

# THEY SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO NOOR AL-DEEN

I presume this story on Abu Zubaydah is an attempt to highlight the difficulty of choices facing the Obama administration, as well as to draw some attention to things like the excerpts of the ICRC report on Abu Zubaydah's (and others') torture. It reminds us what we already know—that Abu Zubaydah suffers from a head injury that made his memory bad and wasn't even a member of al Qaeda, making his torture that much more pointless.

Because his name often turned up in intelligence traffic linked to al-Qaeda transactions, some U.S. intelligence leaders were convinced that Abu Zubaida was a major figure in the terrorist organization, according to officials engaged in the discussions at the time.

But Abu Zubaida had strained and limited relations with bin Laden and only vague knowledge before the Sept. 11 attacks that something was brewing, the officials said.

[snip]

"The government doesn't retreat from who KSM is, and neither does KSM," said Joseph Margulies, a professor of law at Northwestern University and one of Abu Zubaida's attorneys, using an abbreviation for Mohammed. "With Zubaida, it's different. The government seems finally to understand he is not at all the person they thought he was. But he was tortured. And that's just a profoundly embarrassing position for the government to be in."

The news, here, seems to be that the US picked

up a young associate of Abu Zubaydah the same night they got the older man. And that associate, Noor al-Deen, basically corroborated the details the intelligence community is now accepting. Before the US started torturing Abu Zubaydah.

Noor al-Deen, a Syrian, was a teenager when he was captured along with Abu Zubaida at a Pakistani safe house. Perhaps because of his youth and agitated state, **he readily answered U.S. questions, officials said, and the questioning went on for months, first in Pakistan and later in a detention facility in Morocco.** His description of Abu Zubaida was consistent: The older man was a well-known functionary with links to al-Qaeda, but he knew little detailed information about the group's operations.

[snip]

On the night of March 28, 2002, Pakistani and American intelligence officers raided the Faisalabad safe house where Abu Zubaida had been staying. A firefight ensued, and Abu Zubaida was captured after jumping from the building's second floor. He had been shot three times.

Cowering on the ground floor and also shot was Noor al-Deen, Abu Zubaida's 19-year-old colleague; one source said that he worshiped the older man as a hero. Deen was wide-eyed with fear and appeared to believe that he was about to be executed, remembered John Kiriakou, a former CIA officer who participated in the raid.

"He was frightened – mostly over what we were going to do with him," Kiriakou said. "He had come to the conclusion that his life was over."

Deen was eventually transferred to

Syria, but attempts to firmly establish his current whereabouts were unsuccessful.

His interrogations corroborated what CIA officials were hearing from Abu Zubaida, but there were other clues at the time that pointed to a less-than-central role for the Palestinian. As a veritable travel agent for jihadists, Abu Zubaida operated in a public world of Internet transactions and ticket agents.

So you've got a panicked teenager spilling his guts, insisting that Abu Zubaydah is just a functionary. And at the same time, Abu Zubaydah was saying he was just a functionary (and providing what useful intelligence he had to offer). And the US response to that was ... to make Abu Zubaydah their torture experiment—their test case for what torture techniques did and did not "work."

Yet more reason they destroyed the torture tapes showing Abu Zubaydah's interrogation.