



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on June 19, 2013

Pres. Obama's Secret CIA Hit Squad Detailed in "The Way of the Knife"

President Barack Obama has converted the CIA into his personal army and granted it unfettered assassination authority.

The story behind the development and deployment of this presidential killing corps is told in [The Way of the Knife: The CIA, a Secret Army, and a War at the Ends of the Earth](#), the latest book by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Mark Mazzetti.

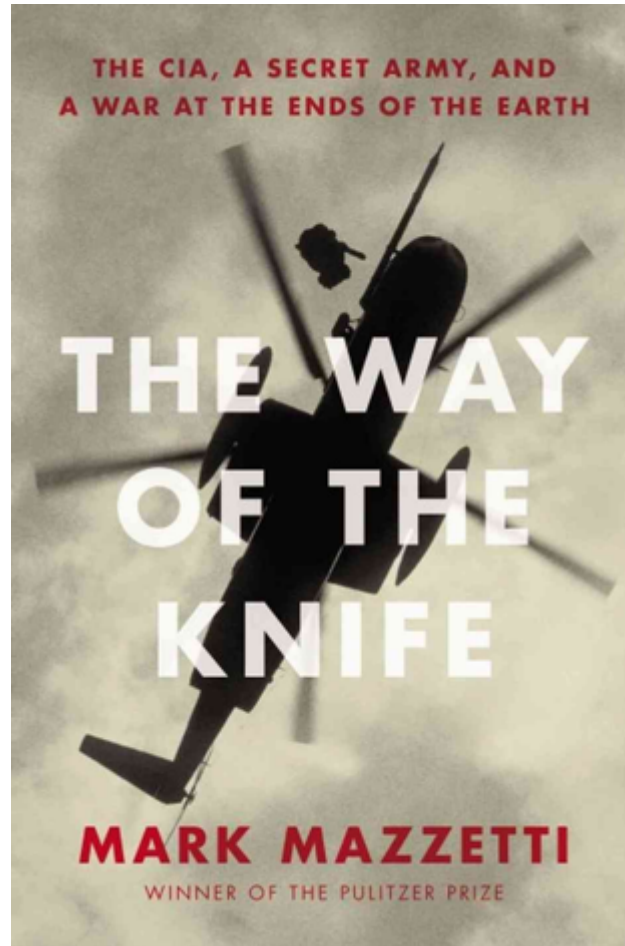
Mazzetti, who writes for the *New York Times*, describes a role reversal between the army of agents in the CIA and the actual army:

And just as the CIA has come to take on tasks traditionally associated with the military, with spies turned into soldiers, so has the opposite occurred. The American military has been dispersed into the dark spaces of American foreign policy, with commando teams running spying missions that Washington would never have dreamed of approving in the years before 9/11. Prior to the attacks of September 11, the Pentagon did very little human spying, and the CIA was not officially permitted to kill. In the years since, each has done a great deal of both, and a military-intelligence complex has emerged to carry out the new American way of war.

The "new American way of war" includes not declaring war. Rather than submit to the constitutional authority of the legislative branch's exclusive power to declare war, presidents for decades have marched brigades of U.S. armies through the barriers that separate the powers of the White House and Capitol Hill.

Admittedly, when the president assumes the power to designate people as enemies of the state, then he feels legally justified in skirting (or completely disregarding) the myriad constitutional and moral checks on the prosecution of war.

For example, President Obama's nearly daily approval of drone-delivered assassinations is an effrontery to over 650 years of our Anglo-American law's protection from autocratic decrees of death without due





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process of law. When any president usurps the power to place names on a kill list and then have those people summarily executed without due process, he places our republic on a trajectory toward tyranny and government-sponsored terrorism.□□

It would be another matter if those targeted and executed by the president were armed enemy combatants — they were not. Were these suspected “militants” enemy soldiers captured during wartime they would be necessarily afforded certain rights granted to POWs. Those slated for assassination are not allowed any rights — neither the due process rights given to those accused of crimes nor the rights of fair treatment given to enemies captured on the battlefield. The White House has assumed all power over life and death and created ex nihilo a new category of individual — one deprived of all rights altogether.

President Obama, apparently, has a fondness for transformers: He takes one useful thing and repurposes it into something equally useful, although perhaps not equally constitutional.

Apart from the spy-to-soldier switch, Mazzetti writes of how “in a shadow war waged across the globe, America has pursued its enemies using killer robots and special operation troops.”

Again, in *The Way of the Knife*, Mazzetti displays a penchant for conflating the president (and the federal government and the military) for America, as in “America has pursued its enemies.”

The enemies currently being pursued by drones and CIA/Special Ops death squads are not the enemies of America — not demonstrably — but are people unfortunate enough to have their flash card come up in the Tuesday kill list confab.

An informative piece written by two of Mazzetti’s *New York Times* colleagues illuminates much of the macabre methodology of aggregating the names of enemies of the state to President Obama’s proscription list.□□ Recounting the scene at one of the regularly scheduled Tuesday intelligence briefings at the White House, Jo Becker and Scott Shane wrote, “The mug shots and brief biographies resembled a high school yearbook layout. Several were Americans. Two were teenagers, including a girl who looked even younger than her 17 years.”□□

It cannot be too soberly restated that these seemingly cold-blooded conferences are occurring every week in the Oval Office and are presided over by the president.□□

That last fact is essential if one is to understand the era into which our Republic has entered. The president of the United States, in this case Barack Obama, sits in a chair in the White House rifling through dossiers of suspected terrorists. After listening to the advice of his clique of counselors, it is the president himself who designates who of the lineup is to be killed. As the *New York Times* explains:

Mr. Obama has placed himself at the helm of a top secret “nominations” process to designate terrorists for kill or capture, of which the capture part has become largely theoretical. He had vowed to align the fight against Al Qaeda with American values; the chart, introducing people whose deaths he might soon be asked to order, underscored just what a moral and legal conundrum this could be.

It is truthfully said by choruses of the president’s men that he inherited this “War on Terror” from President Bush. He must, so the supporters say, continue the operation until the threat to America from extremists is eliminated.

In his prosecution of this global search and destroy mission, President Obama displays more than just a grudging obligation to finish what his predecessor started, however. As Mazzetti reminds his readers,



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“The foundations of the secret war were laid by a conservative Republican president and embraced by a liberal Democratic one who became enamored of what he inherited.”

To his (dis)credit, President Obama has taken that inheritance and turned quite a profit. He now unrepentantly and repeatedly spends this lethal wealth on building an empire on the rubble of the constitutional Republic that was erected based on a constitutional blueprint. He is now — and it is foreseeable that all future Oval Office occupiers will be, as well — a man possessed of nearly unbounded power over life and death, with unitary command over a sophisticated and surreptitious squad of CIA soldiers and special operations manipulators. Again, Mazzetti from *The Way of the Knife*:

The strange new conflict has also upended how the United States waged war. The traditional wartime chain of command — passing from the White House to the secretary of defense to a four-star commander with a staff of hundreds to build and execute a war plan — had quietly been circumvented. The CIA director was now a military commander running a clandestine, global war with a skeleton staff and very little oversight.

The White House, he later explains, now has the first and final say on “who should be captured, who should be killed, and who should be spared.”

Bloodthirsty Roman dictators only dreamed of such deadly dominion over their political enemies and the entire population of their much smaller worlds.

The Way of the Knife: The CIA, a Secret Army, and a War at the Ends of the Earth is published by Penguin Press and is available now.

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