

THE RE-SCOOP THAT PAKISTAN SHOWED CHINA OUR STEALTH CHOPPER

On May 10, ABC news reported Pakistanis saying both they and the Chinese wanted to take a look at the stealth helicopter used in the Osama bin Laden raid. That story quoted a US official saying he would be “shocked” if the Pakistanis had not already, by May 10, shown it to the Chinese.

Pakistani officials said today they're interested in studying the remains of the U.S.'s secret stealth-modified helicopter abandoned during the Navy SEAL raid of Osama bin Laden's compound, and suggested the Chinese are as well.

The U.S. has already asked the Pakistanis for the helicopter wreckage back, but one Pakistani official told ABC News the Chinese were also “very interested” in seeing the remains. Another official said, “We might let them [the Chinese] take a look.”

A U.S. official said he did not know if the Pakistanis had offered a peek to the Chinese, but said he would be “shocked” if the Chinese hadn't already been given access to the damaged aircraft.

At that point, the Pakistanis had already had the tailpiece for 10 days. It took a John Kerry trip several days later and another week of delay before the Pakistanis returned the helicopter pieces.

So why, following the FT scoop (re-scoop?) confirming that the Pakistanis had shown the helicopters to the Chinese, are folks acting so surprised?

The US now has information that Pakistan, particularly the ISI, gave access to the Chinese military to the downed helicopter in Abbottabad," said one person in intelligence circles, referring to the Pakistani spy agency. The Chinese engineers were allowed to survey the wreckage and take photographs of it, as well as take samples of the special "stealth" skin that allowed the American team to enter Pakistan undetected by radar, he said.

And note that the NYT's CIA reporter tries to inject doubt where the FT scoop has little (though ultimately, Mazzetti does quote one person who is "certain" Pakistan shared the helicopter).

American spy agencies have concluded that it is likely that Chinese engineers – at the invitation of Pakistani intelligence operatives – took detailed photographs of the severed tail of the Black Hawk helicopter equipped with classified technology designed to elude radar, the officials said.

[snip]

American officials cautioned that they did not yet have definitive proof that the Chinese were allowed to visit to Abbottabad. They said that Pakistani officials had denied that they showed the advanced helicopter technology to other foreign governments. One military official said Sunday that Pakistani officials had been directly confronted about the American intelligence.

One person with knowledge of the intelligence assessments said that the American case was based mostly on intercepted conversations in which Pakistani officials discussed inviting the Chinese to the crash site. He

characterized intelligence officials as being “certain” that Chinese engineers were able to photograph the helicopter and even walk away with samples of the wreckage. [my emphasis]

Are we really supposed to believe it took the NSA 3 months to translate intercepts of top Pakistani officials “inviting” the Chinese to see the helicopter?

Really?

At issue may be efforts to force General Ashfaq Kayani to deny showing the Chinese the helicopter (from the FT).

“We had explicitly asked the Pakistanis in the immediate aftermath of the raid not to let anyone have access to the damaged remains of the helicopter,” said the person close to the CIA.

Senior US officials confronted General Ashfaq Kayani, head of the Pakistan military, about this but he flatly denied it, according to a person with knowledge of the meeting. A senior Pakistani official also denied it to the FT. China declined to comment, as did the White House and CIA.

Or perhaps the 3 month delay in reporting on something that was widely believed to have happened may have to do with the CIA’s desire to allow the fiction that this did not occur to continue.

In any case, the whole scoop seems, at best, the effort of someone trying to force the Administration to admit that Kayani is not dealing in good faith. At worst, it’s another case of discovering gambling going on in the casino.