

PIVOT, DAMNIT!

Remember how during Chuck Hagel's confirmation I kept insisting that Hagel actually had an intelligence oversight role at the President's Intelligence Advisory Board that might be pertinent to the confirmation battle?

Turns out PIAB wasn't just scrounging intelligence for their own contracting interests, as often happens with PIAB and its predecessor PFIAB.

A panel of White House advisers warned President Obama in a secret report that U.S. spy agencies were paying inadequate attention to China, the Middle East and other national security flash points because they had become too focused on military operations and drone strikes, U.S. officials said.

Led by influential figures including new Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and former senator David L. Boren (D-Okla.), the panel concluded in a report last year that the roles of the CIA, the National Security Agency and other spy services had been distorted by more than a decade of conflict.

And while the WaPo focuses on the way this report might have influenced John Brennan – who repeatedly said he'd assess the "allocation of mission" at CIA – I'm just as interested in how the report influenced James Clapper, who recently testified we face a more diverse set of threats than ever before.

This year, in both content and organization, this statement illustrates how quickly and radically the world—and our threat environment—are changing. This environment is demanding reevaluations of the way we do business, expanding our analytic envelope, and altering the vocabulary of intelligence.

Threats are more diverse,
interconnected, and viral than at any
time in history.

If so, I find it interesting that rather than focusing on China, Clapper focused on cyber and – to an unremarked degree – food insecurity (AKA climate change). That is, the report seems to say we need to refocus on China, but Clapper seems to be focusing on cyber instead (which is sort of a focus on China, as will food insecurity be).

One more point. The WaPo suggests that the report said we're wasting too much energy on drones, and rehashes today's drone-to-DOD announcement, including this predictable tidbit.

The White House also is weighing whether to give the Defense Department more control over the drone campaign and reduce the CIA's role, although officials cautioned that the change could take years and probably would not involve CIA drone operations in Pakistan. [my emphasis]

But it doesn't consider what it means that one of the guys who chaired this report is now in charge of the agency that is reportedly getting all the drones.

First Obama's Moral Rectitude Drone Assassination Czar, after setting up a Drone Rule Book, will spin off CIA's drone program (except for Pakistan, and maybe not for another few years, and, well, maybe he's got his fingers crossed a little bit, covertly) to DOD. Meanwhile, it turns out the guy getting that drone program, former PIAB co-Chair and now Secretary of Defense, thinks we need fewer drones and more real intelligence.

Funny how that works out.