

Obama Nominates 'Kill List' Architect as New CIA Chief

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No outsiders in this Criminal Organisation

At a White House ceremony on Monday afternoon, puppet President Obama officially nominated former Bush counterterrorism advisor John Brennan to be the next director of the CIA - a perfect appointment for a government criminal organisation with a license to kill, rob, terrorise, destabilise and import large quantities of illicit drugs.



In his assessment of the appointment, the Guardian's Glenn Greenwald [argues](#) that it should not be shocking that Brennan—who was withdrawn from consideration for CIA chief in 2008 because of his association with the CIA's torture program under President Bush—has now been brought back by President Obama in 2013.

Greenwald called Obama's nomination of Brennan a "symptom of Obama's own extremism [in the controversial areas of torture, targeted killings, and the US drone policy], not a cause."

Calling it a fitting choice, Greenwald said the decision

is a perfect illustration of the Obama legacy that a person who was untouchable as CIA chief in 2008 because of his support for Bush's most radical policies is not only Obama's choice for the same position now, but will encounter very little resistance. Within this change one finds one of the most significant aspects of the Obama presidency: his conversion of what were once highly contentious right-wing policies into harmonious dogma of the DC bipartisan consensus.

Earlier:

The Associated Press is reporting Monday morning that Obama's top counterterrorism advisor, John Brennan—who has also been Obama's right hand man when it comes to governing the administration's program of extrajudicial assassinations known as the 'kill list'—will now be nominated to head the CIA.

According to AP, the "president will announce Brennan's nomination during an event Monday afternoon."

Brennan was previously considered for the top CIA position by Obama at the beginning of his presidency in 2009, but that consideration was withdrawn after voices of opposition raised substantial concern about Brennan's involvement with the CIA's torture program which flourished during the presidency of George W. Bush.

Among those concerned were military psychologists and civilian opponents of the torture program who penned an open letter at the time calling on the newly-elected Obama to reject Brennan from consideration. They [wrote](#):

Mr. Brennan served as a high official in George Tenet's CIA and supported Tenet's policies, including "enhanced interrogations" as well as "renditions" to torturing countries. According to his own statements, Mr. Brennan was a supporter of the "dark side" policies, wishing only to have some legal justification supplied in order to protect CIA operatives. [...]

The use of these tactics goes against the moral fiber of our country and is never justified. This is true whether these "enhanced interrogation" techniques are used directly by U.S. forces, as in the CIA's "black sites," or by other countries acting as our surrogates, as in the "renditions" program where individuals are taken to countries practicing torture, resulting in suffering inflicted by that country's forces. [...]

In order to restore American credibility and the rule of law, our country needs a clear and decisive repudiation of the "dark side" at this crucial turning point in our history. We need officials to clearly and without ambivalence assert the rule of law. Mr. Brennan is not an appropriate choice to lead us in this direction. The country cannot afford to have him as director of our most important intelligence agencies.

Though Brennan was taken out of consideration for the CIA position, months later he was appointed by Obama to be his chief counterterrorism advisor, where he was instrumental in developing what has become known as the 'disposition matrix' or 'kill list' program following reporting that emerged in the Washington Post in 2012.

In a public speech in 2012, Brennan defended the Obama administration's drone program, but was met with protest by CodePink's Medea Benjamin, who challenged the legitimacy and legality of the program that Brennan is largely viewed as running:

As Common Dreams reported in May of last year, Brennan also used his position in the White House to "seize the lead" in secretly determining who would die in the increasingly aggressive US assassination program overseas.

US officials with firsthand knowledge of how the government determines who gets put on the CIA and Pentagon's lists for 'targeted killing' have confessed concern over the implications and nature of the process. In conversations with the Associated Press, one official involved -- who spoke with assurances of anonymity -- said that some of those carrying out the policy have become leery of "how easy it has become to kill someone," under the rules established under the Obama administration and orchestrated by Obama's top counter-terrorism adviser, John Brennan.

Brennan, who last month offered the first public admission by a White House official of the existence of the clandestine drone assassination program in places like Pakistan and Yemen, has amassed unique powers by consolidating the decision-making process to a select and tightly-controlled group of people, according to AP's reporting.

"Under the new plan, Brennan's staff compiles the potential target list and runs the names past agencies such as the State Department at a weekly White House meeting," the report cites officials as describing. "Previously, targets were first discussed in meetings run by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen at the time, with Brennan being just one of the voices in the debate. Brennan ultimately would make the case to the president, but a larger number of officials would end up drawn into the discussion."

Many critics of the secretive program have called for its end, but even attempts for more transparency or simply a legal justification by the White House for the extrajudicial attacks—some of which have seen the assassination of US citizens living abroad—have been rebuffed by officials or scuttled by recent court action.

"Anyone who thought U.S. targeted killing outside of armed conflict was a narrow, emergency-based exception to the requirement of due process before a death sentence is being proven conclusively wrong," said Hina Shamsi, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's National Security Project, following details of the program presented in the Washington Post series. "The danger of dispensing with due process is obvious because without it, we cannot be assured that the people in the government's death database truly present a concrete, imminent threat to the country. What we do know is that tragic mistakes have been made, hundreds of civilian bystanders have died, and our government has even killed a 16-year-old U.S. citizen without acknowledging let alone explaining his death. A bureaucratized paramilitary killing program that targets people far from any battlefield is not just unlawful, it will create more enemies than it kills."

Despite those concerns, John Brennan—the chief architect of the program—if nominated by Obama and approved by the Senate, is about to get a significant promotion.

John Brennan as Obama's Dick Cheney

For additional perspective on the nomination, Amy Goodman interviewed EmptyWheel's Marcy Wheeler on Democracy Now! Monday.

Wheeler, who has written extensively on Brennan's role in some of the government's most controversial programs in recent years, [noted](#) that in addition to his support for torture and the assassination under the last two presidents, Obama's pick should be of heightened concern due to Brennan's propensity for "lying" to the public and making gross misrepresentations of key issues.

Citing several examples, Wheeler told listeners that "when John Brennan says something, you shouldn't necessarily believe John Brennan."

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