

THE SCRIPT OPPOSING DECLASSIFICATION OF THE TORTURE REPORT CONTINUES TO ROLL OUT

During John Brennan's confirmation process, he answered questions about the Senate Intelligence Committee report on torture with two faces. To Saxby Chambliss in private, he said he thought the report was a prosecutorial document, set up to come to pre-ordained conclusions. Publicly, to Democrats, he said he was shocked—shocked!—by what he had read in the Executive Summary of the report.

It was quite clear that Brennan was playing the lawmakers who would get to vote on his confirmation, but they didn't delay his confirmation to resolve the report declassification.

When Brennan's confirmation got delayed by demands to exercise oversight, the CIA delayed its response – originally due February 15 – on the contents of the report. Indefinitely.

All of this, of course, sets up Brennan to refuse to declassify the report because he believes (and, importantly, believed from the start, according to Saxby Chambliss) that the people who have now rushed his confirmation through were acting in an unfairly prosecutorial mode when they spent 5 years documenting what CIA did in its torture program.

Sure enough, the very day after Brennan won confirmation, WSJ reports that CIA is not done with their review yet, but they disagree with the report's findings.

The report examines the details of conditions under which each detainee was held and interrogated, the quality of

the information provided and the accuracy of how the CIA described the program to other officials and lawmakers. It included 20 recommendations, officials said.

The report assesses the utility of information from interrogations in 20 cases and concludes that it wasn't useful; the CIA disputes that conclusion in all but one or two of those assessments, officials said.

The CIA is objecting to the majority of the report, a senior intelligence official said.

"The overall objection was the report basically says we never in any instances got good information from this program," another U.S. official said. "To anyone who has worked at the CIA on this issue, that's not true."

Even CIA officers who opposed the interrogation program acknowledge that the agency obtained useful information, the U.S. official said.

Even if Brennan wanted to declassify this report – and given his stated desire to protect CIA from criticism, he probably doesn't want to – he'd have a hard time doing so, because it would instantly turn the torture dead-enders against him, which is not the safest way to start a job managing a bunch of talented spooks.

Hell, I wouldn't be surprised if the single "senior intelligence official" from which the CIA's perspective is represented is Brennan. Because it has been clear throughout he was working from a script that would lead to a real, probably unsuccessful, struggle to declassify the report.

And that script is rolling out precisely as expected.