

# ELI LAKE'S PORTRAYAL OF THE CIA DIRECTOR CAMPAIGN: DRONES, BENGAZI, AND ... ?

Eli Lake reports that John Brennan wants to stay on as CIA Director under President Hillary. That's not surprising given that Brennan believes (as Lake notes) CIA Directors should get 10 year terms just like FBI Directors do.

I thought maybe Brennan wanted to stick around to make sure he gets credit for bettering Allen Dulles' record for regime change (after all, it's not clear how the regime change conducted while Brennan was at the White House gets counted in these things).

Apparently not. After laying out what he portrays as opposition from both the left and right (not that that stopped Brennan from being confirmed in 2013), Lake describes that Brennan might stay because he's the architect of the drone war.

Brennan does have the benefit of understanding the intricacies of the U.S. drone war that expanded significantly under Obama. Indeed, he is one of the main authors of that policy, going back to his time at the White House during Obama's first term.

There was a time when Obama endeavored to end that war by the time he left office. It's now clear that Obama's successor will inherit it. Brennan is hoping that if that successor is Clinton, she will also inherit the architect of the drone war that he and Obama can't seem to end.

This, at a time when the Senate Intelligence Committee and Armed Services Committee still

squabble over who should drive the drone war.

Lake describes Mike Morell's case (someone Dianne Feinstein has lobbied against in the past) this way:

Morell in particular has been helpful to Clinton. In his memoir and in congressional testimony, he blamed the CIA and the White House for the talking points on the 2012 Benghazi attack that attributed an act of terror to a demonstration over an internet video. Clinton, of course, was secretary of state at the time, and Republicans have leveled most of their criticism of Benghazi at her.

Lake pretends that the stated role in Benghazi and unstated opposition from Feinstein based off Morell's comments about the torture report wouldn't sink his candidacy. Maybe that wouldn't?

Which leaves Mike Vickers, about whom Lake only mentions Vickers' history as "former CIA officer and undersecretary of defense for intelligence." Thankfully, Vickers has made his own case, in a recent endorsement of Hillary. After Vickers recalls his own bipartisan history (largely running covert ops), he raises Hillary's favorite alleged proof of her national security chops, when she advised Obama to launch the Osama bin Laden raid.

As a Green Beret, CIA operations officer and senior national security official, I have served under six presidents—four Republicans and two Democrats. The last was Barack Obama, and for four years in the White House Situation Room, I saw Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's sound strategic judgment first-hand—on the Afghanistan surge, the campaign to dismantle and defeat core al Qaeda in Pakistan's tribal region, the raid to kill Osama bin Laden, and on lethal

support for the moderate Syrian opposition. Secretary Clinton has the temperament, national security experience and strategic judgment to be an outstanding commander in chief. Donald Trump does not. I'm with her.

Vickers then ends his "endorsement" by confidently asserting we need to be more hawkish than we currently are.

To be sure, we will need more aggressive counterterrorism strategies, stronger support for the Syrian opposition as the only plausible counterweight to authoritarianism and extremism within Syria, more effective counters to Iranian and Russian expansion, and better strategies for deterring and competing with China over the long term. But just as we needed an experienced and steady hand to guide us safely through the early years of the Cold War, we need an experienced and steady hand to guide us through the current challenges to American leadership and world order. Only one candidate in this presidential race can supply that.

There you have the race to be CIA Director under Hillary (at least as viewed through a Neocon lens): the current drone architect, Mr. Benghazi, or the guy whose enthusiasm for covert ops matches Hillary's own.