

# The Disposition Matrix

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## §1

“I’ve got a visual on Dormer!” the CIA Director announced, “He just hijacked a red F-150 and is proceeding south on Highway 188, towards Tecate, Mexico.”

President George Barack turned towards General Brown, “Kill him! With the Reaper!”

“Sir, if I may...” General Brown demurred, “Our current rules of engagement only authorize surveillance of the subject. We can only notify California authorities now.”

“Don’t tell me what I can and can’t do!!!” the president shouted, slamming his fist down on his desk in the Oval Office, “we’ve already got – what’s-his-name – the Los Angeles police chief saying that it is domestic terrorism. What was it he said?”

“Charlie Beck,” an aide informed the president, “he said, ‘This is an act, and make no mistake about it, of domestic terrorism.’”

“Good enough for me,” said the president, “If its terrorism, then we can kill the bastard. That’s all we needed when we whacked Anwar al-Awlaki. Right?”

“Yes,...” General Brown agreed hesitantly, “but al-Awlaki was in Yemen. Dormer would be the first hit we’ve carried out in America.”

“He’s not in America anymore,” noted the CIA Director, without looking up, “Mexico now.”

“Send it!” General Brown spoke into his cell phone, and the Reaper pilot, sitting at a desk in Virginia, pushed a button and killed a man two thousand miles away.

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### §2

“I understand that Dormer was a violent man and was too well-armed to attempt an arrest, but the last few we did weren’t really all that dangerous. And now this man...” General Brown’s voice trailed off.

“If he isn’t plotting something, then why is he hiding from us?”

General Brown had to make a conscious effort not to roll his eyes. “Just because you can’t find someone doesn’t mean that they are actively evading you.”

“But you know where he is now?”

“Yes sir. He’s living in the back of his van, in this forest just outside of Flagstaff, Arizona,” said the general, pointing to a map, “This is, apparently, what he’s been doing for most of his life: Living in a rusty old van, driving around the country and stopping at libraries and internet cafes to post inflammatory messages on Facebook about gun control. He doesn’t believe in it.”

“And he’s armed, right?”

“We know that, in 1992, he purchased an SKS rifle and a thousand rounds of ammunition for it. Whether he has purchased any other weapons since then, we do not know.”

“I say we kill him!” the president exclaimed, “It will send a message to all the other gun nuts out there. We can’t have them posting shit like this on the internet!”

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The lights in the Oval Office dimmed and an aide projected a screen shot of Mr. Pratt's Facebook page onto the wall. His latest post was pictures of Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot and President George Barack side by side with this caption: "The experts agree... gun control works!"

"He's comparing me to those guys!" the president stammered, "That's offensive!"

"Sir, with all due respect, is there any precedent for assassinating a man who has not actually committed a crime?"

"Absolutely! Anwar al-Awlaki never killed anybody with his own hand. But nobody complained when we whacked him for all that shit he posted on the internet. He was *talking* about killing Americans."

"And, being a U.S. citizen, the First Amendment didn't protect him when he posted these opinions – however nasty they might have been – on the internet?"

"Nah, he lost those rights when he moved to Yemen."

"We're not at war with Yemen and – I'm not a lawyer – but I don't think that living in another country revokes one's Constitutional Rights. Anyway, Mr. Pratt isn't in Yemen; he's in Flagstaff, Arizona."

"It doesn't matter! The same laws that apply to al-Awlaki apply to Pratt. I'm giving the order right now. Kill him!"

General Brown gulped, "Yes sir. We have MQ-9 Reapers patrolling the border. I can have one over the target in two hours."

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### §3

“Sir, Mr. Davidson of Paradise Travel is here to see you,” General Brown’s secretary announced over the intercom.

“Who?”

“Mr. Davidson is a travel agent. You made an appointment with him to discuss your plans to tour some of the possible locations for your retirement.”

The general shook his head. Davidson was the last person he wanted to talk to at the moment. Next month General Brown would be retiring from the military with twenty years of service; until a few months ago, planning for his retirement had been all he could think of. But the making of appointments with travel agents now seemed like something from the distant past.

“Enter.”

“Here is a château on the French Riviera,” Mr. Davidson said, setting some glossy photos on the general’s desk, “just under two million U.S. dollars – a steal!”

“How about Yalta? It’s beautiful there!” Mr. Davidson suggested, piling more glossy photos on the general’s desk, “And here we have some nice ocean-front property in the Bahamas.”

“You can go anywhere!” the travel agent enthused, but General Brown shook his head no.

“Where do you go,” he asked rhetorically, “when you’ve already gone too far?”

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### §4

“Who do we get to kill today?” the president started the Terror Tuesday meeting off, gleefully rubbing his hands together.

Without a word, the CIA director stepped forward and put a dossier on the president’s desk.

“What did this guy do?” asked the president, not even bothering to look at the dossier.

“He’s a big player in the Ukrainian mafia. We’ve been tracking him for some time now, unsuccessfully. But recently we tapped into his cell phone and learned that he has an appointment to get his hair cut tomorrow, here at Yuri’s Barbershop on Borysa Hrinchenka Street,” the CIA director asserted, pointing to a map of Kyiv, Ukraine.

“Kill the bastard!” the president ordered, “Damned Mafioso.”

“But...” General Brown stammered.

“What?” the president’s lip drew back in an ugly sneer, “You’re not going soft on me, are you?”

“No, no sir. It’s just that... I mean, blowing someone up as he steps out of a barber shop in downtown Kyiv; I just think that the Ukrainian people will see this as a violation of their sovereignty.”

“You said that blowing up that Mohammed guy in front of Buckingham Palace would cause a diplomatic row, but the Brits got over it – in spite of the Queen’s Guards being wounded by shrapnel. We’ve killed a dozen or so U.S. citizens now, right here on our own soil, and you

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didn't complain. But now you balk at whacking this mafia asshole? Fuck the Ukrainians! I can kill anybody, anywhere, anytime. I've got the power!" the president swore as he signed the Mafioso's death warrant, "Are there any more?"

"There is one," said General Brown, setting a dossier on the president's desk, "This man is an international assassin. He has killed over a hundred civilians worldwide, outside any theater of war, and all execution style... including thirteen Americans!"

"Thirteen Americans?" the president gasped, "Then let's kill the dirty bastard!!"

"Sir, before you make that decision, it is my duty to inform you that the subject is a natural-born U.S. citizen; and that the hit will take place here, in the continental United States."

"We've done CONUS hits before, no problem. Can we be sure that there won't be any collateral damage?"

"Yes sir. The subject will be attending a meeting to discuss assassination plots on Friday at 1500 hours. I can personally guarantee that everybody who will be within the missile's blast radius is directly involved in the international assassination ring."

"Then kill him!" the president ordered and, with a flourish of his pen, he signed the international assassin's death warrant, "Is that all?"

"Yes sir," General Brown said, bowing as he walked backwards, "I believe that is all."

No one else stepped forward to suggest a possible target, and the meeting was adjourned.

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### §5

“Sir! I respectfully request permission to file a flight plan for this MQ-9 Reaper, sir!”

The air traffic controller looked over the flight plan and was stunned to see that it would be flying in United States airspace. Then he saw the signature at the bottom and paled: President George Barack.

He went an even whiter shade of pale when he saw exactly where they were proposing to fly their drone.

“Are you sure about this? You will be flying directly through restricted air space.”

“Sir! Yes sir!” the drone pilot shouted out, ramrod straight, chest out, feet exactly side-by-side, “I checked and double-checked the flight plan. Sir!”

“Well, you better stay on course!” the air traffic controller warned, “I will clear a path for you, but there is restricted airspace all around you.”

“Sir! Yes sir! I will not vary from the plotted course by even one inch. Sir!”

The drone pilot did a crisp about-face and marched stiffly out of the air traffic control office as though he were on a parade ground.

“These kids,” the air traffic controller mused as he watched the pimple-faced youth leaving his office, “So gung-ho! Do they ever wonder who is down below, on the receiving end of their missiles?”

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### §6

President George Barack stood at the podium in the Rose Garden, a dozen military officers standing at attention behind him, all decked out in their dress uniforms, their chests covered with medals.

Had anybody been observing the officers, they might have noticed that General Brown cast a furtive glance towards the heavens and discreetly crossed himself. But all eyes were on the president. So handsome! So charismatic! He held the journalists – especially the female journalists – in the palm of his hand.

“It is my pleasure to announce that on Wednesday, by my direct order, a bad man – a *very* bad man – a big player in the Ukrainian mafia, was eliminated. Thanks to our efforts to right the wrongs here and everywhere in the world, this evil man’s reign of terror is over!”

“Ooohh!”

“Aaahh!”

“You’re such a man!” the journalists cooed, fawning over the president with the usual adulation displayed at these press conferences. The fact that there were now demonstrations against the United States in every Ukrainian city went unreported.

“Isn’t he dreamy?” gushed Crystal Ball, creaming her panties.

She had actually been a vehement critic of targeted killings during the previous administration, but had a ready reply:

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“So yeah, but I feel a whole lot better about the program when the decider, so to speak, is President George Barack.”

“And, as an added bonus,” the president went on, “I have also ordered the elimination of an international assassin! This evil man has killed over a hundred civilians worldwide, outside any theater of war, and all execution style... including thirteen Americans!

“Ooohh!” the journalists gasped.

“He is scheduled to die today at...” the president checked his wrist watch, “right about now.”

*BLAM!!!!*

The Hellfire missile plunged through the clouds and struck the president a thunderous blow, like a bolt from Above. There was a flash of light and body parts went flying in every direction... when the smoke cleared, there was nothing left of the Rose Garden but a crater.

No innocent lives were lost. Just as General Brown had promised, everybody within the missile’s blast radius was directly involved in the international assassination ring. And it was all perfectly legal: President George Barack had signed their death warrant with his own hand.

**THE END**

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