

Who is John Brennan, Obama's Nominee to Head the CIA?

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General Petraeus, the head of CIA, resigned admitting to a scandalous extramarital love affair. It made Barack Obama rush to find someone to replace him. As an intelligence veteran, John Brennan was the likely candidate. His nomination for the position popped up for the first time in 2009, but it didn't go through. Back then he realized there was no chance because of his involvement in the CIA «dubious techniques of interrogation», or the use of brutal tortures, to be more exact...

Who is John Brennan? Why does he seem to be irreplaceable to Obama? I must note Brennan is a very reclusive person; he has become even more incommunicative while going through his CIA career path.. It's hard to figure out what kind of man he is. Gone are the romantic years, when he carried out the missions to prove he was worth his salt. Defiantly long haired wearing a startling earring and a hippy-style shirt of many colors, he wanted to see the world. So he went to Indonesia, Bahrain and Egypt. His studies included a junior year abroad learning Arabic and taking Middle Eastern studies courses at the American University in Cairo.

According to official biography, Brennan joined the CIA in 1980. His 25 years with the CIA included work as a Near East and South Asia analyst, work in the Middle East and a tenure as a director of the National Counterterrorism Center. He was a daily intelligence briefer for President Bill Clinton in 1994-1995. In 1996 he was CIA station chief in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. He has always been focused on fighting terrorism. After all, Bin Laden, as well as other top Al Qaeda leaders, came from Saudi Arabia. Brennan managed to get the CIA operatives penetrate Al Qaeda and watch bin Laden's activities and use some of the organization members in the CIA's interest. The same type of activities were conducted by the CIA in the post-Soviet space, in Chechnya, for instance.

In 1999 he was appointed chief of staff to George Tenet, then-Director of the CIA. Brennan became deputy executive director of the CIA in March 2001. He was director of the newly created Terrorist Threat Integration Center from 2003 to 2004, an office that sifted through and compiled information for President Bush's daily top secret intelligence briefings and employed the services of analysts from a dozen U.S. agencies and entities. The job was really challenging and required an ability to know your way in the corridors of power at the time the state structures functioned in emergency conditions. From the very start Brennan understood he should ignore some strange circumstances of the way Al Qaeda managed to enter the United States and act on its territory.

Many facts did not match the general picture of the Al Qaeda's large-scale attack against

the country. Perhaps that was the reason he left government service in 2005.

Brennan became Chairman of the Intelligence and National Security Alliance (INSA) and the CEO of The Analysis Corporation (TAC) now renamed as Sotera Defense Solutions. In 2009 he got back to the White House in the capacity of Obama's chief counterterrorism advisor. Brennan criticized some Bush-administration anti-terror policies, saying it went too far sometimes.

Still he adhered to the same principles: shoot first and find out what is what afterwards. **Brennan is the man who started using drones to kill terrorists abroad.** Sometimes the drones are called a wonder weapon of the XXI. On May 2, 2011 Brennan represented a team that killed Osama Bin Laden in the Abbottabad suburbs (Pakistan). As a White House official, he oversaw the search activities and had a reason to say he deserved some merit for the success of operation.

The use of drones and the elimination of Osama bin Laden served as arguments for his second nomination to be director of the Central Intelligence Agency. The protesters present at the confirmation hearings appeared to be members of the activist group Code Pink. They held signs reading «Drones Fly Children Die»; he was called a liar, a traitor, an enemy of democracy and a threat to national security. The pictures taken at the time show his face became a mask, the eyes narrowed, the lips frozen stiff before completing the sentence. The bodyguards loomed behind his back.

The protesters were led out of the room. The questions asked by Senators were mainly revolving around two issues related to the Brennan's past activities: third degree tortures during the interrogations practiced by the CIA and trying to conceal the number of civilians who lost lives during the drone attacks. Brennan didn't sound very convincing while answering the questions related to tortures and secret jails. Being a deputy executive director of the CIA responsible for everyday activities, it's hard to believe he was not aware of what was going on. Brennan says he saw some copies of documents on the interrogation techniques program (torture), but he had no relation to working it out.

What the documents were copied for? To oversee the implementation of the program? No doubt about it. That's why the argument that he had no authority to stop the program and keep operatives away from the interrogation process was just a subterfuge. Brennan was aware of everything and approved it, if not ordered the tortures.

It never came to his head to stand up against the brutal practice. During the Bush Jr. tenure the law enforcement agencies officials risked their careers in case they displayed lack of will power or unwarrantedly humane treatment of potential enemy. The Brennan's opponents found some of his interviews in which he praised interrogation torture techniques used by the CIA, including waterboarding.

The man was an architect of the administration's controversial escalation of drone strikes to take out suspected militants. He justified his stance during the hearings saying the country had a legal right to defend itself and the lives of Americans. The right is widely implemented without looking back at any moral standards or international law.

Drones attacked targets in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Libya, Somalia and other countries. Brennan says there was no «collateral damage.» It's an outright lie. It is a common knowledge drones hit the unidentified targets, the attacks resulted in the death of

innocent people, including children. Only in Pakistan 176 children were killed from June 2004 through mid-September 2012, that is including President Obama's first tenure.

The Americans suspected of links to Al Qaeda were included in the target list. A new wave of indignation was caused by the witch hunt. For instance, in September 2011 an unmanned aerial vehicle operating in Yemen killed Anwar al-Alwaki and Samir Khan, the US citizens. The two had never been accused of terrorism, had never been on the wanted list, still they were dead. A confidential Justice Department memo concludes that the U.S. government can order the killing of American citizens if they are believed to be «senior operational leaders» of al-Qaida or «an associated force» - even if there is no intelligence indicating they are engaged in an active plot to attack the U.S. It's enough to believe they have a relation to Al Qaeda to hand down a death verdict. The issue will certainly surface at the Senate Intelligence Committee confirmation hearings on February 12.

Today he does everything to curry favor with Senators: utmost transparency of the CIA activities, exhaustive information available to Congress, regular meetings with media etc. There is an opinion going around in press that Brennan's assignment will help the CIA reputation tarnished by the excesses during the Bush Jr. tenure. It presupposes that numerous CIA employees suffered morally and psychologically being involved in tortures. Many operatives are concerned about the CIA fulfilling the functions it is not destined for in case the United States gets involved in hot wars, the quagmire the country seems to be frighteningly dragged into with certain feeling of doom.

It won't be a bed of roses for John Brennan. The thousands of CIA personnel will not only collect information but also be involved in combat actions in conditions much worse than in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Veteran Brennan will do what he is accustomed to: wars, third degree interrogation, spying, keeping information away from Congress, ordering drone strikes to kill Americans as a result of friendly fire, in case the victims become expendable or dangerous...

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