfully identified a Croatian lady named Aminah who contacted him on Facebook expressing interest in marrying Awlaki.

The marriage arrangement, so the report claims, was worked out through a series of videos exchanged between the two using Facebook.

If the Danish story is to be believed, the CIA ordered Storm to "give the woman a suitcase with a tracking device that would give the U.S. Air Force a location for a drone strike. The plot was foiled when the woman ditched the surveillance suitcase, ABC reported."

The Obama administration consistently refuses to enunciate a legal justification for the killing of either Awlaki or his son, both of whom were American citizens.

[The New York Times](#) reported, "The secret document provided the justification for acting despite an executive order banning assassinations, a federal law against murder, protections in the Bill of Rights



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and various strictures of the international laws of war, according to people familiar with the analysis.”

“President Obama’s decision to order the killing of an American citizen is among the most significant of his tenure as President and the American people have a right to know the facts behind this decision,” said Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton. “Anytime an American citizen is killed per the orders of the President of the United States, the process that led to the decision must be made transparent.”

Put another way, the president of the United States believes that he is solely responsible for the position of the United States in the world. By now, Americans are aware that the president’s view is the only view that matters. He is, as President Bush once proclaimed, “the decider,” and none shall oppose (unless they fancy being pursued by Hellfire missiles).

What is perhaps more frightening than the president’s assumption of the right to decide who lives and who dies, is the apparent coldness he displays in the process of compiling the proscription list.

The *Times* story says that the president “approves lethal action without hand-wringing.” In fact, when it comes to ordering an airborne drone to deliver its deadly payload — whether the target is an alleged al-Qaeda recruiter, an American teenager eating dinner with his family, or any other unidentified target — President Obama reportedly commented that the decision to pull the trigger is “an easy one.”

Apparently, it was easy to catch Awlaki, as well, but arresting him didn’t have quite the cachet as delivering death by drone after he was released.

Photo of Anwar al-Awlaki

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