

TRUMP RAISES THE AXE OVER THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY, AGAIN

The Intelligence Community is finishing its report on the intelligence regarding Russia's influence in our elections. The report is expected to be delivered to President Obama tomorrow and briefed to President Elect Trump on Friday.

That's the context for – and surely at least part of the explanation for – this WSJ story reporting that Trump plans to reorganize the intelligence community.

[A]dvisers also are working on a plan to restructure the Central Intelligence Agency, cutting back on staffing at its Virginia headquarters and pushing more people out into field posts around the world. The CIA declined to comment on the plan.

“The view from the Trump team is the intelligence world [is] becoming completely politicized,” said the individual, who is close to the Trump transition operation. “They all need to be slimmed down. The focus will be on restructuring the agencies and how they interact.”

[snip]

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence was established in 2004 in large part to boost coordination between intelligence agencies following the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks.

Many Republicans have proposed cutting the ODNI before, but this has proven hard to do in part because its mission centers are focused on core national security issues, such as

counterterrorism, nuclear proliferation, and counterintelligence.

“The management and integration that DNI focuses on allows agencies like the CIA to better hone in on its own important work,” said Rep. Adam Schiff (D., Calif.), the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, who believes dismantling the ODNI could lead to national security problems.

Mr. Trump’s advisers say he has long been skeptical of the CIA’s accuracy, and the president-elect often mentions faulty intelligence in 2002 and 2003 concerning Iraq’s weapons programs. But he has focused his skepticism of the agencies squarely on their Russia assessments, which has jarred analysts who are accustomed to more cohesion with the White House.

The report repeats earlier reporting – in part from some of the same WSJ reporters – that Trump planned this briefing. Back then, in mid-November, Trump was merely disdainful of the IC and much of the reorganization appeared to be a mix of vengeance on the part of Mike Flynn and, frankly, some reasonable ideas (things like splitting NSA and reversing some of the questionable changes John Brennan made). At the center of it all was a plan to make Admiral Mike Rogers Director of National Intelligence.

The day after that reporting, however, outlets reported that Ash Carter and James Clapper *had* been planning to fire Rogers, partly because the NSA had remained a leaky sieve under his tenure and partly because he had delayed cyber-bombing ISIS (perhaps to preserve intelligence collection). And that’s before it became public that the NSA hadn’t adopted four security measures recommended after the Snowden leaks.

After that, of course, Democrats and the CIA started leaking that Russia hacked the DNC *with*

the purpose of electing Trump, which gave Trump the entrée to suggest this discussion is all politicized, which has escalated to this week. Trump seems to have orchestrated the Sean Hannity interview at which Julian Assange said what he has long said – that he didn't get the DNC files from Russia.

Reuters is now reporting that after the election the IC determined that third parties had gotten the files from Russian entities to Wikileaks, which means Assange likely has no idea where the files came from.

But the timing of this story, sourced significantly to the Trump camp, seems to be a warning to those who will brief Trump on Friday. While Clapper and Brennan are on their way out (the fate of Comey and Rogers is still undecided), they certainly will want to protect their agencies.

Which should make for an interesting briefing Friday.