

By Debra Sweet

In May 2013, Obama finally acknowledged the U.S. military targeted killing program, and said he would explain how people are chosen to be killed. But it still took an ACLU lawsuit to get the material made public. As if it's all a game, the administration refers to the guidelines as a "playbook."

[The Intercept reports](#), "The guidelines show the process is concentrated at the White House, specifically in the National Security Council. They also describe the process for approving so-called **signature strikes, where the target of the strike is not a known 'high value terrorist,' but rather some other 'terrorist target,' which could be a group of people exhibiting suspect behavior, or a vehicle, building or other infrastructure.**"

We already knew most of this, but still...they get together and decide who to kill from a distance. We know thousands have been killed, including people who were never part of the fight, but made victims because of where they live.

[Brian Terrell](#), of Voices for Creative Non-Violence, who has done his share of jail and prison time for protesting the US drone war, responded to the playbook with:

"In 1960, Adolf Eichmann was asked under interrogation by the Israeli police if he had "acquired the view that the salvation of the German people depended on the extermination of the Jews," Eichmann replied, "We didn't have such opinions, we just didn't. Commands were given, and because they were commands, we obeyed..." Israeli police: "But not if you're ordered to do something blatantly illegal?" Eichmann: "You say illegal."

Today I have a very different view of things...But then? I wouldn't have considered any of those actions illegal... If anyone had asked me about it up until May 8, 1945, the end of the war, I'd have said: This government was elected by a majority of the German people...every civilized country on earth had its diplomatic mission. Who is a little man like me to trouble his head about it?

I get orders from my superior and I look neither right nor left. That's not my job.

My job is to obey and comply." (quotes from *Eichmann Interrogated: Transcripts from the Archives of the Israeli Police* DeCopo Books, NY, 1999)

The trials at Nuremberg successfully prosecuted German officials for crimes

that did not exist on the books when they were committed. My understanding is that the court's rationale was that some acts are just so heinous that there is no need for a statute to define them as illegal. In any case, since the end of WWII, there are the Nuremberg decisions, the UN Charter, the Geneva Convention of 1949, that all put Obama's drone wars clearly in the category of crimes.

Of course, every regime declares itself "legal." Bush and Cheney had lawyers who could layout a legal rationale for the attack on Iraq and even for torture, just as Clinton had hired legal experts to justify the sanctions on Iraq and the "no-fly zones", against all evidence that they constituted a war crimes. Saddam also had lawyers who could prove that Kuwait was legally a province of Iraq and that his invasion was justified as a "liberation" **and there are lawyers employed by Israel who insist that the West Bank settlements and the blockade of Gaza are legal.**

It means nothing that any administration judges its own actions as legal, especially when no one else seems to agree. (author's emphasis).