

DID JOHN BRENNAN CREATE THE LOOPHOLES CIA USED TO HELP SPY ON NEW YORKERS?

There's one question I haven't seen anyone ask but which seems utterly critical to John Brennan's fitness to be CIA Director.

Back when the AP was first exposing how the CIA set up a spying program for the NYPD, they asked John Brennan about it. He professed to be "intimately familiar" with the program.

President Barack Obama's homeland security adviser, John Brennan, who was the deputy executive director the CIA when the NYPD intelligence programs began, said he was intimately familiar with the CIA-NYPD partnership. He said that agency knew what the rules were and did not cross any lines.

As the program got more attention last year, Brennan even went to NYC to personally give the domestic spying program his seal of approval.

The White House added its stamp of approval a month later when President Obama's top counterterrorism adviser John Brennan visited police headquarters.

"I have full confidence that the NYPD is doing things consistent with the law, and it's something that again has been responsible for keeping this city safe over the past decade," he said.

Remember, this program is offensive not just because it spies on so many Americans and in such incompetent fashion. It's offensive because it involved the CIA in training NY Police Officers in CIA spy techniques.

These operations have benefited from unprecedented help from the CIA, a partnership that has blurred the line between foreign and domestic spying.

[snip]

David Cohen arrived at the New York Police Department in January 2002, just weeks after the last fires had been extinguished at the debris field that had been the twin towers. A retired 35-year veteran of the CIA, Cohen became the police department's first civilian intelligence chief.

Cohen had an exceptional career at the CIA, rising to lead both the agency's analytical and operational divisions. He also was an extraordinarily divisive figure, a man whose sharp tongue and supreme confidence in his own abilities gave him a reputation as arrogant.

Cohen's tenure as head of CIA operations, the nation's top spy, was so contentious that in 1997, The New York Times editorial page took the unusual step of calling for his ouster.

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Among Cohen's earliest moves at the NYPD was making a request of his old colleagues at CIA headquarters in Langley, Va. He needed someone to help build this new operation, someone with experience and clout and, most important, someone who had access to the latest intelligence so the NYPD wouldn't have to rely on the FBI to dole out information.

CIA Director George Tenet responded by tapping Larry Sanchez, a respected veteran who had served as a CIA official inside the United Nations. Often, when the CIA places someone on temporary assignment, the other agency picks up the tab. In this case, three former

intelligence officials said, Tenet kept Sanchez on the CIA payroll.

When he arrived in New York in March 2002, Sanchez had offices at both the NYPD and the CIA's station in New York, one former official said. Sanchez interviewed police officers for newly defined intelligence jobs. He guided and mentored officers, schooling them in the art of gathering information. He also directed their efforts, another said.

There had never been an arrangement like it, and some senior CIA officials soon began questioning whether Tenet was allowing Sanchez to operate on both sides of the wall that's supposed to keep the CIA out of the domestic intelligence business.

[snip]

The informant division was so important to the NYPD that Cohen persuaded his former colleagues to train a detective, Steve Pinkall, at the CIA's training center at the Farm. Pinkall, who had an intelligence background as a Marine, was given an unusual temporary assignment at CIA headquarters, officials said. He took the field tradecraft course alongside future CIA spies then returned to New York to run investigations.

Even some people within CIA considered this arrangement a violation of the prohibition on CIA involvement in domestic spying. It was, at best, a big loophole the government used to use CIA methods and trainers to spy on New Yorkers.

Siobhan Gorman describes Brennan's role during the period when this loophole was set up as one "focused on administrative and workforce issues," precisely the kind of person who would orchestrate putting a CIA officer in the NYPD and an NYPD officer in CIA training.

Mind you, back in 2011, the CIA's Inspector General (not DOJ) did a month-long investigation and declared that CIA-on-the-Hudson didn't violate the letter of the law because CIA officers weren't the ones on the streets spying on Americans.

But that doesn't change that the arrangement is just a big loophole to use NYPD's multiethnic officers to conduct CIA-like infiltrations in NY's Muslim, Arab, and South Asian communities.

And it seems very likely that John Brennan—the guy who wants to be CIA Director—created that loophole.

Are we about to rubber stamp a guy who has already violated the spirit of the prohibition on CIA domestic spying to take over the CIA? Would Brennan—who has been expanding spying on Americans under Obama, too—just blow away the prohibition on spying on Americans once and for all?