

PAKISTANI “COOPERATION” ON FAISAL SHAHZAD

Mark Hosenball has a post elaborating on something reported elsewhere—that the High Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG) is only marginally involved in Faisal Shahzad’s interrogation. Given a point I tried to make here—namely, that one of the first things that happened after Shahzad’s arrest and seemingly in conjunction with him waiving a number of his rights, Pakistan detained at least one of his friends and his father-in-law (and potentially his father)—I’m particularly interested in how Hosenball describes Pakistan’s “cooperation” on this case.

Two of the officials also said that the HIG is playing little to no role in the questioning of multiple presumed associates of Shahzad who were detained by authorities in Pakistan following the failed Times Square attack. The main reason that HIG personnel are not more involved in questioning potential witnesses and suspects picked up in Pakistan, the officials said, is because Pakistani authorities have declined to invite HIG personnel into their country to participate in the interrogations.

[snip]

Another of the officials said that in any case, given the fact that Shahzad began cooperating with U.S. authorities literally minutes after Homeland Security officers took him off a flight from New York’s JFK Airport to Dubai on May 3, the need for ultrasophisticated interrogation expertise, like the kind of expertise HIG is supposed to offer, is not necessarily warranted in Shahzad’s case. As for witnesses or

suspects picked up in Pakistan in connection with the Shahzad investigation, the official said, Pakistani authorities are doing most of the questioning themselves, though both Pakistani and U.S. officials say that the two governments are generously sharing information with each other.

Now, Hosenball places HIG's non-involvement in the Pakistani interrogations (if that's what they are) in this case within the context of earlier Pakistani disinterest in inviting HIG to the country. But look at a few of these details:

May 3, just before midnight: Shahzad arrested

May 4: US Ambassador Anne Patterson asks for Pakistani cooperation in case

May 5: Shahzad's friend and father-in-law detained; police guard father's house

May 6: Shahzad's father in protective custody

May 7: In interview taped for May 9 60 Minutes, Hillary Clinton warns of "severe consequences ... [if] an attack like this that we can trace back to Pakistan were to have been successful"

May 9: FBI seeks access to Shahzad's father, retired Air Vice Marshall Baharul Haq

The appearance from this timeline is that, at a time when public reports said Shahzad was claiming, implausibly, that he acted alone, Pakistan rounded up Shahzad's family members and a friend (though they appear to have described the detention of Shahzad's father differently from how they described the detention of Shahzad's father-in-law). Pakistan appears to have done this in response to a request from Ambassador Patterson. So Pakistan was certainly

cooperative with the US, to the extent that it detained family members with no clear ties to the attempted attack.

Which is why the FBI request to have direct access to Shahzad's father is so interesting—and Clinton's oblique threat about ties between Pakistan and attacks like this. The appearance—and again, this is just appearances—is that the US is intent on getting access one way or another to Baharul Haq, regardless of whether or not HIG gets that access.

Mind you, there are no conclusions to draw from all this. But it seems that the issue with Pakistan may not just be a dislike of HIG.