

# Does Obama's CIA Nominee John Brennan Know Morality?

By [Ray McGovern](#) and [Scott McDonald](#)

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*Image: White House counterterrorism adviser John Brennan, who is President Barack Obama's nominee to be CIA director.*

*Sen. Barbara Mikulski and other defenders of CIA Director-nominee John Brennan say they are reassured by his Jesuit education at Fordham that he must be well-grounded in moral philosophy. But two Fordham alumni, Scott McDonald and Ray McGovern, disagree in this open letter to Mikulski.*

From: Scott McDonald and Ray McGovern

To: Senator Barbara Mikulski of Maryland

Subject: Misplaced Trust in "Values" of John Brennan

Dear Senator Mikulski:

During John Brennan's confirmation hearing before the Senate Intelligence Committee on February 7, you expressed yourself as being reassured by his values and Jesuit education, suggesting you may intend to vote to approve his nomination to be Director of the CIA. We believe your trust in Mr. Brennan is misplaced.



Despite the fact that Mr. Brennan holds a degree from Fordham College, a Jesuit college and our Alma Mater, we contend that he has failed to live the mission that is compelled by his education, his Alma Mater, and his religion. In no way is he a man "for and with others."

To live up to the Jesuit mission, to be a man or woman "for others," is to stand on the side of the oppressed in opposition to structures of oppression and violence. Mr. Brennan, a man who has built a career designing, implementing, and defending such structures, can more

aply be described as a “man for extrajudicial assassinations,” “a man for torture and rendering,” or “a man for government secrecy and deception.”

During your brief questioning of Mr. Brennan, you suggested that his Jesuit education, along with what you believe to be his values, inclined him to “speak truth to power, to speak truth about power.” While a sound Jesuit education calls one not only to be honest, but also to challenge unjust power structures, Mr. Brennan has a record of anything but honesty, having repeatedly lied about the CIA drone campaign, including whether or not it even existed, and the number of civilian deaths it has caused.

Mr. Brennan has served as the Administration’s mouthpiece in deceiving the American people and Congress about a program of extrajudicial killings, including the targeting and killing of American citizens.

Mr. Brennan has defended the use of torture by the United States, as well as the U.S. secret prison system throughout the world. He has also openly endorsed the United States’ rendition policies, which effectively circumvent due process and *habeas corpus* and outsource America’s torture regime to client states.

Senator Mikulski, you and 20 other Democratic Senators, were able to see through the “intelligence” that deceived most of your colleagues into voting in October 2002 to authorize war on Iraq — intelligence later described by Senate Intelligence Committee chair Jay Rockefeller as “unsubstantiated, contradicted, or even non-existent.”

Your expressed inclination to trust Mr. Brennan leads us to conclude that you have not performed due diligence in looking into his role, as right-hand-man to then-Director George Tenet, in that consequential intelligence fraud. You voted to approve the bipartisan Intelligence Committee report of June 2008 that prompted those devastating remarks by Sen. Rockefeller. And so, we assume you are aware that that “intelligence” was not “mistaken” - as many still claim - but, rather, fraudulent.

As fellow graduates of Fordham College, who try to live out the mission of our education, we feel it is our duty to voice serious concern and opposition not only to the nomination of Mr. Brennan as Director of the CIA, but to Mr. Brennan’s repeated use of his Jesuit education and his warped understanding of Augustine’s “just war theory” to try to justify the unjustifiable, and to serve as a shield of Jesuit morality around the Administration and the CIA’s immoral and unlawful policies abroad. We find this abuse of Jesuit moral and ethical training offensive.

Mr. Brennan should be challenged to reconcile his education with his professional conduct. Reviewing his record, we find it highly doubtful that the two can be reconciled. We therefore urge you, as a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, to vote against confirming him as CIA Director.

Sincerely,

Scott McDonald, B.S. *summa cum laude* (Phi Beta Kappa), 2012, Fordham  
Ray McGovern, B.A. *summa cum laude* (Phi Beta Kappa), 1961, Fordham

*Scott McDonald graduated from Fordham College in 2012 with a B.S. in Physics and a minor*

*in Mathematics. He plans to enroll in law school this fall and eventually pursue a career practicing law in the public interest.*

*Ray McGovern graduated from Fordham College in 1961 with a B.A. in Russian. He served as a CIA analyst for 27 years and now works with "Tell the Word" at the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington.*

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