

NOMINATED DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE CHIEF FLYNN TIED TO PETRAEUS, MCCHRYSTAL NIGHT RAID POLICY

On April 8, the US and Afghanistan finally signed an agreement handing over primary responsibility for night raids to Afghan forces. Although the Obama administration was hell-bent on inking that deal as part of the effort to have agreement with Afghanistan on overall status of forces thinking prior to the May NATO summit in Chicago, this agreement was a full month later than the agreement handing over responsibility for detention operations. Negotiations took so long because the US sees night raids as a central factor in success in both Iraq and Afghanistan while the Afghans are critically aware of the polarizing effect of night raids and how they fuel the insurgency.

As I pointed out in this post on an excerpt from Michael Hastings' *The Operators*, Lieutenant General Michael Flynn was a key intelligence staffer for Stanley McChrystal during the Camp NAMA torture and torture cover-up in early 2004. His biography notes that "Major General Flynn commanded the 111th Military Intelligence Brigade from June 2002 to June 2004." Many of those who were victims of torture during that time in Iraq had been rounded up in night raids. Here is Michael Hirsh as quoted by Chris Suellentrop in the New York Times:

Reading "Fiasco," Thomas Ricks's devastating new book about the Iraq war, brought back memories for me. Memories of going on night raids in Samarra in January 2004, in the heart of the Sunni Triangle, with the Fourth Infantry

Division units that Ricks describes. During these raids, confused young Americans would burst into Iraqi homes, overturn beds, dump out drawers, and summarily arrest all military-age men – actions that made them unwitting recruits for the insurgency. For American soldiers battling the resistance throughout Iraq, the unspoken rule was that all Iraqis were guilty until proven innocent. Arrests, beatings and sometimes killings were arbitrary, often based on the flimsiest intelligence, and Iraqis had no recourse whatever to justice. Imagine the sense of helpless rage that emerges from this sort of treatment. Apply three years of it and you have one furious, traumatized population. And a country out of control.

The Hill adds this to Flynn's background:

Flynn was also the top intelligence officer at International Security Assistance Force-Afghanistan, working under former ISAF chiefs Gen. Stanley McChrystal and Gen. David Petraeus.

Flynn often is credited with recognizing the poor state of intelligence on which the earliest night raids were conducted and working to improve the underlying intelligence. Despite claimed progress on this front, however, even as late as last year, a full 20% of night raids in Afghanistan were incorrectly targeted.

Flynn has now parlayed the success with which he is credited into a nomination to head the Defense Intelligence Agency:

A US general who once blasted the work of military spies in Afghanistan as "only marginally relevant" has been nominated to take over the Pentagon's intelligence agency, officials said.

The decision to name Lieutenant General Michael Flynn suggests a possible shake-up of the sprawling Defense Intelligence Agency as the general has earned a reputation for pushing for dramatic change in his work with special forces.

The article goes on to make an indirect reference to night raids and subsequent interrogation of those rounded up:

At JSOC, Flynn reportedly persuaded special forces to place a higher priority on scooping up intelligence while carrying out targeted attacks on militants.

With the Flynn nomination, my take is that we are being asked to overlook those pesky issues of just how the interrogations were carried out and how often those rounded up in the night raids were innocent bystanders. Instead, we are asked to join the chorus of those praising special forces (they killed bin Laden!!) and to accelerate the careers of those who have been involved.

Flynn certainly has his fans, but another point from Hastings' book comes to mind when I am asked to think about Flynn heading such an important agency:

Living up to his scatterbrained reputation, Flynn accidentally left his e-mail address on the report. He received, he said, "thousands of e-mails" commenting on it.

But hey, who needs mission security when you're heading a large agency.