Congressman Vance McAllister: June 6, 2014

America has been fighting the official war on terrorism for well over a decade, and it has been a little over three years since the al-Awlaki incident in which Anwar al-Awlaki was targeted and neutralized by a President-ordered drone strike. The al-Awlaki case was particularly complex because of al-Awlaki’s American citizenship. Nonetheless, many citizens spoke out against the attack, arguing that al-Awlaki’s citizenship entitled him to a fair trial by a jury of his peers. However, al-Awlaki’s actions reflect his rejection his citizenship the accompanying rights.

We support the decision made by the Obama administration to use the drones to neutralize al-Awlaki for the sake of national security, but in the future there are points that need to be considered regarding the morality and ethics of drone strikes. As Americans, we believe in the idea of universal equality and human rights, but in reality many in this country embrace the idea of equality and human rights only as it applies to American citizens. In the “Declaration of Independence,” the Preamble states,“… all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights…” This means that one of the documents on which this country is founded recognizes that *all* humans—not just American citizens—have rights simply by virtue of existing. Those who speak out against the al-Awlaki situation simply on the grounds of his citizenship seem to ignore this foundational belief.

The first right that is acknowledged by our “Declaration of Independence” is the right to life; by occasionally sacrificing some liberties in order to maintain safety, we can better ensure that more liberties are saved than are sacrificed. We agree to the use of drones to obliterate terror in general for the simple idea that when it comes down to liberty verses safety, safety fosters liberty. One cannot enjoy the perks of liberty if they are not alive so that they can pursue them. Drones eliminate international threats to our safety while minimizing innocent causalities. Because our safety is personal, we value it above other’s safety the vast majority of the time. Drone strikes, therefore, are a worthwhile sacrifice in most Americans’ opinions. While it may not be ethical to value some lives above others, because of our species’ selfish nature, we tend to choose to protect ourselves before other people. Essentially, the ethical center of drone strikes lie within the assumption that conflict is inevitable, that war is a certainty, and that loss of life is guaranteed. If we view war simply as a “numbers game,” then drone strikes eliminate threats while reducing civilian casualties.

As long as conflict and war remain a part of global political policy, drone strikes are an essential portion of our national defensive strategy. Ideally, this technology allows us to respect humanity’s inherent right to life while protecting the liberty of as many people as possible by carefully sacrificing those who are actively trying to eliminate those rights and liberties.

Sincerely,

The Snark Sharks