

PANETTA'S THREATS

I'm trying to find it, but some weeks back, there was a report of Rahm and Leon Panetta having a very contentious very public meal in DC. Which is what I assume this passage from the ABC story reporting (again) that Panetta may be on his way out at CIA refers to.

According to intelligence officials, Panetta erupted in a tirade last month during a meeting with a senior White House staff member. Panetta was reportedly upset over plans by Attorney General Eric Holder to open a criminal investigation of allegations that CIA officers broke the law in carrying out certain interrogation techniques that President Obama has termed "torture."

Assuming that the senior staffer was Rahm (always a good guess when tirades are involved), what does that say about the rest of the article (aside from the fact that the description of Panetta using "salty language" without reporting that it was probably a two-way flood of "fucks" suggests some bias)?

The article itself reports three kinds of complaints Panetta has regarding his position:

- The imminent appointment of a prosecutor to investigate torture and dealing with the Democrats in the House
- Panetta's subordinate position with respect to Dennis Blair
- Panetta's discomfort with "with some of the operations being carried out by the CIA that he did not know about until he took the job"

Of note, those are unlike things. Panetta's frustration with the torture investigation and his former colleagues is undoubtedly related. But his pique at being bureaucratically bested by Blair is completely different. And the discomfort about ongoing operations—suggesting he's less willing to push the limits than the "former top US intelligence official" reporting this complaint is another kind of problem altogether.

In other words, it's unclear from the reporting whether Panetta's complaining because he has been too protective of CIA, of his own turf, or of the law.

Now add that range of complaints in with some of the guarantees from those who might be passing on mere observations or might be attempts to create the reality it claims to observe. In particular, I'm particularly intrigued by the report that one of the runners-up to Panetta in getting the position is already being briefed to take over appearing in the same article citing a former high ranking intelligence officer.

"Leon will be leaving," predicted a former top U.S. intelligence official, citing the conflict with Blair.

[snip]

Six other current and former senior intelligence officials said they too had been briefed about Panetta's frustrations in the job, including dealing with his former Democratic colleagues in the House of Representatives.

One of the officials said the White House had begun informal discussions with candidates who were runners-up to Panetta in the CIA director selection process last year.

One of the candidates reportedly has begun a series of preparatory briefings.

Is the guy predicting Panetta's demise the guy getting briefings in preparation for consideration for the job? And is that guy someone like John Brennan?

Someone (perhaps, but not necessarily in addition to the Blackwater-related people pissed at Panetta for briefing Blackwater's role to Congress) is out to get Panetta. It's unclear precisely why they're out to get him.