

Hillary Clinton signed off on drone assassinations, emails reveal

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In his online endorsement of Hillary Clinton to succeed him in the White House, President Obama declared that she was more qualified than any previous candidate for the presidency. A report Friday in the *Wall Street Journal* indicates that these “qualifications” include personal participation in approving drone-missile assassinations.

Clinton’s role in the chain of command leading to the incineration of thousands of people in Pakistan, most of them innocent civilians, is one of the secrets concealed in the long-running investigation of her use of a private email server while Secretary of State in the Obama administration.

The *Wall Street Journal* article reports that in 2011 and 2012, after a series of internal disputes between the CIA and the State Department over how drone missile strikes in Pakistan were complicating US diplomatic relations with the government in Islamabad, the State Department was given the right to veto missile strikes if their timing was considered especially provocative to the Pakistani government.

The US Ambassador to Pakistan, Cameron Munter, or another official at the embassy, would be informed of drone strikes in advance by the CIA, and would then consult with the State Department, going up the line all the way to Secretary of State Clinton, about whether to formally “concur” or “non-concur” in the action.

According to the *Journal*, such communications would normally pass through the internal State Department communications system, with Clinton given oral briefing and responding in the same way. However, there were some instances, usually when officials were on vacation or during holiday periods, or when the high-security system was too cumbersome and an immediate reply was needed, when an aide would send Clinton an email about an impending strike,

for her response.

The *Journal* wrote: “The vaguely worded messages didn’t mention the ‘CIA,’ ‘drones’ or details about the militant targets, officials said.”

These emails are apparently among those now considered top-secret by the intelligence agencies, although they were not so classified by the State Department at the time. As the *Journal* noted, “The CIA drone campaign, though widely reported in Pakistan, is treated as secret by the U.S. government. Under strict U.S. classification rules, U.S. officials have been barred from discussing strikes publicly and even privately outside of secure communications systems.”

Significantly, the *Journal*, whose editorial page is ferociously hostile to Clinton and treats her use of a private email server as a major criminal offense, reported that “Several law-enforcement officials said they don’t expect any criminal charges to be filed as a result of the investigation, although a final review of the evidence will be made only after an expected FBI interview with Mrs. Clinton this summer.”

It has been clear for more than a year that the email controversy is being driven by sections of the military-intelligence apparatus allied to the Republican Party and seeking an even harder line in US foreign policy than that pursued by the Obama-Clinton administration. A series of leaks has kept the issue before the public to undermine Clinton’s political standing and, potentially, sabotage her campaign entirely.

What is remarkable about the latest revelation is that it does link Clinton directly to criminal activity, only not in the sense long alleged by her right-wing political opponents. The criminal activity is her personal participation in the campaign of drone-missile assassination, conducted by the CIA and Pentagon at

the direction of President Obama, in complete violation of international law.

The *Wall Street Journal* account indicates that State Department opposition to specific drone missile strikes was related entirely to problems of timing—a mass incineration coming on the eve of sensitive US-Pakistani talks or the visit of a top US official to Islamabad—and did not represent any objection to the program itself.

The newspaper reported, “Only once or twice during Mrs. Clinton’s tenure at State did U.S. diplomats object to a planned CIA strike, according to congressional and law-enforcement officials familiar with the emails.”

As for the CIA’s concerns about secrecy—now given voice by Republican officials, from congressional representatives on up to Donald Trump—the *Journal* account concedes that the drone missile program was widely publicized in Pakistan.

“Despite being treated as top secret by the CIA, the drone program has long been in the public domain in Pakistan,” the newspaper noted. “Television stations there go live with reports of each strike, undermining U.S. efforts to foster goodwill and cooperation against militants through billions of dollars in American aid.”

The language is priceless. According to this leading US newspaper, it was not the missile strikes themselves, spreading death and destruction, but the television reports about them, that were causing a political backlash in Pakistan.

As for the insistence on secrecy, this had a clear political motive. The CIA and Pentagon wished to keep the missile assassination program secret, not from the Pakistani population, who could see the toll in men, women and children incinerated and maimed, but from the American people, who were not to be allowed to know what the government of the United States was doing, allegedly in their name.



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