

BRENNAN CEDES TO FEINSTEIN ON TORTURE TAPE DESTROYER BUT “DEFIANT” ON TORTURE REPORT

The WaPo reports that the woman who helped Jose Rodriguez destroy the torture tapes will not – as had been floated – officially lead the Clandestine Services.

A female CIA officer who was the first woman to lead the agency’s clandestine service, but was also closely tied to the agency’s interrogation program, will not get to keep that job as part of a management shake-up announced Tuesday by CIA Director John O. Brennan, U.S. officials said.

The report (sourced to “US officials,” which can be code for members of Congress or staffers) emphasizes that the intervention of members of Congress – and Dianne Feinstein specifically – played in key role in persuading John Brennan such an appointment would be a problem.

But the woman, who remains under cover, faced opposition from senior lawmakers over her ties to an interrogation program that critics have said employed torture to get information from al-Qaeda captives after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

[snip]

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), the chairwoman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, had called Brennan to express concern over the possibility that someone so closely linked to the program would be put in position to lead the

agency's spying service.

Kudos to DiFi for what appears to be successful oversight.

The only problem is the same article notes that Brennan is preparing to blow off DiFi's torture report.

The transition comes at a time when the agency is assembling what is said to be a defiant response to a recently completed report by the Senate Intelligence Committee that is sharply critical of the interrogation program and its results.

As I have noted in the past and elaborated on at Salon yesterday, Brennan's "defiance" should not matter. Ultimately, the White House has the authority to release the report.

But it's trying to dodge the issue.

And now, in spite of Panetta's claims that the White House originally made torture a SAP, the White House has done nothing to accelerate the release of a report that – according to Democrats on the committee and John McCain – will correct many misconceptions about the torture program.

Of course, as president, Obama would have the authority to order John Brennan to declassify the report in any case. But the White House seems unwilling to acknowledge whether it possesses the sole authority over this decision. In response to a question whether – as Panetta's statement indicates – the White House has classification authority over the program, NSC spokesperson Caitlin Hayden didn't answer.

Instead, she used the same kind of stalling technique as the CIA:

The Administration is currently reviewing the full 6,000 page report at the invitation of the SSCI and we look forward to working with the Committee once that review is complete.

I suspect the White House will use Brennan's "defiance" as cover for keeping the report hidden.

What Brennan does in personnel decisions that remain hidden won't get the CIA out of the torture business. Only real transparency on it will.

Update: The Cable published the entire letter announcing the personnel changes at CIA. It ends with this claim about the woman passed over at Clandestine Services.

The assertion she was not chosen because of her affiliation with the CT mission is absolutely not true.

I guess for the CIA, destroying evidence of torture is considered "the [counterterrorism] mission."