

US INTELLIGENCE OPERATIVES IN LIBYA, BEFORE A FINDING, SOUNDS LIKE JSOC

Mark Hosenball, who yesterday broke the news that Obama had issued a Finding authorizing the CIA to operate covertly in Libya in the last 2-3 weeks, today says “intelligence operatives” were on the ground before Obama signed that Finding.

U.S. intelligence operatives were on the ground in Libya before President Barack Obama signed a secret order authorizing covert support for anti-Gaddafi rebels, U.S. government sources told Reuters. The CIA personnel were sent in to contact opponents of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and assess their capabilities, two U.S. officials said.

[snip]

The president – who said in a speech on Monday “that we would not put ground troops into Libya” – has legal authority to send U.S. intelligence personnel without having to sign a covert action order, current and former U.S. officials said.

Within the last two or three weeks, Obama did sign a secret “finding” authorizing the CIA to pursue a broad range of covert activities in support of the rebels.

Congressional intelligence committees would have been informed of the order, which the officials said came after some CIA personnel were already inside Libya.

Now, one explanation for this is simply that Obama sent JSOC—under the guise of preparing the battlefield—rather than CIA. It sounds like the

practice—first exploited by Cheney—that the government has used frequently in the last decade of ever-expanding Presidential authority.

Indeed, House Intelligence Chair Mike Rogers' claims he must authorize covert action, but hasn't, sounds like the kind of complaint we've frequently gotten when the President bypassed the intelligence committees by claiming DOD was simply preparing the battlefield.

And Hosenball's nuanced language about "boots," that is, military, on the ground, may support that view.

Furthermore, we know there are a slew of British Special Forces on the ground in Libya. So why not Americans, too?

Hosenball is not saying this explicitly, yet. And he does refer to "CIA operatives" (who could be in Libya to simply collect information). But all the subtext of this article suggests that our special forces have been on the ground since before any Finding, which in turn suggests they may have been there longer than 2-3 weeks (the timeframe given for the Finding).

This is all a wildarsed overreading of Hosenball at this point. But if I'm right, then it would mean Obama would be using the shell game he adopted from Cheney to engage in war without Congressional oversight.