

SO MUCH FOR DAVID PETRAEUS' ASPIRATIONS IN LIBYA

As I said earlier, the main gist of the Petraeus tapes—Roger Ailes' attempt to get him to run for President—is neither shocking nor all that interesting (though it is amusing).

But I can't help but laugh at the irony of this detail. As Petraeus tries to explain to a rather thick Kathleen MacFarland why he thinks the CIA Director job would be “a quite significantly meaningful position,” he talks about the Libya intervention. He starts that discussion by predicting that CIA will run much of what we do in Libya (remember, this conversation took place on April 16, 2011, just after the US ostensibly turned the Libyan war over to NATO, but six months before Qaddafi was killed).

Petraeus: Well, look, I mean, I can do math and reason, as well. But an awful lot of what we do in the future – believe it or not in Libya, right now, perhaps . . .

Q: Yeah.

Petraeus: . . . is what that organization can do.

He then tries to explain to MacFarland that the CIA is a national treasure (It takes Petraeus several times before he gets her to understand he's talking about the CIA, not Libya or covert ops generally).

Petraeus: Well, so we'll see what happens. Look, he gets to pick the chairman he wants, and the guy he's comfortable with. That's the deal. And if they're uncomfortable with a guy who they know will be heard, then okay, so be it. That's his choice.

Q: But you're looking at something like the other one as potentially where you make the difference in Libya.

Petraeus: I think you can make a huge difference. I think that's a national asset – I think it's a treasure.

Q: Libya?

Petraeus: No, I'm talking about the organization.

Q: Oh, you mean covert ops.

Petraeus: I think that organization is full of just, heroes. Unsung heroes, which is the way they want to be. And again, so . . .

He then makes a more interesting move (most of which she again misses). "We're not going to do much more," says the Neocon looking for more countries to overthrow, but we "did Libya."

Q: And I agree with you. With the Arab Spring, you lose or you win it on covert . . .

Petraeus: If you look at . . . we're not going to go out, do much more, I don't think – I mean, I was surprised we did Libya.

Q: Oh, that was insane.

And so if we're only going to overthrow countries via covert means rather than hot wars, it means DOD's budgets will be cut.

Petraeus: I mean, we've got . . . so if that's the extent of what we're going to do, we're going to be retrenching militarily.

Petraeus: Again, you're going to take big budget cuts, and it's going to be all about . . . it's going to be the post-, sort of the early 1990s kind of

stuff.

And what's the fun of being a top General during a time of budget cuts, after all?

But if DOD's budget is getting cut, it will mean CIA's budget will grow (this time it takes Petraeus four tries to get this through to her; really, does Fox pay this woman? She's an "analyst"?).

Q: Yeah. It'll be the "peace dividend" after Iraq, and after Afghanistan, it'll be the peace dividend. Libya is a little bit of a screw-up on that.

Petraeus: Yeah. Yeah. But on the other hand, the other folks – on the other hand – I think are going to be in a growth industry.

Q: You mean Obamacare . . .

Petraeus: No, intelligence.

Q: Oh, the bad guys?

Petraeus: Yeah, the intelligence community, I think, is going to be . . .

Q: The bad guys, or our – you mean our intelligence community?

Petraeus: Our intelligence community. Going to have to be. I mean, there's so much going on.

Effectively, David Petraeus was explaining his MOAR DRONZ policy to MacFarland before he even accepted the CIA job.

But he was also justifying the CIA job by noting that Libya would be where we "do" things, the next Muslim country to "do."

David Petraeus wanted the CIA job because that's where he could "do" what he had claimed to "do" in Iraq and was failing to "do" in Afghanistan. The next place to win glory, the shores of Tripoli.

A pity he fucked that up, eh?

I mean, while everyone swears up and down that the Benghazi attack had nothing to do with Petraeus' departure, because his departure coincided with the assessment of what happened in Benghazi, it has elicited an assessment of Benghazi in conjunction with Petraeus' two earlier "victories." That comparison suggests that in fact, the glorious General may have failed three times at the important work of training local militias.

Moreover, while CIA appears to still own the next "do"—Syria—the fuck-ups in Benghazi now serve as an excuse to put DOD in charge of CIA's job.

Not only that, but commentators are asking whether we really want CIA in charge of these "dos"—at least the paramilitary side of it—after all.

Petraeus was right that intelligence was the growth industry. But that was premised on the continued success of the Libyan adventure. And the last thing that happened while Petraeus had the "quite significantly meaningful position" of running Libya is that CIA failed in its central HUMINT mission, much less the work of keeping safe the State figures who provided cover for the CIA folks "doing" Libya.

It seems Petraeus looked forward to (or at least claimed to look forward to) the CIA job as a "quite significantly meaningful" place to cap his career. But just before he diddled himself out of office, the Petraeus-led CIA had a significant setback in that work.