



David Priess @DavidPriess Mon Nov 29 02:46:44 +0000 2021

THREAD: A wealth of new information about the intelligence briefings for Donald Trump and those around him as a presidential candidate in 2016, as president-elect in 2016-17, and as president has just hit the CIA's public website.

Here are the most newsworthy details:

1/16 <https://t.co/MH4WAUBYdn>



Context: The info is in a new chapter of John Helgerson's book GETTING TO KNOW THE PRESIDENT—a useful source for my book THE PRESIDENT'S BOOK OF SECRETS—written for the CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence.

It's on the CIA website here:

<https://t.co/4bYQINUKIP>

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Helgerson tellingly links the IC's experience of briefing Trump to predecessors' experiences with his chapter title:

"Donald J. Trump—A Unique Challenge"

What follows are assertions made in the this new chapter, often based on classified info not yet available otherwise.

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In the 2016 campaign, DNI Jim Clapper went beyond written ground rules for briefing major party candidates by stressing (1) briefings would come from career intel officers, not political appointees; and (2) the team creating/briefing Obama's PDB wouldn't do these briefings.

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Senior briefer for the campaigns Ted Gistaro selected 14 substantive experts from multiple agencies to assist him—the largest and most organizationally diverse group of such experts ever deployed for transition briefings of candidates and presidents-elect.

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Trump had two preelection briefings, which we already knew.

But we didn't yet know that during the second briefing (on Sept. 2), he assured the intelligence community briefers that "the nasty things" he was saying publicly about the IC "don't apply to you."

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Hillary Clinton's preelection intel briefing began awkwardly—given her personal email issues—when the security officer asked her as she approached the secure briefing room whether she had a phone on her.

She "very professionally assured the questioner" that she was clean.

7/16

As president-elect, Trump had a healthy intel briefing schedule: 14 briefings during the 10 week transition period.

His very first PDB—still Obama's book, but Trump got to see it—came on Nov. 15, with items on Peru, Turkey, Syria, China, the Middle East, and South Asia.

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The transition following the election in 2016 was also the first in which the outgoing White House formally approved, in writing, the provision of the PDB to Cabinet-level designees prior to their confirmation, once they were officially designated and received clearances.

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Reports about President Trump not reading the PDB but taking oral briefings instead get confirmation in the new material.

"He touched it," Trump's first full-time PDB briefer said about the president's book. "He doesn't really read anything."

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Trump surprisingly received no briefings from the CIA on covert action programs until several weeks into his administration.

Incoming VP Mike Pence and incoming National Security Advisor Michael Flynn, however, got to hear about all the covert action programs on Dec. 7.

11/16

During every transition, CIA analysts prepare a book full of info about the many foreign leaders with whom the president-elect might speak.

Trump's book was delayed—because no one at Trump Tower felt comfortable receiving the classified book and being responsible for it.

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But CIA officers acquired a safe and installed it in Trump Tower, such that the president-elect had the relevant information in front of him when he spoke with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

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As expected, the intel community tailored the PDB to President Trump, reducing the number and length of its articles.

Trump also cut back (slightly) the number of senior officials who had access to the PDB, from the 50+ at the end of the

Obama administration to 40+.

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While the PDB kept being published every day, Trump got a briefing only two to three times a week. Later in his term, he settled into only two sessions per week, on average.

They just stopped in late 2020; Trump took no PDB briefings for the last month or so of his term.

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Most of the information above, and several other things in this new chapter, are confirmed here for the first time.

If you're interested in the PDB, national security, or details of the Trump era, you really should read the entire chapter:

<https://t.co/4bYQINUKIP>

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