

THE SOON TO BE ANNOUNCED WAR IN YEMEN

In response to my speculation that the Administration might be treating UndieBomb 2.0 as one part of a larger secret including our war against Yemeni insurgents led out of the NSC, a reader ~~Mark Hosenball~~ alerted us to Mark Hosenball's reporting that drone strikes are not included among the leak investigations.

Recent revelations about clandestine U.S. drone campaigns against al Qaeda and other militants are not part of two major leak investigations being conducted by federal prosecutors, sources familiar with the inquiries said.

Most detailed information on the drone wars, which were initiated by the George W. Bush administration but expanded by President Barack Obama, is highly classified, officials said.

But Obama and top administration officials, including White House counter-terrorism chief John Brennan, recently have been alluding more openly to drone operations in public remarks, and detailed news coverage has been widespread.

The CIA has not filed a "crime report" with the Justice Department over reports about Obama's drone policy and a U.S. "kill list" of targeted militants, an action which often would trigger an official leak investigation, two sources familiar with the matter said. They requested anonymity to discuss sensitive information.

By contrast, the CIA did file a "crime report" following publication by the

Associated Press last month of a report disclosing the foiling of a plot by Yemen-based Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula to attack an airliner using a newly designed underwear bomb, sources said.

It's worth remembering, btw, that Hosenball was the person who reported that John Brennan revealed information that led Richard Clarke to learn that UndieBomb 2.0 was actually carried out by a Saudi asset. Just saying.

Meanwhile, the AP reports that the White House is going to acknowledge our undeclared wars in Yemen and Somalia in a report to Congress today.

For the first time, the White House's semiannual report to Congress on the state of U.S. combat operations abroad mentions what has been widely known for years but never formally acknowledged: The U.S. has taken "direct action" against al-Qaida members in Yemen and Somalia.

All this comes in advance of a June 20 deadline (I will be on a beach in England with the in-laws) in one of the ACLU's FOIAs on drones (the one on the Awlaki OLC memo) in which the CIA will have to decide whether it can confirm that it has a drone program.

Call me cynical, but I'm still waiting for the Administration to say all this non-specific disclosure means it can tell the ACLU to take a hike.

Ultimately, though, we have yet to see whether the kill list stories—which the AP reported to be out of date before they came out—will be presented in FOIA response as the current state of affairs in our drone war in Yemen.

Update: Here's the language on Yemen.

The U.S. military has also been working closely with the Yemeni government to

operationally dismantle and ultimately eliminate the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the most active and dangerous affiliate of al-Qa'ida today. Our joint efforts have resulted in direct action against a limited number of AQAP operatives and senior leaders in that country who posed a terrorist threat to the United States and our interests.

The United States is committed to thwarting the efforts of al-Qa'ida and its associated forces to carry out future acts of international terrorism, and we have continued to work with our CT partners to disrupt and degrade the capabilities of al-Qa'ida and its associated forces. As necessary, in response to the terrorist threat, I will direct additional measures against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces to protect U.S. citizens and interests. It is not possible to know at this time the precise scope or the duration of the deployments of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter this terrorist threat to the United States. A classified annex to this report provides further information.

Very interesting, particularly the nod to the classified annex, which presumably is more forthcoming about all the insurgents we've now promoted into "operatives and senior leaders" than we get here. And what's that construction about, anyway? "Operatives and senior leaders"??? To say the least, the order is odd.

Update: the comment from Hosenball was not from him himself—I've changed the post accordingly.