

STATE DEPARTMENT SECRECY: WHAT A BUNCH OF CRAP!

Since the issue of State Department secrecy – breached by the WikiLeaks cable dump – has been a topic of discussion, I thought it worthwhile to point to this National Security Archive post describing a particular FOIA appeal.

Eleven years ago, in those halcyon pre-9/11 days, Frank Pallone sponsored a resolution declaring Pakistan a state sponsor of terror reading, in part,

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that Pakistan should be designated as a state sponsor of terrorism.

Whereas reliable reports from Western media sources have cited Pakistan as a base and training ground for terrorist groups, and the Pakistani Government's demonstrated reluctance to halt the use of its soil for terrorist organizations;

Whereas media reports have implicated Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) directly in terrorist activities, as well as the international drug trade;

[snip]

Whereas Pakistan is one of three countries to recognize the Taliban in Afghanistan;

Whereas the Taliban, which has been declared a foreign terrorist organization by the U.S. Department of State, has provided refuge and assistance to Osama Bin Laden;

Whereas the U.S. Department of State has declared Osama Bin Laden and associates as a foreign terrorist organization;

Whereas Pakistan has hindered U.S. and international efforts to apprehend Osama Bin Laden;

Whereas Pakistan was placed on the U.S. Department of State's 'watch list' of suspected state sponsors of international terrorism in 1993;

When NSA first got the document in response to a FOIA, there was a square marking on the upper right corner redacted under the deliberative exception. The NSA appealed and won and – voila! It turns out some State Department flunky who reviewed the proposed legislation 11 years ago had declared, “What a bunch of crap!”

I can see why our government wouldn't want us to know that, when presented with a resolution condemning Pakistan for actions that made it easier for Osama bin Laden and a bunch of other terrorists we have since gone to war against to operate, some bureaucrat responded by declaring “what a bunch of crap!” How terrible it would be after all, if the citizens paying that bureaucrat's salary got to see what bad judgment he or she had!

But can the State Department understand how, faced with an effort to hide the State Department's own bad judgment, we citizens might not trust its judgment on secrecy, much less policy?