

## Where's Obama's CIA Director?

By Cliff Kincaid

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The *Washington Post*'s Jeff Stein, a very good writer on intelligence and security matters, is wondering in print what the CIA is doing in Egypt. He writes: "Most historians agree that the CIA was largely in the dark when anti-American students, radical Islamists and mullahs ignited street protests in Tehran [1978] because the U.S.-backed shah had forbidden the CIA to have contact with opposition groups. The CIA can't let that happen again in Egypt, intelligence veterans say" and it probably isn't."

The word "probably" is of course ambiguous. He did note that, two years ago, Emile Nakhleh, the former head of the CIA's political Islam strategic analysis program, had said the United States should be "reaching out" to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, as well as to Hamas and Hezbollah, to find "common ground." Hamas and Hezbollah are officially designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations by the U.S. Department of State.

Nakhleh, who retired in 2006, is the author of *A Necessary Engagement: Reinventing America's Relations with the Muslim World*.

Despite Stein's claim that the CIA is "probably" on top of the situation, Nakhleh wrote in the *Financial Times* after the protests in Egypt began that, "US policymakers were caught just as off guard in 1978 [during the uprising against the shah] as they were last week."

But rather than being in the dark about what is happening in Egypt, the CIA may be on the side of radical forces in the country and the region.

Conservatives have mostly been critical of *WikiLeaks* for releasing classified and sensitive U.S. Government cables. But that may change with the release of a U.S. Government document that indicates U.S. knowledge of a plot to destabilize Egypt by laying the groundwork for a new government that would include members of the Muslim Brotherhood and Revolutionary Socialists. This sounds suspiciously like the Obama Administration's policy.

In this case, *WikiLeaks*'s disclosure may serve a real public interest and generate enough of a backlash to save Egypt from a fate far worse than Hosni Mubarak's government. Frank Gaffney of the Center for Security Policy has been tireless in trying to inform the media about the Obama's Administration's new Egyptian partner—the Muslim Brotherhood—by appearing on programs like "Hannity" on Fox News.

Interestingly, the Revolutionary Socialists in Egypt have been joined by the Egyptian Communist Party, which issued a statement declaring, "The revolution will continue until the demands of the masses are achieved." The statement asserted that the Egyptian government's "American masters" have "taken their hands off in the wake of the continuing revolution of the people and its escalation everywhere in Egypt."

Obama's CIA Director, Leon Panetta, was nominated for the job despite his lack of experience in intelligence matters. His primary qualification was having served as a left-wing former Congressman before becoming President Clinton's chief-of-staff.

“Our first responsibility is to prevent surprises,” said Panetta during his Senate confirmation hearings. But when asked if he was aware that then-Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair had selected former Director of Central Intelligence John Deutch, a known security risk, to serve in a sensitive position on an intelligence advisory panel, Panetta said, “I’m not aware of that.”

For the purposes of historical accuracy, here's the exchange which took place between Senator Tom Coburn and Panetta:

*Coburn: Are you aware that former DCI John Deutch, who in 2001 had his security clearances revoked and received a pardon for mishandling highly classified information, do you realize that he has recently been asked by DNI Director Blair to serve in a fairly sensitive position on an advisory panel overseeing our most sensitive intelligence overhead architecture?*

*Panetta: I'm not aware of that.*

*Coburn: Do you think that's appropriate?*

*Panetta: I think I'd have to sit down and talk with Admiral Blair about just exactly what he had in mind.*

*Coburn: What kind of message do you think that appointment sends to the men and women of the CIA, who work every day to collect and protect the most sensitive intelligence?*

*Panetta: Again, Senator, because, this is the first time I've heard that, I don't want to jump to any quick conclusions about what the Admiral may or may not have had in mind, but clearly this is something I need to talk to him about.*

Senator Christopher Bond, then Vice-chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said that Deutch “caused grave damage to our national security” and was “a known counterintelligence risk.”

Nevertheless, Panetta's ignorance was not held against him and he was confirmed as CIA director by unanimous consent.

Deutch returned to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a professor, joined the Council on Foreign Relations as a foreign policy expert, and is now described as an adviser to several energy companies.

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