

JOHN BRENNAN'S REVIEW OF HOW HE KILLED AN AMERICAN TEENAGER

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Jeremy Scahill's book, *Dirty Wars*, comes out tomorrow. I'm sure I'll have more to say about it over the next few weeks.

But for now, he's got an adaptation at the *Nation* that describes a Senior Administration Official involved in drone targeting, who would have left sometime between October 14, 2011 and now (so, maybe Petraeus, Panetta, Clinton, or Vietor?? Update: Or Jeh Johnson?), claiming that the strike was all a mistake, launched in response to apparently crappy intelligence from Ali Abdullah Saleh's government (or possibly the Saudis?) claiming that senior AQAP leader Ibrahim al-Banna was present, alone.

A former senior official in the Obama administration told me that after Abdulrahman's killing, the president was "surprised and upset and wanted an explanation." The former official, who worked on the targeted killing program, said that according to intelligence and Special Operations officials, the target of the strike was al-Banna, the AQAP propagandist. "We had no idea the kid was there. We were told al-Banna was alone," the former official told me. Once it became clear that the teenager had been killed, he added, military and intelligence officials asserted, "It was a mistake, a bad mistake."

The now-former SAO goes on to describe how pissed the Moral Rectitude Drone Assassination Czar John Brennan was about the strike, because he believed Abdulrahman was deliberately set up

to be killed (though Scahill's source doesn't appear to specify whom Brennan thought was setting up an American teenager for death, JSOC, Yemeni partners, or the Saudis).

However, John Brennan, at the time President Obama's senior adviser on counterterrorism and homeland security, "suspected that the kid had been killed intentionally and ordered a review. I don't know what happened with the review."

So Brennan sets up a review ... that apparently got stashed in the same black hole as every other report on drone killing.

Because the whole thing is embarrassing.

Brennan, who is now director of the CIA, recently answered an inquiry from the Senate Intelligence Committee on such after-strike reviews. When civilians are killed, Brennan said, "we not only take account of the human tragedy, but we also go back and review our actions." Analysts "draw on a large body of information—human intelligence, signals intelligence, media reports, and surveillance footage—to help us make an informed determination about whether civilians were in fact killed or injured," Brennan asserted in his written response. "In those rare instances in which civilians have been killed, after-action reviews have been conducted." No such review of Abdulrahman's killing has ever been made public.

The consensus that has emerged from various anonymous officials commenting on Abdulrahman's killing was that it was a mistake. I asked the former senior administration official why, if that was the case, the White House didn't publicly acknowledge it. "We killed

three US citizens in a very short period," he told me. "Two of them weren't even targets: Samir Khan and Abdulrahman Awlaki. That doesn't look good. It's embarrassing."

Recall, when JSOC killed almost an entire Bedouin clan in al-Majala, David Petraeus claimed that only the alleged targets immediate family had been killed, well after people had been to the site to document the carnage. Immediately after Abdulrahman's death, the Administration immediately, almost boisterously, claimed the boy was 21, either based on crappy intelligence or in an attempt to justify a "military aged male" claim.

This is why it is so important to declassify the documents on targeted killing. Even according to the Moral Rectitude Drone Assassination Czar, this kid was set up.

He just won't tell us by whom.