

IS THIS HOW THE YEMENI-AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP WORKS?

In my post on the government's invocation of state secrets to hide the things national security officials have already leaked to the press, I linked to David Ignatius' largely-overlooked report that Yemen first asked us to target Anwar al-Awlaki, and only thereafter did we get around to targeting him and telling courts they had no business asking why we had done so.

Last October, the Yemeni government came to the CIA with a request: Could the agency collect intelligence that might help target the network of a U.S.-born al-Qaeda recruiter named Anwar al-Aulaqi?

Keep that in mind as you read this story about a Yemeni woman trying to FOIA information about US involvement in her US citizen husband's abduction in Yemen. (h/t Political Carnival)

As [Sharif Mobley] drank tea on a Sana'a street, eight masked men burst from two white vans and tried to grab him. Terrified, he ran, but was brought crashing to the ground by two bullets to his legs and bundled into one of the vans.

The method of abduction may have been brutal, but it was not the work of a rebel group or criminal gang. Instead, the armed men were Yemeni security agents, and in a set of legal documents seen by Al Jazeera, Mobley's lawyers allege they were operating on behalf of the US government.

Now, the story only presents the Mobley's

family's story, in which they claim that while Mobley had had contact with Anwar al-Awlaki, he never had any dealings or awareness of ties to al Qaeda.

“Sharif openly admits that he had been in limited contact with al-Awlaki,” says Cori Crider, Mobley’s lawyer. “But he categorically denies that he was involved in or aware of any plot or link to al-Qaeda.”

Perhaps Mobley’s family is just spinning, downplaying more developed ties between Mobley and AQAP. Though note that any contact with al-Awlaki would have happened before Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula was designated a terrorist organization, and even then, the government claims that terrorist designation should not limit others’ First Amendment rights to associate with members of designated terrorist groups.

Whether or not Mobley’s story is correct or not, it doesn’t dismiss the other allegation: that someone apparently tied to the US embassy raided the Mobley family home, all while pretending that Yemen—not the US—had sole custody of Mobley.

When she realised her husband was missing, [Mobley’s wife, Nzinga Saba Islam] immediately reported his disappearance to the embassy, where she was told to file a report with Yemeni police.

That night, at 1am, as she lay worrying about what had happened to her husband, the documents say around 15 men burst into the family home. The family were held at gunpoint and searched, while the house was raided and items confiscated.

Nzinga has told lawyers that the following morning she returned to the US embassy. As she waited to file a report about what had happened, she insists

that she saw the man who had led the raid on her home wearing a US embassy pass.

“He was, as far as Nzinga could tell, in charge of the raid on her home,” Crider says. “She asked the embassy about him and what he was doing there, but embassy officials never gave her a straight answer.”

The documents allege that embassy officials listened to what Nzinga had to say, and began to question her about her husband’s activities in Yemen. Amongst the items she says they showed her were photographs taken during the raid on the house.

Mind you, none of this would be new. By all appearances, the US has used Pakistan as a proxy for arresting US citizens to avoid granting those citizens the legal rights they otherwise would have.

But the move is troubling, given the appearance that Yemen pushed this crack-down before the US did, and given the US government’s refusal to make public their larger case against al-Awlaki.

Anwar al-Awlaki is very quickly becoming our next surrogate bogeyman in the war on terror (the one designed to distract from the continued freedom of the people who actually targeted us on 9/11). And along with that, the government seems intent on hanging a whole lot more terrorist designations on people—including American citizens—without ever showing the evidence that al-Awlaki himself was operational.