

CIA DIRECTOR PETRAEUS' TRADITIONAL MILITARY OPERATIONS

One of Brennan's answers to Additional Prehearing questions I didn't gloss the other day is this one:

Question 8: What are your views on what some have described as the increased "militarization" of the CIA mission following September 11, 2001 attacks?

In my view, the CIA is the Nation's premier "intelligence" agency, and needs to remain so. While CIA needs to maintain a paramilitary capability to be able to carry out covert action as directed by the President, the CIA should not be used, in my view, to carry out traditional military activities.

[snip]

Do you envision the CIA becoming more or less "militarized" in its mission, should you be confirmed?

The evolution of foreign threats will determine how the CIA adjusts its intelligence activities in the future. If I were to become the Director, I would plan to carry out CIA's crucial missions, including collecting foreign intelligence, providing all-source analysis, conducting robust counterintelligence, and carrying out covert actions as directed by the President. If confirmed, I would not be the Director of a CIA that carries out missions that should be carried out by the U.S. military.

Brennan brought up the issue again in response

to a question (which was prefaced by a totally inappropriate bid to his Jesuit training) from Barbara Mikulski.

At the beginning of her questioning, Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) noted dryly that she had been “jerked around” by every CIA director she’d known as a legislator, with the exception of Leon Panetta. Brennan assured her “truthfulness is a value that was inculcated in me in my home in New Jersey.” But when Mikulski brought up about the CIA’s increasing role in paramilitary operations, describing that as “mission creep” and asking whether Brennan would steer the Agency back towards its more traditional intelligence-gathering role, Brennan said only that he would “take a look at the allocation of that mission,” before saying that the CIA “should not be involved in traditional military activities.” But Mikulski was talking about paramilitary activities such as drone strikes. No one actually accused the CIA of engaging in “traditional military activities.”

Clearly, Brennan is making a distinction between paramilitary actions he insists (contrary to the many claims he’d get out of the business) are a central part of CIA’s mandate and traditional military operations.

To some degree, he seems to be saying he will not abide by putting himself in the chain-of-command to give a JSOC op a legally pretty face.

But I couldn’t help thinking about Brennan’s answers as I read this WaPo article. While the article never comes out and says it, what it describes is Obama’s decision – taken at precisely the moment when Petraeus ousted, ostensibly for a consensual affair – to abandon an approach put in place by the retired general.

President Obama is unlikely to shift his stance against the expansion of a U.S. role in Syria's civil war, despite a death toll topping 60,000 and acknowledgment that key members of his national security staff favored a plan first proposed in June to arm the Syrian rebels.

U.S. officials said that the issue was shelved in October after an extended "red team" analysis by the CIA concluded that the limited-range weaponry the administration was comfortable providing would not have "tipped the scales" for the opposition.

Syrian opposition forces already had sufficient quantities of light weaponry from other outside sources and raids of government depots, the analysis determined. The question of providing shoulder-launched missiles to shoot down government aircraft, officials said, was never considered.

It remained unclear whether senior officials who backed the plan, first proposed during the summer by then-CIA director David H. Petraeus, were comfortable with President Obama's decision not to move ahead with it.

The article makes it clear the driving force behind this decision is a desire to avoid providing weapons that could be used against Israel or even the US.

In the case of the mobile surface-to-air missiles, called MANPADS, one official said, "We wouldn't even consider it, because God forbid they would be used against an Israeli aircraft."

[snip]

White House press secretary Jay Carney stressed the administration's caution

Friday. "We have had to be very careful," he said. "We don't want any weapons to fall into the wrong hands and potentially further endanger the Syrian people, our ally Israel or the United States. We also need to make sure that any support we are providing actually makes a difference in pressuring [Syrian President Bashar al-]Assad."

[snip]

Clinton stressed caution about sending arms that could fall into the wrong hands. [brackets original]

And yet, in spite of the fact it makes clear that the decision to abandon the approach of arming the rebels occurred the month after arms the US provided rebels in Libya were used – by militants in Libya with ties to the militants in Syria – to kill our Ambassador there, the article doesn't mention Libya once.

I'm not saying CIA's barely-hidden support for rebels in Syria amounts to a traditional military role. Nor am I saying I buy that Brennan's comment disavows traditional military actions, provided CIA's role in them are obscured better than they have been.

But I am mindful of David Petraeus' explanations to Kathleen MacFarland about why a general like him would want to move over to CIA.

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.

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.

It took an Army General like Petraeus fucking up military ops with the CIA to convince the Obama Administration to get out of that business.

But, as Hillary is quoted in the article saying, the decision on Syria has actually not yet been made.