

PRO-DRONE LEAKS FROM THE LEAK WITCH HUNT COMMITTEES

There are several interesting details in this story describing the claimed attention with which the Intelligence Committees oversee drone killing.

But let's start with the fact that it largely relies on anonymous staffers from the Intelligence Committees (as well as on-the-record comments Dianne Feinstein has made in other contexts, and two on-the-record quotes from Democratic Congressmen).

"You can see exactly what is going on," said a senior congressional aide, who, like other officials, spoke about the highly classified program on the condition he not be identified.

[snip]

"I don't know that we've ever seen anything that we thought was inappropriate," one senior staff member said.

Still, the drone program is under far more scrutiny than in the past, congressional officials say.

[snip]

Members of the oversight committees are limited in their ability to challenge the CIA's conclusions, a senior staff member cautioned. "I can watch video all day long – I'm not an imagery analyst," he said. "I can only look to see if the description reasonably concurs with what my untrained eyes are seeing."

This, in spite of the facts in the article—to say nothing of recent government court

filings—making it clear that the program is compartmented.

The lawmakers and aides with the intelligence oversight committees have a level of access shared only by President Obama, his top aides and a small number of CIA officials.

Of particular note, while the article makes clear that HPSCI senior policy advisor and Naval Reserve intelligence officer Tom Corcoran (who it describes as someone with real expertise in reviewing intelligence) did not comment for the article, it does not say whether two former Ag Committee staffers working for Saxby Chambliss on SSCI commented or not.

There's a lot else in this article deserving of attention: its silence about the oversight of JSOC strikes (which derives from the different oversight rules for the military), conflicting details about the Abu Yahya al Libi strike, the assumptions expressed about visual evidence and real knowledge.

But most of all, I find it notable that just weeks after these staffers' bosses have declared war on leaks, they're out there, leaking to spin their bosses' desired narrative that the bosses exercise adequate oversight over a controversial program.