It has become common knowledge that Barack Obama has ordered the assassination of an American citizen, Anwar al-Aulaqi. Without trial or other judicial proceedings, the administration has simply put him on the to-be-killed list.*

Whistleblowers in the military leaked a video showing U.S. troops firing on an unarmed party of Iraqis in 2007, including two children. As ugly as this video of the women, victims of a family “honor killing,” but the Afghan government accepts the eyewitness reports that U.S. Special Forces killed the men, (a police officer and lawyer) and the women, and then dug their own bullets out of the women’s bodies to destroy evidence. Top U.S. military officials have now admitted that U.S. soldiers killed the family in their house.

Just weeks earlier, a story broken in Harper’s by Scott Horton carried news that three supposed suicides of detainees in Guantánamo in 2006 were not suicides, but possible homicides carried out by American personnel. This passed almost without comment.**

In some respects this is worse than Bush. First, because Obama has claimed the right to assassinate American citizens whom he suspects of “terrorism,” merely on the grounds of his own suspicion or that of the CIA, something Bush never claimed publicly. Second, Obama says that the government can detain you indefinitely, even if you have been exonerated in a trial, and he has publicly floated the idea of “preventive detention.” Third, the Obama Administration, in expanding the use of unmanned drone attacks, argues that the U.S. has the authority under international law to use such lethal force and extrajudicial killing in countries with which it is not at war.

Such measures by Bush were widely considered by liberals and progressives to be outrages and were roundly, and correctly, protested. But those acts which may have been construed (wishfully or not) as anomalies under the Bush regime have now been conscripted into “standard operating procedure” by Obama, who claims, as did Bush, executive privilege and state secrecy in defending the crime of aggressive war.

Unsurprisingly the Obama administration has refused to prosecute any members of the Bush regime who are responsible for war crimes, including some who admitted to waterboarding and other forms of torture, thereby making their actions acceptable for him or any future president.

The Pentagon acknowledged, after denials, a massacre near the city of Gardez, Afghanistan, on February 12, 2010. Five people were killed, including two pregnant women, leaving 16 children motherless. The U.S. military first said the two men killed were insurgents, and the women, victims of a family “honor killing,” but the Afghan government accepts the eyewitness reports that U.S. Special Forces killed the men, (a police officer and lawyer) and

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Ethan McCord, dissident Army veteran of the unit that killed 12 Iraqi civilians shown in Collateral Murder.
Pardiss Kebriaei, staff Attorney for the Center for Constitutional Rights: The Case Against Targeted Assassinations by the U.S.
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