

# WHY WOULD THE US GOVERNMENT HAVE DECONFLICTION ISSUES WITH MANSSOR ARBABSJAR IN 2010?

Before I look at the other ways Gregory Saathoff's report opining that Manssor Arbabsiar is not manic hurts the government's case, I want to discuss a rather curious citation Saathoff includes.

Troutman, D. (2010, January 13). Email to Virginia Villareal re: Deconfliction (in reference to a national security concern regarding Manssor Arbabsiar), p. 1.

As you'll recall, the government claims that Arbabsiar first came on their radar in May 2011 when a DEA Informant claimed that Arbabsiar contacted him to arrange a kidnapping.

And yet, according to this, someone was emailing Virginia Villareal (there's a Customs and Border Patrol Officer currently in San Antonio by that name) in January 2010 about a national security issue involving Arbabsiar?

Deconfliction is the term used for when agencies with overlapping interests sort out their turf—particularly if the agencies are using weapons or informants. The timing indicates that it came during—and probably was part of—Arbabsiar's naturalization process in 2009-2010.

DHS: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).(2009, June 24). Memorandum subject:IBIS hit resolution for applicant: Manssor Arbabsiar, p. 1.

DHS: USCIS. (2010, April 23). N 652, naturalization interview results, pp.

1-8.

DHS: USCIS. (2010, August 6). N-400, application for naturalization, pp. 1-10.

DHS: USCIS. (2010, August 30). Form N-445, notice of naturalization oath ceremony, pp. 1-2.

And at one level, it's not all that surprising that there would be a national security concern as Arbabsiar applied for citizenship: his cousin is a high ranking Quds Force member. Indeed that—plus Arbabsiar's criminal background—is one of the reasons it's hard to believe he **even got** citizenship, given that equivalent issues can get a Green Card holder deported. And he appears to have done that without paying for an immigration attorney (he complained to Saathoff he had to pay for an attorney for his son during this period, but not an immigration attorney, though they can be inexpensive).

So at the very least, this suggests at least one other agency was aware of Arbabsiar as he went through the immigration process.

But I do find the timing rather interesting given the way Saathoff describes Arbabsiar's actions that year. He was taking many trips to Iran—purportedly to bring cash back from real estate investments there and he was living in Corpus Christi, away from his wife. (Note, IBIS is the database the government uses to check people as they cross borders to make sure they're not terrorists or drug runners, which is presumably why the entry above and a 2012 one were listed as sources.)

In my interviews with Mr. Arbabsiar and in reviewing documents that were not cited by Dr. First at the time of his declaration, Mr. Arbabsiar acknowledged that this was in fact a period of significant international activity. In addition to attaining his United States citizenship, during early 2010 he spent

most of his time apart from his wife living mostly in Corpus Christi or travelling overseas. In 2010, he flew to Iran on four separate occasions in order to secure and bring back rental money from his Iranian property holdings. He estimated that during these trips he brought back up to \$8,000-\$9,000 on each trip.

[snip]

In his August 4, 2012 interview, he recalled a 2009 trip to Iran where he obtained hair transplant surgery in Iran because it was less expensive than in the U.S. With decreasing revenues in the U.S., he made four separate trips to Iran in 2010 in order to bring back funds from his Iranian investment properties.

[snip]

In fact, 2010 was a year of significant international activity for Mr. Arbabsiar with more international air travel for him than was recorded for any other year in the previous decade. He took four separate flights to Iran during 2010 and also attained his U.S. citizenship and passport. In his interviews with me, he reported that he would bring back money from Iranian investments as well as Iranian goods for his wife and son.

Then his business partner died and yet, in spite of the fact he was financially strapped, he dropped (or rather, lost) the car business.

By late 2010, following the death of his business partner in July, he had moved from Corpus Christi to Austin in order to live at home with his wife. In our September 26 interview, he recalled: "After Steve died, my life changed a lot. Up until that point I was spending some time in Austin and some time in

Corpus. But after he died, I didn't want to do the car business [in Corpus Christi] any more.

[snip]

Living in both Austin and Corpus Christi during that year, it was only late in the year and following his friend's death in July that he finally moved to Austin to live with his wife where he engaged in activities including landscaping around the home and planting fruit trees.

His wife described him during as depressed, sitting at home, in this later period.

For this example, he relies on Ms. Arbabsiar's wife's report that "for roughly one year around approximately 2010, Mr. Arbabsiar was severely depressed, isolating himself in his bedroom and rarely getting out of bed except to pace around his bedroom and chain smoke."

It was after that depression and a period when he was in medical treatment in late 2010 that Arbabsiar reached out to his cousin to build an "export business."

My life was going bad – I had lost my friend and my dad – my cousin, he took advantage of me. I hate to say that, and I trusted him – my whole family, they should help me. I wanted to do a good business, an export business.

Remember, in addition to talking to Narc about killing the Saudi Ambassador, Arbabsiar was also talking about dealing drugs.

Again, all of this might suggest nothing more than an appropriate awareness of Arbabsiar's cousin's identity (but even so, that suggests the myth that Arbabsiar approached Narc out of

the blue is just that—a myth).

But Arbabsiar was a very unlikely person to have gotten his citizenship when and how he did, particularly without the apparent assistance of an immigration lawyer. And between the time the government presumably identified Arbabsiar as an Iranian with ties to Quds Force and the time he ultimately got his citizenship, he made a lot of trips to Iran to get cash. Then, once he got citizenship, he lost his business and went into a funk and then—went to, or went back to, his cousin to launch “a good business, an export business,” and once again he returned to the States with thousands of dollars in cash, just like in 2010. During the entire time the FBI was purportedly watching him set up an assassination attempt, according to the Corpus Christi cops, they never once contacted those cops, not even to check the criminal record that their dead tree files showed.

It sure sounds like the government was following Arbabsiar a lot longer than the 18 months they claim.

But then the report also reveals how Arbabsiar first found Narc.

Mr. Arbabsiar stated that the Mexican woman that he contacted to help identify someone to carry out the assassination attempt on the Saudi Ambassador had a younger sister with whom he had a sexual relationship in 1992, while he was married to his third wife.

So maybe his relationship with the DEA goes back to 1992, when he fucked his way into the family?

---

# CONFIRMED: THE GOVERNMENT HID-AND IS STILL HIDING-MANSSOR ARBABSIAR'S FIRST DOCKET

I first raised questions of why the government had charged Manssor Arbabsiar—the Scary Iran Plotter—with an **amended** complaint almost two weeks ago. As I noted then, the obvious existence of an earlier sealed complaint might suggest the possibility that Arbabsiar was charged with something entirely different than the murder-for-hire charges he got charged with on October 11.

First (and this is what got me looking at the docket in the first place), the complaint is an **amended complaint**. That says there's a previous complaint. But that complaint is not in the docket. Not only is it not in the docket, but the docket starts with the arrest on September 29 (notice the docket lists his arrest twice, on both September 29 and October 11), but the numbering starts with the amended complaint (normally, even if there were a sealed original complaint, it would be incorporated within the numbering, such that the docket might start with the amended complaint but start with number 8 or something).

Two things might explain this. First, that there was an earlier unrelated complaint—say on drug charges, but the charges are tied closely enough to this op such that this counts as an amended complaint. Alternately, that Arbabsiar was charged with a bunch of things when

he was arrested on September 29, but then, after at least 12 days of cooperation (during which he waived Miranda rights each day), he was charged with something else and the new complaint incorporated Ali Gholam Shakuri's involvement, based entirely on Arbabsiar's confession and Shakuri's coded conversations with Arbabsiar while the latter was in US custody. [emphasis original]

If Arbabsiar were originally charged with something different than he was charged with on October 11—for example, if he were charged with drug charges that might put him away for hard time—it might explain why he waived Miranda rights for 12 days in a row, when he had, on 5 different occasions in his past, hired lawyers to represent him when he got in legal trouble.

Well, this filing not only confirms that an earlier complaint exists—the earlier complaint is dated September 28—but it confirms my suspicion the complaint is in an different docket that is entirely sealed.

On September 28, 2011, Magistrate Judge James C. Francis IV authorized a complaint bearing **docket number 11 Mag. 2534** ("Sealed Complaint"), **charging the above-listed defendant**. The Sealed Complaint is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

On October 11, 2011, Magistrate Judge Michael H. Dolinger authorized an Amended Complaint (**11 Mag. 2617**) **charging the defendant and Gholam Shakuri** ("Amended Complaint"). By order of the Honorable Loretta A. Preska, dated October 11, 2011, the Sealed Complaint was ordered to remain sealed. On October 11, 2011, the defendant was presented **on only the Amended Complaint**.

The Government respectfully requests

that the Court enter a limited unsealing order permitting the Government to **produce the Sealed Complaint in redacted form** to defense counsel as part of the discovery process. The Sealed Complaint would otherwise remain sealed.

First, compare the docket numbers:

First Complaint: 11-mg-2534

Amended Complaint: 11-mg-2617

Criminal Indictment: 11-cr-897

These  
are  
three  
entire  
ly  
differ  
ent dockets.

Search: Criminal Case Search 11-mg-2534 New York Southern Page: 1

No records found



A search for criminal magistrate docket 11-2534 returns nothing. Which means the docket—the entire docket—is and remains sealed.

This increases the likelihood that the first complaint charges entirely different charges—such as opium charges—than the amended complaint does.

Indeed, the language of this letter appears to suggest that only Arbabsiar was charged in the first complaint. Even if this earlier complaint pertained to murder-for-hire charges, this might make sense—as I have pointed out, most of the current charges are conspiracy charges that would involve at least two defendants. But the letter suggests—by stating only that “the defendant was presented on only the Amended Complaint”—that there may be charges unique to Arbabsiar, completely unrelated charges that hang over him still—that weren’t charged because of his 12-day cooperation to implicate Shakuri.

And here’s the kicker. The government isn’t even telling Arbabsiar’s defense counsel all of what



was in that first complaint. They are asking that she receive the complaint **in redacted form**.

So not only are they hiding the original basis of his arrest from us—US citizens and the world community, to whom the government claimed this is an international incident. But they're hiding parts of this earlier complaint even from the public defender tasked to actually represent this guy.

---

## **SCARY IRAN PLOT: FBI HAD NO NEED TO INVESTIGATE ARBABSIAR'S CORPUS CHRISTI PAST**

So imagine this scenario.

A DEA informant calls up his handler out of the blue and says,

Omigod! Some crazy Iranian just approached me to arrange some kind of hit on behalf of this Iranian terror organization. He asked about explosives (I bragged about my C4 expertise.) He found me through my aunt in Corpus Christi. She says she knows him from when he used to be a used car salesman.

The DEA calls the FBI. What's one of the first things the FBI would do?

Maybe look him up in the FBI's own files (they find he doesn't have a federal record). And just after that, you'd think they'd start investigating him in Corpus Christi, where Narc knew him to have connections. Maybe call the cops there and see if they knew this crazy

Iranian. Which, since Arbabsiar has a pretty consistent record of petty arrests and lawsuits, they do.

Which is why it's sort of odd that the FBI never contacted the Corpus Christi cops—they first talked to them the day after Arbabsiar was charged.

Arbabsiar had previous arrests in Nueces County during nearly 20 years living in the area.

That meant arrest records and personal details were on file in the county's warehouse. But no one from any federal agency ever asked for the folder, Kaelin said.

"From an intelligence-gathering standpoint, even the tiniest bits of information could have a connection to something bigger," he said. "They never asked to see it."

In fact, FBI agents never contacted the sheriff's office or the police department about their investigation into Arbabsiar.

That's all the more weird given that some of the criminal files on Arbabsiar were on dead tree files in a warehouse from back in the day when the FBI itself didn't really use computers (you know, like last year).

Now, my scenario sounds weird, almost impossible, particularly in the age of information sharing between local cops and national counterterrorism investigators. Even if they were worried about keeping Narc's identity secret—which I'm sure is particularly critical so close to the border in South Texas—you'd think they'd at least go and make discreet investigations about Arbabsiar (particularly given the claims that, by the end of the investigation, FBI officers seemed to be going out of their way to make their presence

known.

Neighbors, however, said it had been years since Arbabsiar lived in the stucco house he once shared with his wife on a suburban cul-de-sac. They said it appeared that as many as 10 people were living in the house, and lately there had been some signs of suspicious activity: When residents looked for available Wi-Fi networks, networks with names like “FBI Van 1” would pop up.

Unless ...

Unless they didn't need to do that background research on Arbabsiar when Narc purportedly came to them out of the blue to tell them about this crazy Iranian seeking an assassin purportedly out of the blue.

The FBI's seeming disinterest in learning about Arbabsiar from the law enforcement officials who ostensibly knew him best suggests they already knew about him when he approached Narc.

(As a number of media outlets have reported, the Grand Jury has indicted the plotters, a mere nine days after the Administration started making an international incident about this. I'll update or do a post once the indictment is in the docket.)

---

**GOVERNMENT REMAINS  
MUM ABOUT WHEN IT  
FIRST CHARGED  
ARBABSIAR AND FOR**

# WHAT

Yesterday, I pointed out some oddities of the docket for Manssor Arbabsiar, the accused plotter in the Iran assassination plot. Most notably, the docket for this crime starts with the amended complaint. That indicated there was an original complaint. But the numbering on the docket—which starts with the amendment complaint—suggested the original complaint **might** relate to an entirely different crime.

bmaz called the court house to try to figure out the oddity. And court personnel did some checking—and consulted directly with the AUSA trying this case—they explained only that there had been a prior complaint in SDNY which Chief Judge Loretta Preska had approved having sealed. The court house offered no insight on when all this happened.

The government's unwillingness to unseal that original complaint is just another weird aspect of this case, as it suggests Arbabsiar might have been arrested for totally different charges. Or he might have been charged months ago.

To add the curiosity, consider this quote from Arbabsiar's public defender, Sabrina Shroff.

Mr. Arbabsiar, who has lived in Texas for many years, made a brief appearance in federal court in Manhattan on Tuesday afternoon, dressed in a blue checked shirt and with a pronounced scar on his left cheek. He did not enter a plea, but his lawyer, Sabrina Shroff, said after the hearing that **"if he is indicted, he will plead not guilty."** [my emphasis]

Arbabsiar's lawyer isn't sure he'll be indicted? She's not sure this will ever be presented to a grand jury?

That may indicate the government is already talking plea deal with Arbabsiar (and why not,

since he's been chatting freely about this for two weeks and apparently would prefer to stay in jail than go free).

Which, if that were to happen, would mean—barring the unlikely extradition of Shakuri—none of this questionable evidence would ever be challenged by an antagonistic lawyer or nor evaluated by a jury.

And if that were to happen, then the whole wacky plot, with all its dubious aspects, would serve nothing more than to cause an international incident and keep Arbabsiar in US government custody, potentially on easier terms than the prison term he might have expected for whatever he was charged with in his first complaint.

---

## **IN ATTEMPTING TO JUSTIFY TRUMP MUSLIM BAN, PROPAGANDA OUTLET PROVES INANITY OF IRAN, SUDAN INCLUSION**

WaPo did this fact check on Trump senior advisor Stephen Miller's claim that, "72 individuals, according to the Center for Immigration Studies, have been implicated in terroristic activity in the United States who hail from those seven nations, point one." It awards his claim three stars, stating,

[U]pon closer examination of the cases on the list, it becomes clear that his statement went too far. In fact, this is pretty thin gruel on which to make sweeping claims about the alleged threat posed to the United States by these

seven countries, especially because the allegations often did not concern alleged terrorist acts in the United States.

[snip]

Regardless of the direct or tangential ties that investigators believe each individual may have to terrorist activities, these charges need to be proven in a court of law. Suspected or potential terror links involving these 72 individuals do not confirm Miller's claim that they were "implicated in terrorist activity."

Moreover, some people on this list entered the United States – many of them naturalized – decades before they were charged with any of the crimes. That makes Miller's use of this list to defend Trump's executive order quite questionable.

There are other methodological problems with the list Miller references that WaPo doesn't consider. For example, it includes people, like Ahmed Warsame, who got extradited or rendered to the US, so it's not like their presence in the US can be attributed to visa screening (though there is some concern that the Muslim ban will make it more difficult to extradite and coerce cooperation from similarly situated defendants, thus making it harder to round up threats overseas).

Just as strikingly, the list affirmatively undermines the claim that these seven countries are all a threat. Of the CIS' list of 72 individuals, just four are from Iran, two from Libya, just one from Sudan. And the claims implicating these people mostly fall apart when you look closer. Most of them arise from the efforts in the early 2000s to prosecute Muslim charities, and several of those cases eventually fell apart, rather spectacularly in a case

associated with Al-Haramain. Plus, in at least two cases, these defendants got caught in the middle of America's changing views on which terrorists it criminalizes and which it partners with.

#### Sudan

Abdel Azim El-Siddig: CIS claims that El-Siddig was found guilty of conspiracy to fail to register as a foreign agent and was sentenced to 58 months. That's an error. El-Siddig plead just to conspiracy to violate FARA. He was sentenced to probation and has served that sentence. El-Siddig was largely charged in an effort to coerce his cooperation in prosecuting former Congressman Mark Deli Siljander, who pursued the interests of the Islamic American Relief Agency. Ultimately, even Siljander was only sentenced to a year; it looks like this may have been one of the cases that fell apart based on crummy intelligence.

#### Libya

Ali Mohamed Bagegni: One of the Libyans listed is Ali Mohamed Bagegni, who was on the board of IARA and got wrapped up in the case against Siljander. He served 6 months of probation.

Emadeddin Muntasser: Muntasser was convicted in another charity case – for lying to get tax exempt status for Care International and also for lying about having met Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who has gone on and off America's list of favored terrorists for twenty years now. Judge Dennis Saylor overturned the tax charge, finding it was not supported by the facts presented. The First Circuit reinstated guilty verdicts on tax charges, but Saylor just sentenced him to time served.

#### Iran

Siavosh Henareh: As WaPo notes, one of the Iranians listed is Siavosh Henareh. He was **busted** for conspiracy to import heroin that others allegedly were going to use to raise money for Hezbollah. But he was not charged with any ties to terrorism.

Pete Seda (Pirouz Sedaghaty): Seda's case is a particularly problematic charity case, as we know the government illegally spied on him under Stellar Wind (though they probably did with all the other charity defendants as well). Ultimately, though, the charge that he tried to funnel money to Chechen fighters was **overturned** by the 9th Circuit, and he pled guilty to tax fraud. The case fell apart in part because the government had to pay off witnesses to implicate him and withheld other information. See **this post** for more details about how HSBC got off for a far bigger scale of crime associated with this case.

Zeinab Taleb-Jedi: Taleb-Jedi was prosecuted in 2006 for material support for MEK, the anti-Iranian group that a good chunk of DC has also **materially supported**, including Howard Dean, Elaine Chao, John Bolton, Fran Townsend, and Newt Gingrich, a group which had been a big source of often flimsy intelligence on Iran. She stalled out that prosecution and in 2009 ultimately pled guilty to violating an executive order. She was sentenced to time served.

Manssor Arbabsiar: I've written about the Scary Iran Plot extensively (for example **here**, **here**, **here**, **here**). It is the one case where someone really was convicted of plotting an attack in the United States – in this case, to assassinate then Saudi Ambassador to the US Adel al-Jubeir. Arbabsiar plead



guilty to the charges, so there's no doubt he did act on his Revolutionary Guard cousin's orders to find someone to kill the Saudi Ambassador. But most of the details about the plot – Arbabsiar's likely prior role as an informant and his efforts to resume that role, DEA's great craft in making the plot as scary as possible (even targeting a restaurant favored by Senators), the circumstances surrounding Arbabsiar's interrogation and mental competence, and even hints that the cousin may have been a mole for another government – raise questions about how serious Iran was about actually conducting this attack.

In short, just one of these cases can really be construed as an attempted attack, and that was pretty remarkable for the fiction and other handiwork the DEA went into in making it a spectacular bust.

Don't get me wrong. The overall list is bullshit too. If you look at CIS' numbers, you see that most represented community, Somalia, also happens to be the one that has for years partnered closely with the FBI to alert them to concerns about radicalization. That basically means Trump's Muslim ban punishes that community for affirmatively working to prevent terrorism.

But CIS' efforts to pretend that Iran, Sudan, and Libya make sense here fall even further flat.

---

## NOW THAT'S SOME DISTURBANCE IN THE

# FORCE

At some time around 9:30 PM ET at the INSA Leadership Dinner, John Brennan suggested that maybe the CIA Director – that is, maybe he – should have a 10 year term.

D/CIA John Brennan says it might make sense to have the CIA director and DNI serve similar terms to the FBI director's 10-year term.

At 4:30 AM Saudi time (so 9:30 PM ET), Saudi King Salman announced a major royal shake-up. Rather than his brother Muqrin bin Abdulaziz being Deputy and heir to the throne, American favorite and very close Brennan buddy Mohammed bin Nayef will be heir.

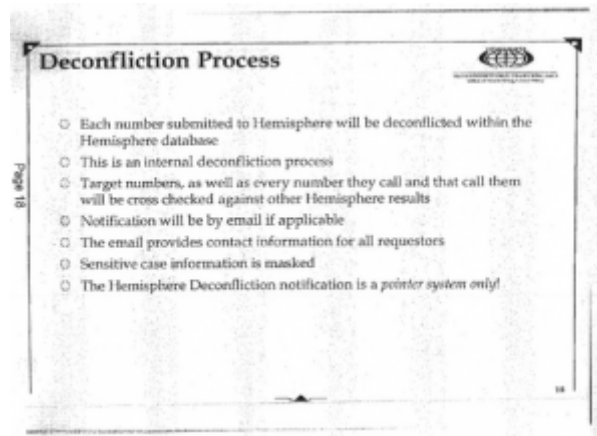
Saudi King Salman is announcing a major royal shake-up at 4:30 am. Muqrin is out, M. Bin Nayaf is the new heir, his own son deputy heir.

That's a rather interesting power move by two closely affiliated types (though I assume that the CIA Director can't do these things by fiat ... yet).

Update: Adding, King Salman's insomnia induced Kingdom restructuring also apparently made Ambassador to the US (the guy whom Manssor Arbabsiar was purportedly trying to kill) Adel al-Jubeir Foreign Minister.

---

## DECONFLICTION IN DRAGNET DATABASES



I want to return to something that appears in both of the Hemisphere slide decks we've seen: Deconfliction.

In addition to helping law enforcement find burner phones and contact chains, using connections that include location, Hemisphere helps deconflict between multiple investigative teams.

When multiple teams are working the same targets – in war or criminal investigations – you need to be aware of what other teams are doing. In war, this helps to ensure you don't shoot a friendly. In investigations, it helps to protect turf and combine efforts.

In investigations – especially drug or terrorism ones that rely on informants – it also helps to distinguish legally sanctioned crime – that of informants – from that which no law enforcement agency is directing. And, as the Declaration deck explains, Hemisphere checks new queries against previous ones, and emails requestors if someone has already chained on that contact.

- Target numbers, as well as every number they call and that call them will be cross checked against other Hemisphere results
- Notification will be by email if applicable
- The email provides contact

## information for all requestors

In other words, in addition to the way it serves as a quick investigative tool, Hemisphere also helps drug investigators to avoid stepping on each others' toes (or at least communicate better).

Then there's this:

- Sensitive case information is masked

This seems to suggest Hemisphere doesn't, presumably, provide any hints about how the original investigator is conducting their investigation, whether suspected traffickers are bring run or not. That's the kind of thing that would be "masked." (Note, this suggests that whoever is running this database would have access to that masked information.)

I raise all this because it poses questions for other databases involving informants. As I have noted, FBI uses the phone dragnet (and therefore presumably the Internet dragnet in whatever form and geographic locale it still exists) to identify potential informants. And one thing FBI does with its back door searches during assessments assessments is review actual content collected under traditional FISA and FAA in its quest for informants.

These dragnet databases play a key role in the selection and recruitment of informants to use in terrorism investigations.

But then what happens?

The example of David Headley – who played a crucial role in one of the most lethal terrorist attacks since 9/11, the Mumbai attack, the early period of which while he served as an informant for the DEA – is instructive. The FBI likes to boast that Section 702 helped stop Headley's plot against Danish cartoonists. But Headley's case should, instead, raise real questions about

how it is a terrorist can plan a complicated terrorist attack while his known terrorist colleagues, presumably, are being surveilled without detection by the people supposedly handling him.

We know that the metadata dragnets, at least, put some identifiers on a “defeat list.” There’s reason to suspect (in part from the syntax of redacted references to the defeat list) they do so not just for high volume numbers, but for sensitive numbers (perhaps Congress, for example). But I also think they may put informants on a defeat list too. That’s, in part, because if you didn’t do so their handlers would become two degrees from terrorist suspects, which might have all sorts of unintended consequences. That’s just an educated guess, mind you, but if I’m right it would have some interesting implications.

That doesn’t appear to have prevented DEA from tracking Manssor Arbabsiar, the Scary Iran Plotter (I assume he at least used to be an informant, because there’s little else that would explain why the cousin of a top Quds Force Member busted for drug possession would nevertheless get citizenship, and deconfliction discussions show up in what was probably his immigration file).

But it would raise really big questions in other cases.

One way or another they need to give informants special treatment in databases – as they apparently do in Hemisphere. How they do so, however, may have real consequences for the efficacy of the entire dragnet.

---

## NSA HAS CONQUERED

# CANADA AND MEXICO NOW

To  
accomp  
any  
its  
excell  
ent  
piece  
on the  
NSA's



Zombie Lie about having prevented 54 terrorist attacks, ProPublica republished the map NSA released to seed the Zombie Lie (visual aids help with propaganda, I understand).

I noticed for the first time how the NSA has simply incorporated Canada and Mexico into the "Homeland."

I wouldn't have mentioned it at all, but one of the events they're almost certainly including among the 13 is the Manssor Arbabsiar "plot" to kill the Saudi Ambassador. That plot, at least as DEA's informant crafted the tale, involved targets in Argentina, too (and, of course, the plotting took place in Mexico).

Though perhaps the most telling aspect of the whole map is how the whole terrorism thing goes blank once you get south of Mexico. There, of course (and in Mexico as well), we're stopping "Narcoterrorists," not "terrorists."

Finally, it's funny that NSA is so inaccurate with their maps, given that some of their spying depends on boundary arbitrage, the placement of collection points outside of the US, so it can collect US person data while pretending not to.

---

# HOW TO EVALUATE THE HIG? EXPLOITATION? DEAD BODIES?

Carrie Johnson uses the arraignment of Abu Anas al-Libi as an opportunity to consider the success of the High Value Interrogation Group. She weighs the following details:

- There haven't been that many cases
- Some governments refuse access to HIG
- The group lacks leadership
- The clean team model has problems

But I think we need to take a step back.

First, while Johnson gives a list of some of the interrogations conducted by HIG, it's not comprehensive (for example, it doesn't include Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, with whom HIG was used in an ad lib capacity – it had just started; and it doesn't include Manssor Arbabsiar). And it's not clear we would know every time HIG gets used. For example, there were unnamed officials present at Ibragim Todashev's death; given that we know HIG was used from the start with Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, it's fair to at least ask whether any HIG members were present, and whether they remained in the room when Todashev was killed.

That expanded list of HIG interrogees quickly gets you to the question of consequences for HIG interrogees. Just from this possible list, you get questions such as,

- If HIG was present at Todashev's interrogation did they have a role in his killing?

- Al-Libi was brought to New York because of health problems attributed to his choice to stop eating and drinking; did HIG use any food manipulation before this?
- While I expect him to lose, Abdulmutallab's appeal on competency grounds remains active; did HIG-induced solitary tip Abdulmutallab over the edge, as his appeal claims (he was reportedly not-altogether there when first detained)?

And these issues, plus the refusal of lawyers for Dzhokhar all could endanger convictions – and certainly, death penalties (which has already been taken off the table in al-Libi's case) – in these cases.

Then there's the question of what we're after: the truth, or exploitation?

I've written about exploitation and HIG here, and Jason Leopold and Jeff Kaye showed how that – not necessarily truthful intelligence – was the goal of the torture program.

Exploitation is the use of interrogations not just to get intelligence, but also to support propaganda and/or generate informants. If exploitation is HIG's goal, we might raise questions about whether both Abdulmutallab and Tsarnaev really implicated Anwar al-Awlaki of their own accord. In the former case, both non-HIG confessions did not implicate Awlaki as anything but an inspiration. In the latter, we know Tamerlan was also influenced by right wing propaganda. If exploitation is the goal, should we really believe the government story about the Scary Iran Plot, particularly given that most



details of the “plot” – such as the restaurant targeted in Georgetown – came from our informant in the first place?

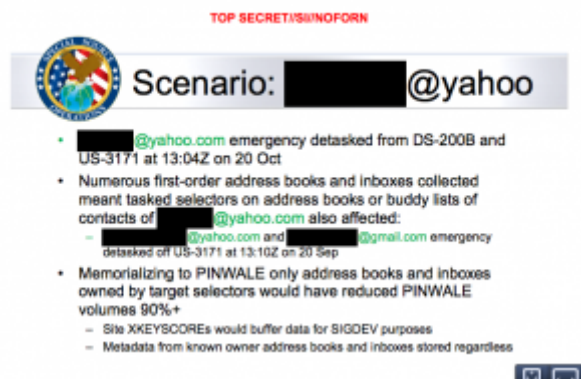
I don’t know the answer to these questions. But they seem to be ones we need to answer whether HIG works or not – to say nothing of whether a Democratic society should embrace HIG or not.

---

## REMARKABLY TIMED SPAMOUFLAGE, SCARY IRAN PLOT EDITION

WaPo  
has  
its  
latest  
Snowden  
n  
scoop  
out,  
descri  
bing

how the NSA collects hundreds of thousands of email contact lists daily.



The National Security Agency is harvesting hundreds of millions of contact lists from personal e-mail and instant messaging accounts around the world, many of them belonging to Americans, according to senior intelligence officials and top secret documents provided by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden.

I’ll come back to this part of the story later.

But further down in the story, it describes how a hack-spam attack on a member of Iran’s Quds Force overwhelmed NSA, forcing it to conduct

emergency detasking of that person and several others between September 20 and October 20, 2011.

Spam has proven to be a significant problem for NSA – clogging databases with data that holds no foreign intelligence value. The majority of all e-mails, one NSA document says, “are SPAM from ‘fake’ addresses and never ‘delivered’ to targets.”

In fall 2011, according to an NSA presentation, the Yahoo account of an Iranian target was “hacked by an unknown actor,” who used it to send spam. The Iranian had “a number of Yahoo groups in his/her contact list, some with many hundreds or thousands of members.”

The cascading effects of repeated spam messages, compounded by the automatic addition of the Iranian’s contacts to other people’s address books, led to a massive spike in the volume of traffic collected by the Australian intelligence service on the NSA’s behalf.

After nine days of data-bombing, the Iranian’s contact book and contact books for several people within it were “emergency detasked.”

This means that this target and “several people” within this Quds Force target’s contact books (and possibly the primary target’s email) were detasked in precisely the same time period as our informant, Narc, was entrapping Manssor Arbabsiar, of Scary Iran Plot fame.

Remember, if you read the plain language of some of the transcripts and other materials, it appears possible the money for this op involved another government.

There’s a similarly odd passage in the quotations purportedly showing that Shahlai was being funded for this by

Iran.

[Arbabsiar] this is politics, ok  
... it's not like, eh, personal  
... **This is politics, so these  
people they pay this  
government** ... [Shahlai's] got  
the, got the government behind  
him ... he's not paying from his  
pocket. [ellipses original]

Now this passage, unlike the last two  
(which are translations from Farsi),  
might best be explained by Arbabsiar's  
less than perfect English. With that  
caveat, though, the bolded passage  
appears to suggest not that Iran was  
paying QF, but that QF was paying some  
other government (or someone else was  
paying Iran).

There are later details that also don't make  
sense if this was an Iranian op.

In other words, during precisely the period when  
the most bizarre, improbable plot to hit  
Hollywood in years happens, some of the  
potential targets have their surveilled  
communications spamouflaged by an outside  
entity. (h/t to Frank N Furters for first  
calling this spamouflage.)

But I think our Intelligence Community is too  
dull to find that worthy of more consideration.