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## Obama's Re-Election Means Fourth Term of Bush Terrorism Policies

By MALOU INNOCENT

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For all his talk about spreading democracy and liberty, President George W. Bush has come to be associated with policies of indefinite detention, coercive interrogation, and warrantless wiretapping. But unlike President Bush, it is doubtful that President Barack Obama will be remembered for his assertions of unchecked executive power. That's dangerous. Here's why.

In his 2006 book, *The Audacity of Hope*, then-Illinois Sen. Barack Obama wrote: "When we detain suspects indefinitely without trial, we weaken our ability to pressure human rights and the rule of law in despotic regimes." As president, however, Obama signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act, which permits the military to detain indefinitely without charge not only foreign terror suspects on American soil, but also American citizens.

[See a collection of political cartoons on the Middle East.]

After Obama signed the bill, senior officials were quick to tell ABC News, "The president strongly believes that to detain American citizens in military custody infinitely without trial, would be a break with our traditions and values as a nation, and wants to make sure that any type of authorization coming from congress, complies with our Constitution, our rules of war and any applicable laws."

Of course, the National Defense Authorization Act speaks for itself. Regardless of whether the president agreed with everything in the bill, its provisions illustrate why Obama's policies—at least on national security and counterterrorism—are closer to Bush's than Americans are led to believe.

Another example is the Obama administration's drone program, over which the president has asserted a prominent role in managing individual strikes. Drones have become a valuable tool of U.S. counterterrorism policy and have significantly destroyed al Qaeda's senior leadership. Yet, drone strikes have generated enormous turmoil in the regions in which they are launched and have undoubtedly killed an untold number of innocent civilians.

Both adverse consequences have the potential to expand the anti-American sentiment from which terrorism breeds. The gravity of that problem becomes easier to comprehend when one considers that some groups of people that Washington targets for death only bear characteristics associated with terrorism—their identities may not be known. Perhaps unwittingly, CIA deputy director Steve Kappes captured this problem best: "Mr. President, we can see that there are a lot of military-age males down there, men associated with terrorist activity, but we don't always know who they are."

On the one hand, Obama openly rejected Bush's "with us or against us" approach to foreign affairs. On the other hand, Obama's sophisticated demeanor opened him to criticism, with hawks condemning him as too weak and easily manipulated by America's enemies. Sadly, in the process, Obama's counterterrorism policies like indefinite detention and targeted strikes have become not only entrenched, but largely ignored