**Cyber Discovery Camp**

**June 2015**

**Thursday night assignment**

**Drone technology**

In March 2013 the *New York Times* reported that a secret Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) drone program was responsible for the 2011 targeted killing of a suspected terrorist, Anwar al-Awlaki, in the Middle Eastern country of Yemen. The U.S. government alleged that Al-Awlaki was a high-ranking leader of the terrorist network al Qaeda in the region and was responsible, according to CIA intelligence, for recruiting and training al Qaeda operatives and for organizing and ordering attacks against U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. The CIA had gathered intelligence on al-Awlaki and tracked his movements for years, concluding by 2011 that he posed a significant threat to U.S. national security. In September 2011 President Barack Obama gave the CIA the order to launch a drone attack on a vehicle in Yemen carrying al-Awlaki.

Drone attacks have become common since 2008. This particular attack quickly caused controversy, however, because the *New York Times* reported that al-Awlaki was a U.S. citizen, having been born in New Mexico in 1971 and having spent much of his life in the United States. Also killed in the attack was al-Awlaki’s 16-year-old son, who, according to the *New York Times*, was not suspected of any crime or anti-American activity. Controversy quickly followed the publication of the article. Critics claimed that the Obama administration violated al-Awlaki’s constitutional rights, that as a U.S. citizen he was entitled to due process under U.S. law, which grants each U.S. citizen the right to defend himself before a jury of peers. The Obama administration illegally acted as judge, jury, and executioner in this case, critics said. The administration responded by claiming that al-Awlaki presented an imminent danger to U.S. national security and therefore was an “enemy combatant” who could be treated as a threat just as any other soldier on a battlefield.

Your task is to write to one of Louisiana’s senators, Bill Cassidy or David Vitter, about the al-Awlaki case. Do you think the senator should support the president’s national security policy? Or do you think the senator should call for an investigation into the legality of the president’s decision? Alternatively, do you have recommendations for the senator to pass along to national security officials for ways in which the U.S. government’s drone policy might better reflect its legal system or ethical values?

Your letter should be approximately 500 words. (Please ensure that your letter contains no information that might be used to identify you or your school.)