

# WHAT WILL JOHN BRENNAN DO, SUSPEND HIS OPERATIONS?



These with a thousand small  
deliberations

Protract the profit of their chilled  
delirium,

Excite the membrane, when the sense has  
cooled,

With pungent sauces, multiply variety

In a wilderness of mirrors. What will  
the spider do,

Suspend its operations, will the weevil

Delay?

–T.S. Eliot, Gerontion

This image – captioned, “President Barack Obama talks with CIA Director John Brennan, center, and Chief of Staff Denis McDonough in a West Wing hallway of the White House, May 10, 2013” – may officially be my new favorite official White House photograph.

I first learned of it when Katherine Hawkins pointed to this MuckRock FOIA request, which noted that the document in Brennan’s hand was titled, “The Central Intelligence Agency’s Response to The Senate Select Committee on

Intelligence Study of the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program."

In other words, John Brennan was speaking to Obama and the Chief of Staff about CIA's complaints about the SSCI Torture Report on May 10. And White House photographer Pete Souza had framed the event amidst reflections and dark lighting that would make even James Jesus Angleton weep.

I'm fond of the photo, too, for what it shows.

As you recall, SSCI's torture report was completed last December. CIA was initially supposed to respond to SSCI about the report by February 15, but that got held up, in part, because of Brennan's confirmation, during which he appeared to avoid reading the report to avoid saying anything about it before being confirmed. Almost immediately after Brennan was confirmed, the CIA started leaking about how much they didn't like it (even while claiming they still hadn't finished reviewing the document). It turns out those leaks were factually incorrect. On April 11, Brennan was still stalling about the content of the review and completely ignoring any possibility it would be released publicly (though had spoken with Dianne Feinstein and Saxby Chambliss earlier that week about it). On May 1, Mark Udall got shrill, advising the President he could "excise the demons" of torture by releasing the report. On May 7, CIA was still compiling its "defiant" response to the report; National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden told me the White House was still reviewing the document. Also on May 7, a collection of human rights organizations called on the White House to appoint someone to oversee the release of the report.

3 days later, Brennan was in the White House with a report on CIA's complaints about the report, all written up.

But here's the thing: that meeting was May 10. It was almost 7 weeks later before Brennan would

present that report (again with leaks about how inaccurate millions of CIA cables are) – in the company of Joe Biden – to Dianne Feinstein and Saxby Chambliss (though there were reports that they ended up discussing other issues instead).

CIA has had its complaints all typed up for over two months now. And the only sign of any discussion about declassifying the report that describes how many lies CIA told about this program is Feinstein's request to Jim Comey in his confirmation hearing that he would read it, why by itself seems a concession that we all won't get to.

So did the White House decide not to release the report two months ago and just never tell us all?