

THE APPROPRIATIONS BATTLE OVER FUNDING “MODERATE” TERRORISTS

Two weeks ago, John Brennan admitted on a Sunday show that sometimes when we “push the envelope ... to protect this country” it “stimulates and spurs additional threats to our national security interests.” In a post on his comments, I suggested he might be thinking specifically of Syria as much as generally of counterterrorism.

Today, the WaPo cites “U.S. officials” complaining that the House Intelligence Committee voted to cut 10% off CIA’s Syrian budget.

The measure has provoked concern among CIA and White House officials, who warned that pulling money out of the CIA effort could weaken U.S.-backed insurgents just as they have begun to emerge as effective fighters. The White House declined to comment.

Arrayed against those anonymous whiners, the WaPo cites Adam Schiff on the record and a senior aide anonymously, describing how the CIA effort isn’t tracked with real metrics and hasn’t done much to weaken Assad.

“There is a great deal of concern on a very bipartisan basis with our strategy in Syria,” said Rep. Adam B. Schiff (Calif.), the ranking Democrat on the intelligence panel. He declined to comment on specific provisions of the committee’s bill but cited growing pessimism that the United States will be in a position “to help shape the aftermath” of Syria’s civil war.

[snip]

"Assad is increasingly in danger, and people may be taking bets on how long he can last, but it's largely not as a result of action by so-called moderates on the ground," said a senior Republican aide in Congress, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, citing the sensitivity of the subject.

[snip]

"Unfortunately, I think that ISIS, al-Nusra and some of the other radical Islamic factions are the best positioned to capitalize on the chaos that might accompany a rapid decline of the regime," Schiff said.

Underlying it all, though, appears to be yet another effort (one we've seen with propaganda in the press as well) to claim those linked to al Qaeda in Syria are "moderate," which in turn permits insiders to believe they'll have some control over Syria after our Sunni and Israeli allies pull off his defeat.

Remember: Devin Nunes has long shown skepticism about our efforts to use proxy terrorists to spread democracy. And Adam Schiff is simply smarter than the kind of person who typically gets to be a ranking member of an Intelligence Committee. Good for them for finally insisting on metrics and – absent that – reining in the CIA's gravy train.