

“THE YEMENI SITUATION AND ... THE IRANIAN CYBER SITUATION”

As MadDog noted yesterday, Dianne Feinstein seemed to answer a question I’ve written about here and here regarding the scope of the leak investigations.

She said the U.S. attorneys would not face political pressures from the Obama administration and would “call the shots as they see them.”

“We can move ahead much more rapidly,” Feinstein said. “Instead of one special prosecutor, you essentially have two here, one is the Yemeni situation and the other is the Iranian cyber situation. I think you’re going to get there much quicker.”

I’m not sure I agree with MD, though, that “the UndieBomb 2.0 and the Stuxnet leaks are the ones being investigated,” meaning implicitly that just those two “leaks” are being investigated.

DiFi’s quote seems to confirm that there is a distinct investigation into the source of the detail (one of the only new parts of David Sanger’s StuxNet reporting) that Israel let StuxNet free, possibly deliberately. Since Eric Holder suggested there was a jurisdictional component to his choice of US Attorneys on these investigations, we can assume that Rod Rosenstein, US Attorney for the National Security Agency, will investigate that alleged leak.

But what does DiFi include when she says, “the Yemeni situation”? Does it include only the leaks about UndieBomb 2.0? And if so, why isn’t it being investigated out of Eastern District of VA, the CIA’s US Attorney district, which purportedly had a lead on that operation in the

US?

Further, MD suggested (though did not say explicitly) this means they're not investigating the drone targeting leaks.

Now, as I've noted, one possible reason they wouldn't investigate the drone targeting "leaks" would be if the stories reported falsehoods or—more charitably—a drone targeting process that was no longer in place, as the AP has reported to be the case and the White House, in their response to the AP story, seemed to confirm. That is, one possible reason why they wouldn't investigate the "leaks" about drone targeting would be because those stories did not report accurate classified information (and I'll remind here that the Klaidman story differs in some notable ways from the Joby Warrick story, which we now know came in part from Rahm Emanuel's effort to publicize Baitullah Mehsud's killing).

But there's another possibility. I'm struck by DiFi's description of "the Yemeni situation" rather than—as most people refer to it—the "thwarted" bomb "plot." It's possible that in DiFi's mind—the mind of a Gang of Four member who has presumably been briefed on our ongoing operations in Yemen—that the leak of the bomb sting, the leak of the Saudi role in it, and the stories that made it clear that John Brennan is running a secret war against Yemeni insurgents using signature strikes out of the NSC largely at the behest of the Saudis all constitute for her "the Yemeni situation." UndieBomb 2.0 is a part of that secret war—perhaps the legal justification for US involvement in it (and also a useful way to remove an asset and a key handler before the drones start wreaking havoc). But if this speculation is right, it may well be the other details—the report that this war is being run out of NSC, the details that make it clear we're targeting insurgents, not just AQAP, the fact that we're clearly in an undeclared war—that DiFi worries about most.

Mind you, this is all supposition. It may be

that DiFi was just using shorthand for the UndieBomb 2.0 plot. But to a great degree, all the stories about drone targeting were efforts to expose—and then cover up—the war we’re engaging in Yemen. And that does seem like a secret the Administration is trying to prevent the American public from learning about.