

LAPTOP OF DEATH, 2.0

The Greater US War to Remake the Middle East has been going on so long, it is already re-running its story lines.

Back in 2004, when Dick Cheney was trying to drum up a hot war against Iran, the CIA got dealt a laptop that provided a casus belli all wrapped up in a bow: all aspects of Iran's nuke program, all conveniently collected on one laptop, somehow falling into intelligence hands. It later showed signs of being a forgery.

Now, as the warmakers are trying to gin up a hot war against ISIS (in seeming co-belligerence with Iran!), that's whose laptop we find, courtesy of Foreign Policy: a Tunisian named Muhammed whose last name and picture Foreign Policy declined to provide. On the laptop, FP found a 19-page document that explains how to "weaponize" bubonic plague by throwing it on grenades close to air conditioning units.

"Use small grenades with the virus, and throw them in closed areas like metros, soccer stadiums, or entertainment centers," the 19-page document on biological weapons advises. "Best to do it next to the air-conditioning. It also can be used during suicide operations."

Because a college science student only needs 19 pages to accomplish the technical feat of weaponizing the plague.

Remarkably, a lot of people are taking this as a serious discovery, even though FP describes obtaining the laptop this way:

Abu Ali, a commander of a moderate Syrian rebel group in northern Syria, proudly shows a black laptop partly covered in dust. "We took it this year from an ISIS hideout," he says.

Abu Ali says the fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham

(ISIS), which have since rebranded themselves as the Islamic State, all fled before he and his men attacked the building. The attack occurred in January in a village in the Syrian province of Idlib, close to the border with Turkey, as part of a larger anti-ISIS offensive occurring at the time. "We found the laptop and the power cord in a room," he continued, "I took it with me. But I have no clue if it still works or if it contains anything interesting."

As we switched on the Dell laptop, it indeed still worked. Nor was it password-protected.

We are supposed to believe that 1) ISIS got routed back in January 2) left their laptop 3) don't password protect their devices.

More amusingly, we're supposed to believe that upon capturing devices from an adversary, the "moderate" beheaders in the FSA would not look for intelligence on those devices. Instead, they'd let a computer collect dust over the course of 8 months, never once attempting to so much as turn on a laptop, until such time as it became imperative to foster opposition to ISIS.

Because powering a laptop is apparently too hard for FSA commanders?

Either Abu Ali is lying, or he's lying. Which means the provenance of this laptop and this story is so suspect it should not be treated seriously. There are plenty of other reasons to doubt the story. But if your source claims never to have turned on a laptop – never to have even tried! – seized from an adversary over the course of 8 months, your source is not telling the truth.