

PANETTA: WE DO NOT SHARE ANYTHING INAPPROPRIATE WITH ANYBODY ... EXCEPT OUR ASSETS' IDENTITIES

When Leon Panetta confirmed that Shakeel Afridi was working with the CIA when he used a vaccination program to collect intelligence on Osama bin Laden, he likely made it much harder for Pakistan to release the doctor, or even give him a light sentence. Had the Pakistanis gone easy on Afridi after that confirmation, it would have amounted to the government admitting it had ceded the government's sovereignty to the war on terror.

While I'm sure he had authorization to confirm the ties, there are a whole bunch of reasons it was stupid to do so (including the delegitimization of public health programs).

Panetta's own role in increasing the likelihood Afridi would face harsh punishment from Pakistan didn't prevent him from complaining about Afridi's fate on ABC's Sunday show, however, claiming he just couldn't understand why a country would punish one of its citizens working as a spy for an ally.

"It is so difficult to understand and it's so disturbing that they would sentence this doctor to 33 years for helping in the search for the most notorious terrorist in our times," Panetta told me in a "This Week" interview.

"This doctor was not working against Pakistan. He was working against al Qaeda," Panetta added. "And I hope that ultimately Pakistan understands that, because what they have done here ... does

not help in the effort to try to reestablish a relationship between the United States and Pakistan.”

I sort of wish Jake Tapper had asked Panetta if he’s ever heard of Jonathan Pollard, who we’ve imprisoned, thus far, for 25 years, for spying for an ally. Even more, I’m, um, disappointed that Tapper didn’t ask Panetta WTF he confirmed Afridi’s work for the US, particularly since Tapper himself commented on Panetta’s earlier comments this morning.

Panetta in January was first US official to on-the-record confirm the doctor’s help

More curious still, when Tapper asked Panetta why the Administration shared so much information with Hollywood about the Osama bin Laden raid—and Panetta claimed the Administration “do[es] not share anything inappropriate with anybody”—Tapper didn’t ask the obvious follow-up.

“Nothing inappropriate was shared with them, Jake. You know, we get inquiries everyday from the entertainment industry. We get inquiries from people writing articles, from people writing books, people doing television shows,” he said. “And the process that we’ve established is that you know, we will work with those individuals.”

The White House has come under fire from Homeland Security Committee Chairman Peter King. R-N.Y., who said Wednesday that the filmmakers, who worked together on “The Hurt Locker,” received “extremely close, unprecedented and potentially dangerous” assistance from the Obama administration. Panetta dismissed these claims.

“We’ll try to make sure that we give them accurate information so that the

historic record is protected. But you know, we do not share anything that is inappropriate with anybody," he said.

If the Administration believes it is appropriate to confirm the identities of our assets on national TV, then does it also believe—for example—that John Kiriakou appropriately (and allegedly) shared information on the identities of the people involved in our torture program?

Is it now the official stance of our Administration that sharing sources and methods on the Sunday shows is “appropriate”?

OK then.