



Could the President Assassinate Journalists?

Representative Ron Paul suggested before the National Press Club October 5 that President Obama's assassination program of alleged terrorists could grow into an assassination program for journalists who disagree with the federal government.

"Can you imagine being put on a list because you're a threat?" the GOP presidential contender [asked](#). "What's going to happen when they come to the media? What if the media becomes a threat? Or a professor becomes a threat? Someday that could well happen. This is the way it works. It's incrementalism.... It's slipping and sliding, let me tell you." Paul's remarks were a reaction to a September 30 drone strike in Yemen authorized by President Obama which targeted and killed two American citizens, one of whom Anwar al-Awlaki had been on a presidential assassination list for more than a year. (This discussion begins 7 minutes and 55 seconds into the video below.)



Indeed, both Awlaki a New Mexico native and his fellow U.S. citizen killed in the drone strike, Samir Khan, were journalists. Awlaki served as the primary video propagandist for al Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), an organization which did not exist on September 11, 2001. The South Carolina-born Khan served as [editor](#) of *Inspire* magazine, the English language propaganda magazine of AQAP launched in 2010 from Yemen.

Awlaki openly used his videos to justify terrorist attacks against the United States, but he [denied](#) participating in the actual planning of terrorist events. President Obama [claimed](#) the opposite in a statement September 30, alleging that "He directed the failed attempt to blow up an airplane on Christmas Day in 2009. He directed the failed attempt to blow up U.S. cargo planes in 2010." However, President Obama and his staff have [steadfastly refused](#) to release any evidence of the President's allegations.

Paul [stressed](#) that he didn't invent the word "assassination" policy for Obama's program, noting that the term was coined by Obama's Director of National Intelligence, Dennis Blair. "A lot of people are having second thoughts about this policy," noted Paul. "This was an announced policy in February of 2010 by Dennis Blair. And he used the word 'assassination.' Sometimes on the media they'll say, 'Oh, Ron Paul says he was assassinated. Where did he come up with that word?' From Dennis Blair, who said that that is now our policy." The word "assassination" has been [attributed](#) to Blair's testimony before the House Select Committee on Intelligence February 3, 2010, and indeed that was the substance of Blair's



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on October 6, 2011

remarks, though the word does not appear to be on the official publicly released transcript.

Paul [noted](#) that the American system of law has traditionally been based upon trials, rather than gangland-style Mafia hits. He recalled that this happened even with the worst war criminals during World War II. All the Nazi criminals were tried. They were taken to court and then executed, Paul said. The reason we do this is because we want to protect the rule of law.

Over at the Ron Paul 2012 campaign website, official blogger Jack Hunter [found](#) that Paul has some high-powered conservative legal support for trials rather than a presidential license to kill in Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin Scalia. Scalia [wrote in a 2004 decision](#), "Where the Government accuses a citizen of waging war against it, our constitutional tradition has been to prosecute him in federal court for treason or some other crime" Scalia, favorably quoting British legal scholar William Blackstone, also claimed, To bereave a man of life, or by violence to confiscate his estate, without accusation or trial, would be so gross and notorious an act of despotism, as must at once convey the alarm of tyranny throughout the whole kingdom

Blackstone's [Commentaries on the Laws of England](#) (1753), from which Scalia quoted, was widely read by America's Founding Fathers, and he was among the [most quoted](#) men at the U.S. Constitutional Convention of 1787.

Hunter's quote of Scalia was from a 2004 [dissent](#) in the case of Louisiana native [Yaser el-Hamdi](#), who had been detained indefinitely by the Bush administration at a military brig in South Carolina. Hunter's citation was perhaps a biased selection, in that Scalia heavily weighed the fact that Hamdi's physical location was within the continental United States: "A view of the Constitution that gives the Executive authority to use military force rather than the force of law against citizens on American soil flies in the face of the mistrust that engendered these provisions," Scalia wrote.

But Scalia also added that American citizens are different from foreign combatants in war, stressing that "the tradition with respect to American citizens, however, has been quite different. Citizens aiding the enemy have been treated as traitors subject to the criminal process." In other words, Scalia's basic argument was that alleged traitors have traditionally been given a trial and not been imprisoned or killed without any due process guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and its [Fifth and Sixth Amendments](#).



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