

OBAMA APPOINTS FOX TO EVALUATE TERROR WATCHLIST HENHOUSE

✘ Barack Obama, doing his best to make Dick Cheney's questions about leadership look rational, has assigned John Brennan to conduct the Administration's ballyhooed investigation into the claimed failure of the terrorist watchlist program in the Christmas Fruit Of The Loom Bomber incident.

What's wrong with this picture? Throw a dart in any direction and you will find something. Politico gives the unsettling details:

President Barack Obama promised a "thorough review" of the government's terrorist watch-list system after a Nigerian man reported to US government officials by his father to have radicalized and gone missing last month was allowed to board a Northwest Airlines flight to Detroit that he later tried to blow up without any additional security screening.

Yet the individual Obama has chosen to lead the review, White House counter-terrorism adviser John Brennan, served for 25 years in the CIA, helped design the current watch-list system and served as interim director of the National Counterterrorism Center, whose role is under review.

In the three years before joining the Obama administration, Brennan was president and CEO of The Analysis Corporation, an intelligence contracting firm that worked closely with the National Counterterrorism Center and other US government intelligence, law enforcement and homeland security agencies on developing terrorism watch-lists.

“Each and every day, TAC makes important contributions in the counterterrorism (CT) and national security realm by supporting national watchlisting activities as well as other CT requirements,” the company’s Web site states.

According to financial disclosures forms released by the White House, Brennan served as president and CEO of TAC from November 2005 until January 2009, when Obama named him to the White House terrorism and homeland security job. The disclosures show that Brennan reported earning a \$783,000 annual salary from the Analysis Corporation in 2008. ...

One former senior intelligence official told POLITICO it is “unsavory to see Obama put Brennan in charge of a review of this matter since it is possible that NCTC or TAC could have failed in their responsibilities.”

Oy. “Unsavory”? Ya think? This is akin to a law school final exam where you try to identify all the conflicts of interest in the given situation. But there is not enough time to hit them all. Do not fret, the crack White House ethics team has looked at Brennan and determined there are no conflicts at all. Which is pretty strong evidence that the White House ethical team might ought to be checked out for its own conflicts, if not sanity.

By virtue of his experience, John brings a unique mixture of know-how and understanding to this assignment,” said Denis McDonough, National Security Council chief of staff. “The applicable ethics rules recognize that when the public interest outweighs other issues, an official should be authorized to proceed with an assignment, particularly in the national security arena.

Well, that is reassuring. Or, you know, not so much. I can't wait for the New Year's Eve 4 pm news dump out of the White House. My prediction is Hank Paulson will be named Obama's point man to lead the investigation of the racketeering, fraud and conspiracy at Goldman Sachs McClatchy has been meticulously detailing.

You have to hand it to the Obama White House, they have the last administration beat hands down. Even Bush and Cheney didn't think to have Paul Wolfowitz lead an investigation into their Iraq war and occupation strategy.

(graphic courtesy of NC Jeff at SodaHead)

Update: this post originally attributed this Politico article to Josh Gerstein. Carol Lee and Laura Rozen were the lead reporters on the piece.