

IS AMBASSADOR FEIERSTEIN DRAWING UP THE KILL LISTS IN YEMEN?

The question of why John Brennan seized control of drone targeting continues to gnaw on me. Which is why I find this attack piece on the US Ambassador to Yemen, Gerald Feierstein, to be so interesting.

You'll recall that one effect of the Brennan power grab was to have State consult directly with Brennan about who should be on the kill list, rather than have State work through DOD's teleconferences.

The process, which is about a month old, means Brennan's staff consults the Pentagon, the State Department and other agencies as to who should go on the list, making a previous military-run review process in place since 2009 less relevant, according to two current and three former U.S. officials aware of the evolution in how the government targets terrorists.

[snip]

Under the old Pentagon-run review, the first step was to gather evidence on a potential target. That person's case would be discussed over an interagency secure video teleconference, involving the National Counterterrorism Center and the State Department, among other agencies.

The article on Feierstein describes him being so central to decisions about how the country will be governed, Yemen has become a trusteeship.

The extent of American meddling was further highlighted by the publication

on local and foreign websites of leaked letters from the US ambassador to Yemeni Interior Minister Abdul Qadir Qahtan, instructing him to make certain security personnel changes, which he described as necessary to helping bring civil peace to the country. This leaves no room for doubt that Feierstein has assumed a de facto governing role in Yemen, pushing for progress but only in the manner that he deems appropriate, and which does not, of course, conflict with broader US policy in Yemen.

[snip]

Analyst Qaderi Ahmad Haidar says the country has indeed fallen under effective US trusteeship, and blames the Gulf Initiative and the mechanisms that were agreed to implement it. "It is a deplorable and lamentable picture we see today," he told *Al-Akhbar*. "We didn't expect the pure revolution of the Yemeni youth to end in this."

The US ambassador's pronouncements are incessant, and oblivious to the basic diplomatic norms that govern relations between two states. He is constantly making media appearances to discuss, explain and clarify aspects of Yemen's daily affairs, as though he were the country's undeclared president.

During the course of one recent appearance he said: "We are now in the second phase of the Gulf Initiative... I met with the president yesterday... We believe everyone should take part in the National Dialogue... President Obama has issued an executive order which enables us to punish individuals or groups who obstruct the implementation of the agreement (the Gulf Initiative)... We are working to restructure the army and security forces... We are pleased with what has been achieved so far... We are on

the right track.” The ambassador’s use of the first person when discussing Yemeni affairs strikes Muhammad Ayesh, editor of the independent newspaper *al-Awwali*, as telling. It serves to cast him not just as Yemen’s “governor,” but as a leader propelled by a transformative revolution into the country’s top position.

At least from several Yemeni perspectives, Feierstein is the one making all the decisions for the Yemenis. (He’s also reportedly pushing the Pentagon to sell armored vehicles to the Yemenis.) Couple that with the reports of Hillary’s centralization of CT funding under State.

In Yemen, in particular, some commando officers look upon the State Department’s expanding shadow-war powers as a bureaucratic intrusion on what should be military territory. A source tells Danger Room that in Yemen State has effectively hijacked all U.S. counter-terrorism funding, requiring a labyrinthine approval process for even small expenditures.

It’s clear State—whether Feierstein or Hillary or both—are driving a lot of what is happening in Yemen.

I’m just wondering whether that explains why NSC seized control of our drone war in April, to put it squarely in the hands of our “diplomats?”