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# Obama signs controversial defense bill

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US President Barack Obama has put pen to paper on a \$662 billion defense bill despite serious reservations from critics over the proposed handling of terror suspects. The bill also brought into effect a new round of strict sanctions against Iran.

Some provisions of the bill raise serious concerns among human rights advocates, who argue that they could allow indefinite detention and interrogation of any American citizen suspected to be linked to terrorism.

They say it would deny US citizens legal rights protected by the Constitution.

After the bill was approved by Congress in December, Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch said: "By signing this defense spending bill, President Obama will go down in history as the president who enshrined indefinite detention without trial in US law."

Indeed, President Obama himself has expressed worries about the very legislation he has signed, saying he does not agree with all of it.

"The fact that I support this bill as a whole does not mean I agree with everything in it," he said in Hawaii, where he is spending his vacation.

"I have signed this bill despite having serious reservations with certain provisions that regulate the detention, interrogation and prosecution of suspected terrorists."

Initially the White House threatened to veto the legislation but then pulled back after Congress made last-minute revisions.

Supporters of the legislation have said it codifies current arrangements such as the indefinite detention of terror suspects held at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

Obama also brought into force the latest round of tough sanctions against Iran, targeting its Central Bank in an effort to block Tehran's ability to fund its nuclear enrichment program.

The new sanctions could make it almost impossible for most refiners to buy crude from Iran, whose economy is mostly dependent on its oil exports.

Author and radio host Stephen Lendman told RT the move may lead to a US war against Iran.

"Obama is imperial. He is going for one county in the Middle East after another. His policy is ravaging the world," he claimed.

Lendman says that should the war against Iran start, the entire region could be enflamed. "Russia and China have strategic interests in the region. They may get involved to protect them."

He believes the real targets for the United States are Russia, because of its military strength, and China, because of its growing economic strength:

"We are talking about the clash of the Titans. Sooner or later that clash is coming," he concluded.

*Post-scriptum :*

<http://rt.com/news/obama-signs-defense-bill-087/>

1 January, 2012.