

DIPLOMATS CONCEDE DRONES MIGHT DESTABILIZE NUCLEAR ARMED PAKISTAN

WSJ reveals that some folks within the Obama Administration have finally started to weigh the possibility that our drone strikes in Pakistan do more harm than good. Unfortunately, in the fight over whether the US should rein drone strikes in, those folks appear to have lost the debate ... for now.

The White House National Security Council debated a slowdown in drone strikes in a meeting on Thursday, a U.S. official said. At the meeting, CIA Director Leon Panetta made the case for maintaining the current program, the official said, arguing that it remains the U.S.'s best weapon against al Qaeda and its allies.

The result of the meeting—the first high-level debate within the Obama administration over how aggressively to pursue the CIA's targeted-killing program—was a decision to continue the program as is for now, the U.S. official said.

[snip]

Yet an increasingly prominent group of State Department and military officials now argue behind closed doors that the intense pace of the strikes aggravates an already troubled alliance with Pakistan and, ultimately, risks destabilizing the nuclear-armed country, said current and former officials familiar with the discussions.

What's fascinating about the article, though, is

that for all the discussion of the political problems the drones are causing, there's no discussion of how drones have served to radicalize potential terrorists.

These diplomats and officials say the deep vein of anti-Americanism that runs through Pakistani society forces its elected and military leaders, including army chief Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, to distance themselves from Washington to avoid a popular backlash.

"What's worrying a lot of us is whether we're turning people who should be our natural allies into our adversaries," said a U.S. diplomat in Pakistan.

That is, this debate appears to still be focusing on whether drones make key Pakistani elites separate themselves from us. There's not one mention, however, of people like Faisal Shahzad—the Times Square bomber—who blame drones for their turn to terrorism.