

Senate Intelligence Hearing: What Senator Mark Warner Asked CIA Director John Brennan

By [David Swanson](#)

Global Research, February 08, 2013

[War Is A Crime](#)

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

When CIA nominee John Brennan faced the Senate Select Committee on So-Called Intelligence on Thursday, countless critical and cutting questions had been prepared by bloggers and journalists. None of them were asked.

Brennan might have been asked why he'd lied about the killing of bin Laden or about the murder by drone program. He had claimed that every target was known, even though he was fully aware that people were being targeted without identifying them (using so-called signature strikes). He had claimed that there were zero collateral deaths, even though independent reports have produced hundreds of names, identities, and photographs, and even though the U.S. Ambassador in Pakistan told a delegation of peace activists that there was a U.S. government count of civilian deaths and he wouldn't reveal what it was.

Brennan might have been asked how in the world it can be legal, according to a "white paper" leaked on Monday, for a "high official" to order the murder of a human being, American or non-American, without judicial or legislative or public or international oversight — *or even with such oversight*. He might have been asked if he is one such high official. He might have been asked whether there was a memo to justify the murder of the three Americans thus far known to have been intentionally murdered, since none of them seem to fit the qualifications laid out in the "white paper." He might have been asked what the procedure would be if two "high officials" disagreed on the desirability of murdering a particular American. He might have been asked what authority would certify that a targeted victim could not be captured rather than killed. He might have been confronted with the rise in hostility toward the U.S. government being generated. He might have been asked about the United Nations investigation of the murder by drone program as criminal.



We Virginians were represented in the hearing room by Senator Mark Warner. He claimed what he called the "honor" of introducing the nominee, and expressed his pride that Brennan lives in Virginia along with much of the "intelligence community." Warner hyped his effort to create a U.S. Intelligence Professionals Day (which presumably we'll celebrate silently in our minds), praised Brennan in the vaguest of terms by reading through his resume, declared him ready to be confirmed

pre-questioning, and outrageously asserted that Brennan backed “greater transparency” and “adherence to the rule of law.” A major news story in the preceding 24 hours had been the White House’s refusal to tell the public or even the legislature exactly what it was pretending that the law was.

The most informative and valuable portion of the hearing was produced by Toby Blome, Ann Wright, David Barrows, JoAnn Lingle, Alli McCracken, Eve Tetaz, Joan Nicholson, and Jonathan Tucker, who took turns interrupting the proceedings to ask what needed to be asked. The message that some Americans do not favor murdering children abroad was thus communicated to the world. Many others were prepared to add their voices in that room, but Chairwoman Feinstein kicked everyone out except for a handful of Good Americans, and the hearing proceeded with a mostly empty room. The “Intelligence” Committee is of course used to holding hearings in an entirely empty room with the door locked.

Senator Warner’s chance to ask questions, despite having already declared his support, would come later in the hearing. By that point, Warner had to work with not only Brennan’s pathetic written answers to a series of weak questions presented to him prior to the hearing, but all of his answers to other Senators during the hearing up to that point. Remarkably, during the hearing, on more than one occasion, Brennan claimed to have believed (despite voluminous public evidence) that torture was an effective tool. He did not claim to have believed that as a child, or to have believed it 10 years ago. He claimed to have believed it up until last week when he took the time to read part of the Senate committee’s report, as he had been shamed and pressured into doing. He said he was shocked to learn that torture was not an effective tool. Also during the hearing, before Warner’s turn came, Brennan repeatedly refused to call waterboarding torture and claimed that only a lawyer could make that judgment. Note that he was asking to direct an agency involved in torturing people, identifying himself as a non-lawyer, and declaring that only a lawyer could determine what torture was. Brennan also, by the time Warner’s turn came around, had refused to list the nations in which the United States is murdering people. He had also repeatedly confessed to having had “inside control” of the underwear bomber.

When Warner’s 8 minutes began, one might think he would have had something important to ask about. Couldn’t you have thought of SOMETHING if it was you? Even without prior experience on the committee (or law school) might you not have thought of something, ANYTHING, significant to ask about? Wouldn’t you have asked specific detailed questions about past performance, about torture, rendition, warrantless spying, lying, or killing people? Aren’t any of those topics worth touching on?

Warner framed his first question as a rambling, time-swallowing speech. His question was: how can we be sure the CIA director is well informed? The general vague answer he got to this line of questioning matched the generality and vagueness of the question. If Mark Warner is afraid a CIA director might be uninformed, why not ask Brennan if he knows significant facts? Why not ask him how many people have been killed and where? Why not ask him how many are on the list to be killed? Why not ask him what the criteria are for getting on the list? Why not ask how young the youngest person on the kill list is? Why not express any concern that an “informed high official” might be killing people with the same level of “intelligence” that put so many people into Guantanamo who have since been exonerated of any guilt?

Instead Mark Warner turned to vague questions about the federal budget. Brennan’s

response included hyping the extensive “intelligence” efforts within the “defense” department. Wow, what an opening! The Pentagon is not supposed to be doing the “intelligence” work. Everyone knows how disastrously the Pentagon violated that rule in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq. Surely Warner would jump at this bait.

Warner instead moved on to asking Brennan, as many of his colleagues had already, how exactly Brennan would conduct himself in answering questions from the committee if, after he was confirmed, they were to actually ask him any questions.

By the time Warner might have had a second turn to question the witness, Warner was nowhere to be seen.

He will however be seen at the University of Virginia on Monday and [if you sign up](#) you can attend. Maybe YOU can think of something to ask HIM. If you need ideas for what to ask and how, or just want to attend as a group, you should get together with a concerned citizen who’s planning to attend by emailing shepherd@digitalelite.com

The original source of this article is [War Is A Crime](#)
Copyright © [David Swanson](#), [War Is A Crime](#), 2013

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [David Swanson](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca