

“DEAR JOHN BRENNAN: YOU’RE BEING INVESTIGATED”

A number of people have pointed to Scott Shane’s story on the leak witch hunt for the details it gives on the increasing concern about leak witch hunts among journalists and national security experts.

But this paragraph includes the most interesting news in the article.

The F.B.I. appears to be focused on recent media disclosures on American cyberattacks on Iran, a terrorist plot in Yemen that was foiled by a double agent and the so-called “kill list” of terrorist suspects approved for drone strikes, some of those interviewed have told colleagues. The reports, which set off a furor in Congress, were published by The New York Times, The Associated Press, Newsweek and other outlets, as well as in recent books by reporters for Newsweek and The Times. [my emphasis]

That’s because prior reporting had indicated that the Kill List stories were not being investigated.

Recent revelations about clandestine U.S. drone campaigns against al Qaeda and other militants are not part of two major leak investigations being conducted by federal prosecutors, sources familiar with the inquiries said.

[snip]

The CIA has not filed a “crime report” with the Justice Department over reports about Obama’s drone policy and a U.S. “kill list” of targeted militants, an action which often would trigger an

official leak investigation, two sources familiar with the matter said. They

So Shane's revelation that the Kill List stories are being investigated amounts to the author of one of the Kill List stories reporting that some people who have been interviewed by the FBI told colleagues they got asked about the Kill List. Which might go something like, "Scott, they're asking about your story, too."

All without Shane acknowledging that Shane wrote one of the main Kill List Shiny Object stories.

Meanwhile, I find his reference to the outlets involved very interesting. Using the principle of parallelism, the passage seems to suggest the FBI is investigating the NYT for David Sanger's sources on StuxNet, the AP for Adam Goldman and Matt Apuzzo's sources on the UndieBomb 2.0 plot, and Newsweek for Daniel Klaidman's sources on the Kill List. But of course the NYT also wrote a Kill List story, the AP wrote what is probably the most interesting Kill List story (which reported that the Kill List is now run by John Brennan). "And other outlets." Which might include ABC for revealing that the UndieBomb 2.0 plotter was actually an infiltrator (ABC got the story indirectly from John Brennan, though Richard Clarke). Or the WaPo for Greg Miller's original story on drone targeting, revealing that we were going to use signature strikes in Yemen. Or the WSJ, reporting that we had started using signature strikes.

In other words, it presents a rather interesting group of potential stories and sources.

Now I don't know that John Brennan was the source for all this or that he's really being investigated. I'm not saying Shane is being manipulative by reporting on this (though seriously, it's another example of the NYT having a reporter report on a story that he is really a part of).

But I do find it rather interesting that a reporter targeted in this leak witch hunt just

made news about the scope of the leak witch
hunt.