

RAYMOND DAVIS' WORK "WITH" THE CIA

After the Guardian confirmed for the Anglo-American world what the rest of the world had already concluded—that Raymond Davis is some kind of spook—the government gave the American outlets that have been sitting on this knowledge the go-ahead to publish it.

The New York Times had agreed to temporarily withhold information about Mr. Davis's ties to the agency at the request of the Obama administration, which argued that disclosure of his specific job would put his life at risk. Several foreign news organizations have disclosed some aspects of Mr. Davis's work with the C.I.A., and on Monday, American officials lifted their request to withhold publication.

Yet even though the NYT claims they have been cleared by the government to describe Davis' "specific job," the article does no such thing.

Note how none of the usages in the story make it clear whether Davis works for the CIA, for Blackwater, for his own contracting company, or for JSOC:

The American arrested in Pakistan after shooting two men at a crowded traffic stop was **part of a covert, C.I.A.-led team** of operatives conducting surveillance on militant groups deep inside the country, according to American government officials.

[snip]

carried out scouting and other reconnaissance **missions for a Central Intelligence Agency task force**

[snip]

Mr. Davis **has worked for years as a C.I.A. contractor**, including time at Blackwater Worldwide, the controversial private security firm (now called Xe)

[snip]

The officials gave various accounts of the makeup of the covert task force and of Mr. Davis, who at the time of his arrest was carrying a Glock pistol, a long-range wireless set, a small telescope and a headlamp. An American and a Pakistani official said in interviews that operatives from the Pentagon's Joint Special Operations Command had been assigned to the group to help with the surveillance missions. Other American officials, however, said that no military personnel were involved with the task force.

[snip]

Even before his arrest, Mr. Davis's C.I.A. affiliation was known to Pakistani authorities, who keep close tabs on the movements of Americans.

[snip]

American officials said that with Pakistan's government trying to clamp down on the increasing flow of **Central Intelligence Agency officers and contractors** trying to gain entry to Pakistan, more of these operatives have been granted "cover" as embassy employees and given diplomatic passports.

[snip]

American officials said he operated as part of the Central Intelligence Agency's Global Response Service in various parts of the country, including Lahore and Peshawar.

[snip]

It is unclear when Mr. Davis began working for the C.I.A., but American officials said that in recent years he worked for the spy agency as a Blackwater contractor and later founded his own small company, Hyperion Protective Services. [my emphasis]

This article leaves open every single possibility—CIA, Blackwater, other contractor, JSOC—with the least likely being that Davis is an employee of the CIA (not least because according to the Pakistanis he makes \$200,000). Though the article does make it clear we're now extending official cover to contractors.

The most likely, I'd guess, is that we're using Blackwater to employ JSOC folks to get around legal niceties.

Now, the difference is pretty important, to both the Pakistanis and us. As the article makes clear, the military isn't really supposed to be in Pakistan. We're not at war with Pakistan, after all, at least not as far as Congress has declared.

And Americans are going to care a whole lot more if it is confirmed that another Blackwater cowboy has inflamed our relations with an ally by shooting off his guns wildly and killing the locals. We were supposed to have learned our lesson about Blackwater in Nisour Square.

Hell, I'm pretty cranky about this confirmation that we're giving official cover to contractors in the first place, given that it exposes us to just this kind of diplomatic problem.

Now, frankly, I'm all in favor of protecting CIA officers' identities when they are unknown. But just about everyone in Pakistan already knew Davis is a spook. The NYT's continued silence on that fact doesn't serve to protect Davis; it only makes the paper complicit in the government keeping secrets from us, from its own citizens.

And it appears that the NYT is still engaged in

such complicity by refusing to clarify precisely who employed Davis and whether in doing so our government is engaging in illegal war or continuing to employ the same old problematic contractors.

I guess it's a whole lot easier to confirm someone is CIA when doing so distracts attention from the fact that he's probably something more embarrassing still.

Update: The WSJ, without admitting it too has been sitting on Davis' CIA affiliation, tells a different story. It says this guy with a camera full of pictures, a phone full of tribal area phone numbers, and a GPS is just a simple protective officer.

U.S.officials say Mr. Davis, who has been held in the eastern city of Lahore since late January, was on a short-term contract as a protective officer, responsible for providing security to officials with the CIA and other agencies in the country.

"Rumors to the contrary are simply wrong," a U.S. official said of Pakistani claims that Mr. Davis was directly involved in intelligence gathering operations.

And it quotes an ISI officer claiming they didn't know that Davis was a spook.

A senior official with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency, or ISI, said Pakistan was not aware that Mr. Davis was working for the CIA and believes the U.S. could be using undeclared operatives as a way of circumventing visa restrictions imposed by Islamabad on the U.S. spy agency.

"We didn't even know about him," the ISI official said. "We don't know how many Raymond Davises there could be running around."

Well, if the idea behind lifting the request that newspapers withhold details was to confuse the issue, then the government and its compliant newspaper friends have succeeded!

Update: See how exact the ISI can be as compared to Americans?

But an official from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) told AFP Monday that Davis was working for the CIA.

"He's on contract. He's not a regular CIA guy, but he's working for CIA. That's confirmed," the official said.

Or maybe the AFP just feels less obligation to tell the American people what the government wants us to hear?

Update: The WaPo's Greg Miller seems to get it right (though he admits WaPo sat on this too).

The American who fatally shot two men in Pakistan last month and who has been described publicly as a diplomat is a security contractor for the CIA who was part of a secret agency team operating out of a safe house in Lahore, U.S. officials said.

[snip]

But in fact Davis has spent much of the past two years working as part of a group of covert CIA operatives, whose mission appears to have centered on conducting surveillance of militant groups in large cities including Lahore.

[snip]

Current and former U.S. officials said that Davis had previously been employed by the sprawling security firm once known as Blackwater. A spokeswoman for the company, now known as Xe Services, did not respond to a request for

comment.