



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on June 15, 2012

## 26 Congressmen Send Obama Critical Letter on Drones

When then-Senator Barack Obama was running for President in 2008, he campaigned heartily against the Iraq War and torture. Just four years later, that same man has insisted on approving every new name that is added to the “kill list.” In fact, Obama has [utilized](#) covert drone strikes five times more than former President Bush did. And while the use of drones has become a major component in the so-called “war on terror,” not every member of Congress is on board with the administration’s use of these aerial assault vehicles. Democratic Representative Dennis Kucinich (pictured, right of drone), along with 25 other members of Congress, recently submitted a critical letter to the White House demanding information on the use of drones.



The [letter](#), signed by 24 Democrats and 2 Republicans — including GOP presidential candidate Ron Paul (pictured, left of drone) — demands information on the authorization and use of drone strikes used by the CIA and Joint Special Operations Command. It asks about the “nature of the follow-up that is conducted when civilians are killed or injured ... and the mechanisms that ensure civilian casualty numbers are collected, tracked and analyzed.”

It continues, “The implications of the use of drones for our national security are profound. They are faceless ambassadors that cause civilian deaths, and are frequently the only direct contact with Americans that the targeted communities have. They can generate powerful and enduring anti-American sentiment.”

Significant concerns about drones were raised when White House counter-terrorism advisor John Brennan commented that their use is authorized “if we have a *high degree of confidence* that the individual being targeted is indeed the terrorist we are pursuing.” [Emphasis added.] For some, that standard was not good enough.

Those concerns were exacerbated when the *Washington Post* wrote that the CIA and Joint Special Operations Command were given permission “to fire on targets based solely on their intelligence ‘signatures’ — patterns of behavior that are detected through signals, intercepts, human sources and aerial surveillance, and that indicated presence of an important operative or plot against US interests.”

According to the letter to President Obama, “This new authority is in stark contrast to what your Administration has previously claimed regarding its drone campaign: that they are targeted strikes against suspected terrorists on lists maintained by the CIA and JSOC.”

The letter notes that drone strikes “could significantly increase risks of killing innocent civilians or those with no relationship to a potential attack on the US and further inflame anti-American sentiment abroad.”



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News reports reflect the heavy use of drones in the Middle East. On Wednesday, five militants in the North Waziristan tribal region were killed by a drone strike. Reports indicate that four missiles were fired, two of which hit their target.

On June 4, 15 militants were killed by a drone strike in North Waziristan.

The Obama administration has carried out nearly 250 covert drone strikes in just three years, five times more than the 44 approved under George W. Bush.

An article by the *New York Times* notes that there are suspicions surrounding Obama's use of drones:

... Mr. Obama has avoided the complications of detention by deciding, in effect, to take no prisoners alive. While scores of suspects have been killed under Mr. Obama, only one has been taken into American custody, and the president has balked at adding new prisoners to Guantanamo.

In other words, the Obama administration has found a way to circumvent habeas corpus in yet another stunning desecration of constitutional rights. The *Washington Post* opines, "The problem...is the assertion of a presidential prerogative that the administration can target for death people it decides are terrorists — even American citizens — anywhere in the world, at any time, on secret evidence with no review."

"Their policy is to take out high-value targets, versus capturing high-value targets," said Senator Saxby Chambliss of Georgia, the top Republican on the intelligence committee. "They are not going to advertise that, but that's what they are doing."

Recently, leaks of classified documents have shed some light on the use of drones, but rather than garnering harsh backlash over some of those counter-terror efforts that were exposed through the leaks, the information has only made lawmakers attack what they perceive to be intentional leaks by the Obama administration to bolster his image as a strong anti-terrorist leader. The unconstitutionality or immorality of drone use never entered the discussion.

Kucinich, Paul, and the 24 other signers of the letter are the exception.

Kucinich has been an outspoken critic of the Obama administration's handling of the war on terror. Following the assassination (by drone) of U.S. citizen Anwar al-Awlaki, believed to be working with al-Qaeda, Kucinich accused the Obama administration of [assaulting the Constitution. He argued,](#)

The idea that the United States has the ability to summarily execute a US citizen ought to send chills racing up and down the spines of every person of conscience. The fact that our government can set itself up as policeman, prosecutor, judge, jury and executioner, all wrapped into one fatal moment, should cause every person who loves this country to be deeply concerned about the direction we're going.

GOP presidential candidate Ron Paul has made similar assertions, calling the assassination of al-Awlaki an ["impeachable offense."](#)

Still, despite the various concerns raised by the use of drone technology in the war on terror, a February *Washington Post* poll found that 83 percent of Americans supported the use of drones "against terrorist suspects overseas."

Interestingly, a recent poll by Monmouth University Polling Institute found that the majority of Americans are [opposed](#) to the use of drones in issuing speeding tickets.

"Americans clearly support using drone technology in special circumstances, but they are a bit leery of



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more routine use by local law enforcement agencies,” poll director Patrick Murray observed.



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