

# OBAMA SHOULD ONLY NOMINATE JEH JOHNSON IF HE PLANS ON BREAKING UP DHS

There are multiple reports that President Obama is considering nominating Jeh Johnson to head DOD.

I get the attraction. Obama and Johnson get along well. Johnson only recently left DOD, so he knows it – and the legal loopholes it exploits – well. And in Johnson, Obama would have someone who would gloss his warmaking as something noble.

I even think Obama might welcome the way such a nomination would heighten the confrontation with the GOP on immigration.

Still, Johnson has served as head of DHS for less than a year. His tenure is only now marking a transition from a period during which DHS had such a wildly spinning revolving door that it could begin to serve its alleged mission.

An exodus of top-level officials from the Department of Homeland Security is undercutting the agency's ability to stay ahead of a range of emerging threats, including potential terrorist strikes and cyberattacks, according to interviews with current and former officials.

Over the past four years, employees have left DHS at a rate nearly twice as fast as in the federal government overall, and the trend is accelerating, according to a review of a federal database.

The departures are a result of what employees widely describe as a dysfunctional work environment, abysmal morale, and the lure of private security companies paying top dollar that have

■ proliferated in Washington since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

And all that's on top of DHS's almost impossible mandate, both because it is either too big or poorly defined.

Look, I'm sure Johnson's a nice guy and maybe a great manager (he hasn't been in place long enough for us to know).

But if DHS is a necessary agency, if its domestic spying and immigration and cybersecurity and disaster recovery missions are vital to this nation, if it is going to survive as a many-headed monster, then it should have the person Obama thinks is his best Agency head leading it. If that person is Johnson – as Obama's consideration of him to lead DOD suggests – then moving him would seem to be a concession that DHS, and its obvious failures, really isn't all that important after all.

If Obama moves Johnson from DHS to DOD, he should, at the same time, break DHS back up into more manageable agencies, declare the whole experiment an expensive failure, eliminate the word "Homeland" from our vocabularies. Because it is not working, and if there's no urgency to make it work, then we should break it up into parts that can function competently again.