

“CONSULAR EMPLOYEE” CHARGED WITH MURDER IN PAKISTAN

The NYT has a sanitized version of the story of a “US Consular employee” who has been charged with shooting two Pakistanis.

An American official, Raymond A. Davis, 36, appeared in court here on Friday on charges of murdering two Pakistanis after police officials alleged Mr. Davis shot the men during a possible roadside robbery attempt here. The incident on Thursday in mid-afternoon traffic could inflame strong anti-American sentiment in Pakistan, a possibility that the Pakistani government acknowledge while saying it would apply the rule of law.

[snip]

Mr. Davis was driving a white rental car on the congested Jail Road in Lahore on Thursday afternoon when two men on a motorcycle attempted to rob him, according to Pakistani police accounts. Mr. Davis shot the two men, police officials said. Police accounts initially differed on whether the two assailants were armed, but according to the official police report released Friday, the police found weapons on the dead men. Mr. Davis did not have a license to carry a weapon, the law minister said.

Mr. Davis called the consulate for help during the episode, and a four-wheel-drive vehicle that tried to come to his rescue hit and killed a third man, a senior police official, Faisal Rana, said on Thursday.

The American Embassy in Islamabad acknowledged in a statement that Mr.

Davis was employed by the consulate but did not describe his position. Pakistani police officials described him in various statements as a “security official” or a “technical adviser.”

But Jeff Stein speculates about what might really be going on.

A senior former U.S. diplomatic security agent suggested Thursday that the American involved in a **fatal shootout** in Lahore, Pakistan, was the victim of a spy meeting gone awry, not the target of a robbery or car-jacking attempt.

“It looks like an informant meet gone bad more than a car-jacking attempt,” said Fred Burton, a former deputy chief of the U.S. Diplomatic Security Service’s counter-terrorism division.

And the WaPo adds these details.

Some Pakistani news channels covering the episode raised the possibility that the Americans involved were employees of Blackwater, an American security contractor, now known as Xe Services, that is widely viewed in Pakistan as a sort of mercenary agency.

Alberto Rodriguez, a spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, confirmed that one U.S. citizen who works at the Lahore consulate was involved in the shooting incident. He said U.S. officials were still trying to determine what happened and whether other U.S. officials were involved.

Rodriguez said he did not know whether the detained American has diplomatic immunity. Police said they were checking on that. [my emphasis]

All of which reminds me of the speculation that

the ISI outed the Station Chief in Pakistan so he could be included in a lawsuit involving drone killings.

American officials said the C.I.A. station chief had received a number of death threats since being publicly identified in a legal complaint sent to the Pakistani police this week by the family of victims of earlier drone campaigns.

The American officials said they strongly suspected that operatives of Pakistan's powerful spy service, the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, had a hand in revealing the C.I.A. officer's identity – possibly in retaliation for a civil lawsuit filed in Brooklyn last month implicating the ISI chief in the Mumbai terrorist attacks of November 2008.

There's a lot of worry about Wikileaks exposing the identity of sensitive contacts overseas. But it seems like our "allies" may be doing that themselves.

Update: There was a bomb attack in Kabul that the Taliban claims was an attempt to kill Xe's director in Afghanistan.

Taliban guerrillas said they bombed a Kabul grocery store, where police said eight people died, in an attempt to kill the country director of the U.S. security company Xe Services LLC.

The bomb, which shattered an upscale market popular with international aid workers and business people, killed the director in Afghanistan of Xe, said Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid in a statement via telephone text message.

If Davis is, as some in Pakistan claim, a Xe contractor, it would mean two attempted attacks

on Xe in as many days.