



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on January 22, 2013

Ron Paul Says Focus on Policy, Not Personality

Ron Paul's sound advice may not be echoing off the walls of Congress anymore, but he continues to share it in [interviews](#) and opinion articles.

The latest example of the latter was published January 15 on [thedailybell.com](#). In [his take on President Obama's choices for secretary of defense and director of the Central Intelligence Agency \(CIA\)](#), Dr. Paul suggests that Americans should pay more attention to the policies than to the personalities.



"There is widespread belief that either or both of these nominees will have an immediate and profound effect on US policy," Paul says. "However, this belief is really just a mistaken over-emphasis on personnel over policy. We should not forget that cabinet secretaries serve the president, and not the other way around."

Regarding the president's tapping of former Senator Chuck Hagel to head the Defense Department, Paul warns those desiring an end to the "foreign policy of endless war and empire overseas" that Hagel's nomination isn't the signal many are interpreting it to be.

Paul explains:

Hagel has shown some admirable willingness to advise caution overseas. He is seen as unenthusiastic over the prospects of a US war on Iran, which is certainly to be welcomed. But let us not forget that he did vote for the war against Iraq, he has expressed support for multi-lateral sanctions on Iran, and last year he wrote in the *Washington Post* that, on Iran, he supports "keeping all options on the table, including the use of military force."

That said, Paul admits that even Hagel's mild reticence to recklessly wasting American blood and treasure on perpetual foreign combat missions is enough to siphon the ire of neo-conservatives bent on using U.S. armed forces to make the world "safe for democracy."

Could a Hagel-led Pentagon have a little less itchy of a trigger finger? "We cannot count on it," Paul warns.

Paul then moves on to John Brennan, the president's pick for CIA director.

Right out of the chute, Dr. Paul reminds readers that Brennan is credited with having penned "Obama's destructive drone warfare policy, and who as such has been in charge of the president's secret 'kill list' that has already claimed the lives of three American citizens."

In 2011, two Predator drones fired Hellfire missiles that [killed three American citizens in Yemen](#): Anwar al-Awlaki; his 16-year-old son, Abdulrahman al-Awlaki; and Samir Khan. Notably, none of these three men was ever charged with or tried for any crime. The Obama administration seems to favor the ease of remote-control killing of its enemies over the tedium of a trial and the use of drones over due process.

When the judicial and executive powers of government are consolidated and restraints on the exercise



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of power are cast aside, it can be expected — based both on our knowledge of history and on the nature of man — that power will be abused and no one's rights or life will be safe from elimination by despots.

Dr. Paul recounts incredulously that in 2011, Brennan infamously claimed that “there were no collateral deaths from the US drone attacks in Pakistan.”

It seems that Brennan isn't content just to kill innocent people in Pakistan, however. While serving as the White House's “counterterrorism czar,” he told the *Washington Post*, “There are aspects of the Yemen program that I think are a true model of what I think the U.S. counterterrorism community should be doing” to fight the spread of al-Qaeda in Northern Africa.

Cooking the books to justify war isn't new to John Brennan. As Dr. Paul reminds readers in his article, “As then-CIA director George Tenet's right hand man during the Bush presidency, Brennan was certainly involved in the manufactured intelligence and lies that led the US to attack Iraq.”

Next, although the Obama administration keeps a tight lid on the details of its “death by drone” program, last year Brennan [admitted for the first time publicly](#) to the extent of the use of drones in America's War on Terror. He said that the remote control killing of suspects on foreign soil who have been charged with no crime whatsoever is “in full accordance with the law.”

Then, without apparent awareness of the macabre irony of the statement, Brennan reminded the world that the United States “respects national sovereignty and international law.”

The day after the report of another deadly drone strike in Yemen was reported, Brennan took to the microphone once again to discuss the operation.

[During a conversation with Margaret Sanger at the Council on Foreign Relations \(CFR\)](#), Brennan defended his boss's remote-control elimination of those suspected of posing a threat to the security of the homeland.

“So long as AQAP [Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula] seeks to implement its murderous agenda, we will be a close partner with Yemen in meeting this common threat,” Brennan said.

In the interview, Brennan claimed that the president deploys drones only to target “militants” with designs on attacking the United States or its allies abroad. He admitted, furthermore, that American agents provide tactical intelligence support to Yemeni armed forces battling al-Qaeda on the ground.

When asked about the collateral deaths of innocent civilians during these attacks on “militants,” Brennan said that the American “pilots” controlling the drones “make every effort” to avoid killing innocents:

Today I'd simply say that all our CT [counterterrorism] efforts in Yemen are conducted in concert with the Yemeni government. When direct action is taken, every effort is made to avoid any civilian casualty. And contrary to conventional wisdom, we see little evidence that these actions are generating widespread anti-American sentiment or recruits for AQAP. In fact, we see the opposite; our Yemeni partners are more eager to work with us. Yemenese citizens who have been freed from the hellish grip of AQAP are more eager, not less, to work with the Yemeni government. In short, targeted strikes against the most senior and most dangerous AQAP terrorists are not the problem, they are part of the solution.

If Dr. Paul offers a reliable indication of the level of liberty in the country, though, the nominations and eventual confirmations of Chuck Hagel and John Brennan are not the solution to the Obama administration's acceleration of the armed expansion of the “Pax Americana.”



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He explains:

If the president has decided to continue or even expand US military action overseas through more covert warfare and use of special operations forces, which seems to be the case, it will matter little who he chooses to carry out those policies. If the president decides to continue to provide support to rebels in Syria who have dubious ties to Islamic extremists, to continue to meddle in the internal affairs of countless countries overseas, to continue to refuse to even talk with Iran without preconditions and so on, we will not see a return to foreign policy sanity no matter who occupies what position in the president's cabinet.

And, if history (particularly recent history) is any guide, even the party affiliation of the occupant of the White House will have an equally insignificant effect on the near constant crescendo of the call to deploy drones and divisions to newer and deadlier theaters of operation around the globe.

Photo of Ron Paul: AP Images

Joe A. Wolverton, II, J.D. is a correspondent for The New American and travels frequently nationwide speaking on topics of nullification, the NDAA, and the surveillance state. He can be reached at jwolverton@thenewamerican.com.



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