RIYADH STATION CHIEF OPERATED DRONE WAR FROM AND FOR HIS OLD STOMPING GROUNDS

While the existence of a Saudi drone base has been reported before, the WaPo confirms tonight that the drone strike that took out Anwar al-Awlaki was launched, in part, from the base that no one has before liked to report on.

> The only strike intentionally targeting a U.S. citizen, a 2011 attack that killed al-Qaeda operative Anwar al-Awlaki, was carried out in part by CIA drones flown from a secret base in Saudi Arabia.
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> The base was established two years ago to intensify the hunt against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, as the affiliate in Yemen is known. Brennan, who previously served as the CIA's station chief in Saudi Arabia, played a key role in negotiations with Riyadh over locating an agency drone base inside the kingdom.
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> The Washington Post had refrained from disclosing the location at the request of the administration, which cited concern that exposing the facility would undermine operations against an al-Qaeda affiliate regarded as the network's most potent threat to the United States, as well as potentially damaging counterterrorism collaboration with Saudi Arabia.
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> A CIA spokesperson informed The Post on Tuesday night that another news organization was planning to reveal the location of the base, effectively ending an informal arrangement among several news organizations that had been aware

> of the location for more than a year.

Couple that with Daniel Klaidman's confirmation of something else that was obvious: John Brennan authorized signature strikes for use in Yemen's civil war based on the personal entreaties of his old buddies (Klaidman says it was the Yemenis, but the more obvious candidate is the Saudis).

> The military wanted to conduct broad-based signature strikes in the country. But Obama was worried about getting embroiled in a domestic conflict—and he and Brennan said no.
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> [snip]
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> Then, in the spring of 2012, with Yemen falling into chaos and AQAP gaining more and more territory, Yemeni officials—with whom Brennan had close ties going back to his days as a CIA station chief in the region—beseeched Brennan to help. The Yemeni Army was collapsing under the brutal assault; soldiers were being crucified and beheaded by the jihadis. By April 2012, Brennan and Obama finally relented and permitted signature strikes in the country.
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> Those who defend this decision point out that it would have been a catastrophe for U.S. security if significant parts of the country had fallen to AQAP, which was intent on attacking the American homeland. Yet some inside the administration were critical. Says one senior administration official of Brennan's history in Yemen: "He responded to the personal appeals because he has a long history with these guys." In other words: Brennan's lawyerly preference for rules and constraints may sometimes have taken a backseat to emotion.

How about this? Rather than holding a confirmation hearing for Brennan on Thursday, maybe we should just debate how much we will demand to rent out the entire CIA to the Saudis to do with as they wish?

None of this is surprising. Some dirty fucking hippie reported it in real time.