

JOHN BRENNAN: “GONE NATIVE,” OR ALWAYS ALREADY NATIVE?

In a piece laying out how, rather than shift drone strikes to DOD (as much of the press credulously claimed John Brennan planned to do while he was still in the White House), the Executive will instead merge CIA and DOD operations more closely, Greg Miller includes this line.

One senior administration official said Brennan had “gone native” since moving into the director’s office on the CIA’s seventh floor.

Gone native! “The horror! The horror!”

To rebut that claim, some anonymous sources close to Mr. Kurt – um, I mean Mr. Brennan – suggest Brennan never intended to hand over all of the drone program to DOD.

U.S. officials close to Brennan disputed that characterization, saying he remains committed to the White House goal. But they acknowledged that there is still no timetable for reaching it, and that Brennan never envisioned a complete CIA withdrawal from the drone program.

When Brennan speaks of “traditional” military activities, he “is referring to the military conducting lethal ‘finishing’ operations, i.e. ‘dropping ordnance,’ ” the intelligence official said, meaning the agency would remain involved in tracking terrorist groups and identifying targets even if it ultimately surrenders its authority to execute strikes.

And in fact, those anonymous sources are correct, as anyone who actually read

closely what Brennan said in his confirmation testimony would know. While a bunch of credulous reporters parroted what was surely the impression Brennan chose to create at the time – that he intended to take CIA out of the drone and paramilitary business – he always distinguished what he considered CIA's well-established (think OSS) paramilitary role from "traditional military activities."

And now we're learning that by the latter – TMA – Mr. Kurtz only meant pressing the button.

What a surprise. To the DC press corps, but not to Emptywheel readers.

You see, the evidence suggests Brennan was always "native," the entire time he was in the White House. Perhaps the Senior Administration Officials only now discovering he "went native" decades ago might reconsider the policies he convinced them to believe were their own?