

FUNNY HOW ALL THOSE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS SEEM TO FAIL...

Dexter Filkins confirms today something that had been suggested in earlier reporting: Pakistan cooperated in our capture of Abdul Ghani Baradar in January to disrupt peace talks in Afghanistan.

Now, seven months later, Pakistani officials are telling a very different story. They say they set out to capture Mr. Baradar, and used the C.I.A. to help them do it, because they wanted to shut down secret peace talks that Mr. Baradar had been conducting with the Afghan government that excluded Pakistan, the Taliban's longtime backer.

In the weeks after Mr. Baradar's capture, Pakistani security officials detained as many as 23 Taliban leaders, many of whom had been enjoying the protection of the Pakistani government for years. The talks came to an end.

[snip]

"We picked up Baradar and the others because they were trying to make a deal without us," said a Pakistani security official, who, like numerous people interviewed about the operation, spoke anonymously because of the delicacy of relations between Pakistan, Afghanistan and the United States. "We protect the Taliban. They are dependent on us. We are not going to allow them to make a deal with Karzai and the Indians."

[snip]

"This is a national secret," he said. "The Americans and the British were going behind our backs, and we couldn't

allow that." American and British officials denied they were directly involved in talks with the Taliban.

Some of the Americans anonymously quoted in the piece deny Pakistan was driving the capture; elsewhere Filkins repeats suggestions that the CIA got used by Pakistan. So while the ISI seems ready to confirm their reasons for the capture, the US intent in it still remains murky.

But there seems to be a pattern of murky events scuttling peace negotiations of late.

Consider the May 25 drone strike in Yemen that also happened to kill a provincial official, Jabir al-Shabwani, trying to talk al Qaeda into making peace.

At first, the news from Yemen on May 25 sounded like a modest victory in the campaign against terrorists: an airstrike had hit a group suspected of being operatives for Al Qaeda in the remote desert of Marib Province, birthplace of the legendary queen of Sheba.

But the strike, it turned out, had also killed the province's deputy governor, a respected local leader who Yemeni officials said had been trying to talk Qaeda members into giving up their fight.

[snip]

The May strike in Yemen, for example, provoked a revenge attack on an oil pipeline by local tribesmen and produced a propaganda bonanza for Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. It also left President Saleh privately furious about the death of the provincial official, Jabir al-Shabwani, and scrambling to prevent an anti-American backlash, according to Yemeni officials.

As with the Baradar capture, it remains unclear whether our partners used us, or whether we intended this outcome. But there does appear to be an emerging pattern of peace negotiations scuttled in one way or another.

(See also Yemen's arrest of journalists intending to cover a "peace conference" launched by a Yemeni arms dealer today.)

This may just be al Qaeda's attempts to prevent what happened in Iraq—the payoff of those sympathetic to their cause. Or it may be something else entirely.

But it sure seems like someone—quite possibly our "partners" in the fight against al Qaeda—badly wants to prevent peace from breaking out.