

The Final Round¹

Everett Rutan

ejrutan3@ctdebate.org

Connecticut Debate Association

Pomperaug High School

January 11, 2020

Resolved: The US should not target and kill foreign government officials.

A Note about the Notes

I've reproduced my flow chart for the Final Round at Pomperaug High School augmented by what I remember from the debate. The notes are limited by how quickly I could write and how well I heard what was said. I'm sure the debaters will read them and exclaim, "That's not what I said!" I apologize for any errors, but I hope debaters will appreciate this insight: what a judge hears may not be what they said or what they wish they had said.

There are two versions of the notes. The one below is chronological, reproducing each speech in the order in which the arguments were made. It shows how the debate was presented. The second is formatted to look more like my written flow chart, with each contention running across the page as the teams argued back and forth. It's close to the way I take notes during the debate.

The Final Round

The Final Round was between the Simsbury team of Harry VanDyke and Jack Pitblado on the Affirmative and the Amity team of Jack Tajmajer and Robert Farbman on the Negative. The debate was won by the Negative.

1) First Affirmative Constructive

- a) Introduction
- b) Statement of the Resolution
- c) Definitions
 - i) "targeted killing" is assassination or toppling of governments
 - ii) "governments" are those recognized by the UN
 - iii) "officials" are those elected or appointed
- d) A1²: Banning targeted killing holds US leaders accountable
 - i) Avoids excessive use of power
 - (1) E.g., killing of Qassem Suleimani led to increased tension with Iran and missile strikes
 - ii) Currently the executive has too much power to use force
- e) A2: Targeted killing creates instability

¹ Copyright 2020 Everett Rutan. This document may be freely copied for non-profit, educational purposes.

² "A1" indicates the Affirmative first contention, "N2" the Negative second contention and so forth.

- i) Killing officials creates a power vacuum
 - ii) This increases terrorism and opposition
 - (1) E.g., Iraq protests, gov't vote to ask us to leave
 - (2) E.g., US sending in more troops
 - f) A3: US is not the "world police"
 - i) US does not have the right to take these actions
 - ii) It's an abuse of military power
 - iii) US shouldn't act alone: we need allies
- 2) Cross-Ex of First Affirmative**
- a) Is targeted killing ever justified? Against terrorists, yes.
 - b) Doesn't this conflict with A3? Attack on Osama bin Laden was okay
 - c) With respect to A1, can't the President just override Congress? Executive must consult
 - d) How do you punish a President? Details are not Aff problem
 - e) Then how can you hold the President accountable? We would simply forbid this action
 - f) You'd remove the President from office? This isn't about impeachment
 - g) Are you against all war? No, there are just wars
- 3) First Negative Constructive**
- a) Intro
 - b) Resolution
 - c) Negative accepts the definitions
 - d) N1: Targeted killing is necessary to fight terrorism
 - i) Qassem Suleimani was responsible for over 600 US deaths, causing instability
 - ii) Killing fought terrorism; quick, non-invasion
 - e) N2: Targeted killing is needed for deterrence
 - i) US must be able to back up threats
 - ii) E.g., during the cold war nuclear weapons and threat of destruction kept peace with USSR
 - iii) Organizations like the UN exist due to US pressure
 - f) N3: Targeted killing is a necessary policy option
 - i) E.g., similar to nuclear weapons
 - ii) Provides an option useful in limited situations
 - iii) Geneva Convention permits retaliation
 - g) A1: Aff provides no means of enforcement
 - i) Presidents have ignored laws and avoided Congress in the past
 - h) A2: Aff harms are non-unique
 - i) The US has caused instability and opposition in other ways
 - ii) E.g., invasion of Iraq
- 4) Cross-Ex of First Negative**
- a) What was N3? Targeted killing is a valid option
 - b) Against Qassem Suleimani? Yes
 - c) What is the source of the "600 deaths"? I don't know
 - d) Is it reliable? Yes, it's in the packet
 - e) How can we trust US intelligence? You can't regard all US intelligence past and future to be incorrect

- f) How can you compare nukes and “mutually assured destruction” to assassination?
The concept of deterrence is the same
 - g) Why not let the UN decide? No solvency
- 5) Second Affirmative Constructive**
- a) Intro
 - b) Resolution
 - c) N1: Qassem Suleimani is the only example given by Neg
 - i) Attacks on ISIS and others were not on government officials
 - ii) Qassem Suelimani intelligence may not be accurate or reliable
 - (1) E.g., invasion of Iraq, Pentagon Papers re Vietnam war
 - iii) Iraq instability caused by US actions, led to Iran hostility
 - d) N2: Nukes are not a good analogy for assassination
 - i) Killing government officials causes a power vacuum
 - ii) Other countries don’t agree with our policy, e.g., UK
 - e) A1: US should put this weapon aside
 - i) Assassination should require approval by the international community
 - ii) UN should review the intelligence
 - f) A2: Iraq and Vietnam demonstrate that we cause instability by our actions
 - g) A3: We should not use “world police” excuse to push a US agenda
 - h) N3: Use of this option in the past has caused harm
- 6) Cross-Ex of Second Affirmative**
- a) What about Hitler during WWII? US had allies
 - b) Doesn’t assassination have the potential to kill our enemies? Yes
 - c) Did it destroy Iran? No. We removed their leader and it eventually led to instability and hostility to the US
 - d) Wasn’t that 40 years ago? Yes
 - e) Didn’t killing Qassem Suleimani harm Iran? He’s not the only leader
 - f) A senior government official? Yes, but look at the result
 - g) Can’t the US cause the same instability without using assassination? Then we’d be engaged in a war
- 7) Second Negative Constructive**
- a) We believe the 2nd Affirmative has conceded our case!
 - i) They agree assassination can be a useful tool in some cases
 - ii) They just want to put it under the control of the international community.
 - b) The evidence we cited from the packet comes from articles that appeared in The Guardian and The New York Times
 - i) Aff hasn’t cited articles or page numbers either
 - c) A1: Accountability will not increase
 - i) President’s will continue to overreach and impeachment has never been successful
 - d) A2: Iran’s response to our actions has been measured
 - i) No real negative consequences to Qassem Suleimani
 - ii) Instability is not a harm unique to targeted killing
 - iii) We are already at war in Iraq
 - e) A3: Expecting the UN to act is a false hope

- i) US national security and international security were threatened by Qassem Suleimani
 - ii) As hegemon we can't avoid responsibility for policing the world
- f) N1: Aff doesn't dispute that Qassem Suleimani was a terrorist
 - i) This example proves the Neg case
 - ii) We are retaliating for terrorist acts
- 8) Cross-Ex of Second Negative**
 - a) Didn't the missiles cause casualties? None were reported
 - b) Non-American casualties? None
 - c) What was the source used by the NYT and the Guardian? Don't know
 - d) What source used by the US? Don't know
 - e) Are you aware of Judith Miller? No
 - f) She reported on Iraq War only to find intelligence was incorrect? By the standard you are trying to propose, no intelligence would be valid
 - g) Killing Qassem Suleimani was an appropriate response? Yes
 - h) To an assassination by Iran? A US contractor was killed
 - i) Wasn't Qassem Suleimani revered in Iran? We didn't say that
 - j) Would it be okay for Iran to kill a US general in retaliation? No
- 9) First Negative Rebuttal**
 - a) Source of evidence that Qassem Suleimani supported terrorism?
 - i) Not all intelligence is unreliable
 - ii) Exact number of killings doesn't matter, it's likely there were some
 - iii) Not all news reports are unreliable
 - b) Example of killing Hitler?
 - i) We're not arguing over whether it would have been a good move, but whether it should have been allowed.
 - c) Aff side limits our ability to respond to terrorism
- 10) First Affirmative Rebuttal**
 - a) Resolution requires us to ban assassination by the US
 - i) Aff is in favor of giving control to an international coalition
 - ii) US cannot be trusted
 - b) US intelligence can't be trusted
 - i) It's not about news sources
 - ii) Examples include the Spanish-American War, Vietnam/Gulf of Tonkin Resolution/Pentagon Papers, Iraq War
 - c) War on Hitler was by a coalition
 - i) Reasons for Qassem Suleimani attack needed corroboration
- 11) Second Negative Rebuttal**
 - a) Coalition?
 - i) Any coalition would likely have US involvement and probably US leadership
 - ii) The Aff "plan" violates the resolution
 - b) Credibility?
 - i) Not all intelligence is wrong all the time
 - c) Morality?
 - i) Aff is defending terrorism
 - ii) The US has a moral obligation to the safety and security of US citizens

- d) Deterrence?
 - i) This point has been ignored by Aff
 - ii) Knowing assassination is possible is useful to support diplomacy and military operations
 - iii) Neg is not in favor of any assassination, but there are situations where it is necessary and useful
 - iv) Aff provides no deterrence, and has no means of limiting Executive Power

12) Second Affirmative Rebuttal

- a) Aff has been arguing for a coalition approach all night
 - i) This was not a new plan
 - ii) Neg arguments are straw men
 - iii) Hitler is an example
- b) There is no moral excuse for the US to be a police force
 - i) High GDP and a strong military do not justify these actions.
- c) The reliability of US intelligence speaks for itself
- d) Mutually Assured Destruction?
 - i) This is not the same as nuclear weapons
 - ii) Iraq demonstrates the flaws in this policy
- e) Reciprocity?
 - i) More US soldiers were targeted after Qassem Suleimani