



"Thought Crime" And The NSA: British Detain Anti-Drone Activist

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It came some twenty-five years after the malignant society described in George Orwell's *1984*, but the concept of "thought crime" and its expression in speech, is alive and well at least in the highest echelons of the Anglo-American intelligence community.

Glenn Greenwald's latest article in *The Guardian* takes the detention by British authorities of well-known Yemeni anti-drone activist Baraa Shiban as the point of departure for new revelations provided from the NSA by Eric Snowden.

Shiban, *The Guardian* reported on Sept. 24, had "visited the UK without incident earlier this summer and testified in May to a US congressional hearing on the impact of the covert drone programme in Yemen," but was detained at a British airport on Sept. 23 on his way to a Chatham House conference, and questioned for an hour and a half about "his views on human rights abuses in Yemen," according to Shiban. He was held, the paper reported, under the same provision under which Greenwald's partner had been detained last month, Schedule 7 to Britain's Terrorism Act 2000.

Greenwald now reveals in today's column, that "Top secret US government documents obtained by the Guardian from NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden characterize even the most basic political and legal opposition to drone attacks as part of 'propaganda campaigns' from America's 'adversaries'." He elaborates, "The entry is part of a top secret internal US government website, similar in appearance to the online Wikipedia site," which Snowden characterized in a June interview as containing entries by individuals "with top secret clearance and public key infrastructure certificates", special access cards enabling unique access to certain parts of NSA systems. "He added that the entries are "peer reviewed" and that every edit made is recorded by user."

Greenwald continues, "One specific entry discusses 'threats to unmanned aerial vehicles.' It lists various dangers to American drones, including 'air defense threats,' 'jamming of UAV sensor systems,' 'terrestrial weather,' and 'electronic warfare employed against the command and control system.' But alongside those more obvious, conventional threats are what the entry describes as '*propaganda campaigns that target UAV use.*'"

One such example is entitled 'Nationality of Target vs. Due Process.' It states: 'Attacks against American and European persons who have become violent extremists are often criticized by propagandists, arguing that lethal action against these individuals deprives

them of due process."

Greenwald notes that precisely this argument has been made by the ACLU and Center for Constitutional Rights, among others, regarding the drone killings of U.S. citizens in Yemen such as the al-Awlakis. His article, citing remarks of senior American counterterrorism officials and others attacking criticisms of the drone program, draws the larger conclusion that "such themes are pervasive in national security agencies of the US government, where at least some officials view drone opponents as propagandists and adversaries of the United States."

It should be recalled that the heart of the federal lawsuit against an aspect of the National Defense Act's indefinite detention by the U.S. military was the assertion by plaintiffs Christopher Hedges and other journalists and political activists, that their First Amendment activities (e.g., in Hedges's case, meeting with and writing about Hamas) might cause them to be subject to military detention without trial as "providing support to terrorism." The Government throughout the case said this has not happened, and pooh-pooed the idea that this could ever happen.

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