

THE DRONE RULE BOOK HAS MADE IT EASIER FOR OUR PARTNERS TO DRONE KILL WITH US AGAIN

As I noted earlier, one of the questions that National Counterterrorism Center nominee Nick Rasmussen got asked in his prehearing confirmation questions pertained to the Drone Rule Book.

He was asked about his role in writing the “US Policy Standards and Procedures for the Use of Force in Counterterrorism Operations Outside the United States and Areas of Active Hostilities.” He replied that he participated in “very initial drafts” of the document in May and June 2012 while at NSC, and then participated in the interagency process before it was approved in May 2013.

He was then asked, “Has the Presidential Policy Guidance made our counterterrorism operations more effective?”

Click through to read his full answer to question 17, but he basically talks a lot about institutionalizing the process, all while emphasizing that the Drone Rule Book simply recorded the swell procedure that was already in place. After several bullets of that, he finally answers what was ultimately a yes or no question.

By refining and documenting the careful and deliberate way in which these operations are approved and conducted and by contributing to greater transparency in our CT operations, I believe the PPG has made it easier for some of our key allies and CT partners to support those operations by sharing intelligence and/or providing other

forms of support for our CT operations. I believe PPG had likely contributed to making some of our CT operations more effective by making critical forms of CT cooperation with key partners more sustainable. By standardizing and institutionalizing the considerations and processes that inform our policymaking on direct action operations, we have become more effective in reviewing these operations and ensuring all appropriate national security equities are considered prior to approval.

In response to a question about whether the Drone Rule Book “is a good long term solution for this type of irregular warfare,” Rasmussen talked about how it combined flexibility with a framework to balance many issues.

Obviously, I’m most interested in the benefit Rasmussen says the Drone Rule Book has brought: that it makes it easier for key partners to cooperate with us on drone strikes and other lethal operations.

That’s particularly interesting given the lawsuit by a Yemeni man against British Telecom for its role in a drone strike that killed his brother. He bases his suit on BT’s role in providing cable service between a base in the UK and Djibouti, from where some of the drone strikes are launched.

And here we come to find out that the Drone Rule Book is an effort to make it easier for partners – which probably includes both the UK and Djibouti (because I can’t imagine the Saudis, Yemenis, and Pakistanis much care) – to help out on our drone killing program.