

THE VIRGIN REBIRTH OF CIA'S DRONE WARS AND NSA'S CYBERWARS

The DC press is buzzing about how little President Obama will do tomorrow to rein in the dragnet. The most telling description of Obama's thought process is this one, which makes it clear Obama worries about a backlash from the Deep State if their authorities are reigned in.

The emerging approach, described by current and former government officials who insisted on anonymity in advance of Mr. Obama's widely anticipated speech, suggested a president trying to straddle a difficult line in hopes of placating foreign leaders and advocates of civil liberties without a backlash from national security agencies.

But two other developments probably reflect a better sense of where we're headed: WaPo's report that the Omnibus Spending bill defunds any effort to shift our drone war to DOD control.

Congress has moved to block President Obama's plan to shift control of the U.S. drone campaign from the CIA to the Defense Department, inserting a secret provision in the massive government spending bill introduced this week that would preserve the spy agency's role in lethal counterterrorism operations, U.S. officials said.

The measure, included in a classified annex to the \$1.1 trillion federal budget plan, would restrict the use of any funding to transfer unmanned aircraft or the authority to carry out drone strikes from the CIA to the Pentagon, officials said.

The article names Barb Mikulski and Dianne Feinstein as possible culprits for this move.

Still, senior lawmakers have been vocal in expressing concern about the prospect of the CIA ceding responsibility for drone strikes to the military. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee and a member of the Appropriations Committee, said last year that she had seen the CIA “exercise patience and discretion specifically to prevent collateral damage” and that she “would really have to be convinced that the military would carry it out that well.”

[snip]

Among Feinstein’s colleagues on the Intelligence Committee is Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.), who is chairman of the appropriations panel responsible for the budget bill.

But I am skeptical such a thing would have happened without buy-in – if not direct orders – from John “Always Already Gone Native” Brennan (described as such by an anonymous Senior Administration Official who was shocked that Brennan was moving to keep the drone war contrary to the propaganda the White House had released while he was there).

Then there are the multiple reports on the spending bill’s doubling of CyberCommand’s budget to \$447 million, largely to hire 4,000 more staffers (that compares with a less than 5% increase in the cyber budget for DHS, which is supposed to have the lead on domestic defense).

Whether or not Obama supports CIA retaining control of the drone war, he surely supports this doubling of CyberCommand’s budget, as it is consistent with Obama’s pre-emption, in December, of his Review Group’s recommendation to split NSA and CyberCommand. With that

decision, Obama made it clear he intends to prioritize cyberoffense over cyberdefense of the US.

Obama's going to get up tomorrow to try to pretend to respond to the many criticisms of his NSA's dragnet. But whether because he has lost control of his wars to the Deep State, or because he wants to continue to approach risks using tools of war, the entities driving this issue seem to be the Deep State (and the contractors it keeps fat).