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Option 1: Continue to Use Drones Whenever Needed

The terrorist attacks of September 11 were planned in the hidden corners of Afghanistan by people beyond the reach of the United States government. We knew that they were planning to attack us, but we could not reach them to stop them. Since then, we have developed drones that hunt down our enemies and kill them, wherever they may be hiding. There are plenty of extremists loose in the world who want to do us harm. We know how they behave and where they hide. We cannot wait for final and absolute proof of their guilt; we must continue our “signature strikes” that target those whose patterns of behavior match those of terrorists. Drones are effective; they help protect the United States from its enemies. No one, not even U.S. citizens, can be allowed to believe that they are beyond our reach. We must not hesitate to use drones wherever they are needed in the world. These programs must remain secret and in the hands of the CIA. The president should continue to have the sole authority to order these attacks.

What should the United States do?

1. Keep the drone program secret and in the hands of the CIA.
2. Continue to use drones to target and kill terrorist suspects.
3. Allow the president the discretion to decide who is a target. Public debate over the drone program will only help those who seek to harm us.

Arguments for Option 1

1. This secret program has been effective at devastating al Qaeda and weakening our enemies without putting our soldiers or intelligence officers in harm’s way.
2. The program is only possible because it is a secret. Putting it in military hands would make these killings impossible for foreign governments, who only allow them on their territory because they are secret.
3. The program has eliminated many dangerous terrorists whom we had little or no hope of ever capturing.

Option 2: Use Drones Under Strict Limitations

Drones have been used to kill terrorist suspects for more than ten years. The program is effective. It has killed dangerous people who threatened U.S. interests, but the program's secrecy has also created problems. There needs to be more accountability for the decisions that are made, decisions which apparently now rest solely in the hands of the president. The Constitution did not intend for the president to have this unchecked power. Ultimately drones that carry weapons should be controlled by the military and not the CIA. The CIA's secrecy prevents accountability and public discussion by government officials. Once the programs are in the hands of the military, our elected officials can have these debates. There are also complaints and concerns from U.S. citizens and people around the world about how the United States decides who is a target of a drone strike. For example, what are the standards behind "signature strikes," in which the drones attack people who behave like militants, rather than proven terrorists? The Constitution protects the right U.S. citizens to a trial by jury. The killing of U.S. citizens by secret drone programs should be stopped until there are standards that are debated and clear to all.

What should the United States do?

1. Put the drone program in the hands of the military.
2. Reduce the secrecy of the program and force public officials to be accountable for their decisions.
3. Explain to the public the limits of the program and under what conditions the drone program might expand or end.

Arguments for Option 2

1. The program is effective and should be continued in some form.
2. There needs to be greater transparency so that it is understood by the public and officials can be held accountable.
3. The decision to kill enemy combatants including U.S citizens needs to be subject to the checks on power provided by the U.S. Constitution.

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Option 3: End Targeted Killings

The use of drones to kill suspected terrorists should be stopped. These killings should be called what they are: assassinations. It is illegal for the CIA to assassinate anyone, anywhere. It is illegal for the president of the United States to order the killings, most especially of U.S. citizens. The drones kill innocent bystanders and build resentment and hatred against the United States. Many of the CIA's strikes, called "signature strikes," kill people who fit a pattern of extremist behavior, rather than killing specific, known terrorists. The secrecy of the program means that no one can be held accountable for these decisions. U.S. citizens have been targeted and killed by drones. This is a dangerous precedent made more dangerous because of its secrecy. U.S. citizens assumed to have committed a crime have a Constitutional right to a trial. In this secret environment, the government's power can grow and grow. We have devastated al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Osama bin Laden is dead. We can safely end the drone program now and return to adhering to the Constitutional limits of power. Otherwise, we run the risk of being in a permanent state of war and having fewer and fewer rights.

What should the United States do?

1. End the use of drones to kill suspected terrorists.
2. Seek alternative methods to capture or thwart terrorists.
3. Demand that the president and all of the government do not exceed the limits imposed by the U.S. Constitution.

Arguments for Option 3

1. We will be following our own laws.
2. Today, we are safer than we were immediately after September 11. It is time to stop acting like we are at war.
3. We will decrease resentment of the United States, which led to the terrorism of September 11 in the first place.