

NSA GOT INTO BED WITH THE SAUDIS JUST BEFORE OUR TECHNICAL COOPERATION AGREEMENT EXPANDED

In February 2011, around the time the CIA took over the hunt for Anwar al-Awlaki, NSA started collaborating with Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Interior's (MOI) Technical Assistance Directorate (TAD), under the umbrella of CIA's relationship with MOI (it had previously cooperated primarily with the Kingdom's Ministry of Defense).

On August 15, 2011, hackers erased the data on two-thirds of the computers at Saudi Aramco; American sources claim Iran was the culprit.

On September 30, 2011, CIA killed Anwar al-Awlaki, using drones operated from a base on Saudi soil.

On November 5, 2012, King Abdullah named close John Brennan ally Mohammed bin Nayef (MbN) Minister of the Interior; MbN had for some time been our top counterterrorism partner in the Kingdom.

On December 11, 2012, James Clapper expanded NSA's Third Party SIGINT relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for the first time formally including the Ministry of Interior's Technical Affairs Directorate.

Between January 14 and 16, 2013 MbN traveled to Washington and met with just about every top National Security person (many of whom, including Brennan, were just assuming new jobs). On January 16, MbN and Hillary Clinton renewed and expanded the Technical Cooperation Agreement initiated in 2008. The TCA was modeled on the JECOR program used from the late 1970s until 2000 to recycle US dollars into development

programs in Saudi Arabia; in this more recent incarnation, the Saudis recycle dollars into things like a 30,000 mercenary army and other military toys for internal stability and border control. Last year's renewal – signed just over a month after Clapper made the Saudis full Third Person partners – added cybersecurity to the portfolio. The TCA – both the existing security resources and its expansion under close ally MbN – shored up the power base of one of our closest partners (and at a time when we were already panicking about Saudi succession).

In other words, in addition to expanding Saudi capabilities at a time when it has been cracking down on peaceful dissent, which is what the Intercept story on this document discusses, by giving the Saudi MOI Third Party status, we added to the power of a key ally within the royal family, and did so at a time when the TCA was already shoring up his power base.

We did so, the Information Paper makes clear, in part because MOI has access to internal Saudi telecommunications. While the Information paper talks about AQAP and Iran's Republican Guard, they are also targeting Saudi targets.

And these new capabilities? They get coordinated through Chief of Station in Riyadh, the CIA. John Brennan's agency.

It's all very tidy, don't you think?