

JAILED JOURNALIST MORE CREDIBLE THAN FBI INTERVIEW

There are two paragraphs of the William Webster report on Nidal Hasan's contacts with Anwar al-Awlaki I find particularly interesting. [This appears on page 62; remember that Webster uses both redactions and substitutions—I've used different brackets to distinguish the two]

<Redacted> [In mid]-2011, an FBI <redacted> report documented an interview with an FBI subject <redacted> in which <redacted> [the subject] claimed to have met Aulaqi after the Fort Hood shootings. According to <redacted> [the subject], Aulaqi told him that Hasan "had contacted him via the Internet and had asked what he could do to help Muslims" and that Aulaqi had "advised Hasan that since he was an American soldier, he should kill other American soldiers." According to <redacted> [the subject], Aulaqi said he had given Hasan "permission to carry out his attacks on Fort Hood."

Although Hasan did contact Aulaqi via the Internet, we found no evidence, direct or indirect, that Aulaqi made these purported statements to Hasan (see Chapter 7). The evidence shows instead that Aulaqi did not even respond to Hasan's first message and its question about whether the acts of Muslim soldiers who had killed other soldiers could be reconciled with the Quran. The Washington Post reported on November 16, 2009, that in an interview with a Yemeni journalist, Aulaqi "said that he neither ordered nor pressured Maj. Nidal M. Hasan to harm Americans...."

In effect, the conclusion of the Webster report is that this claim from an FBI interview proved to be uncorroborated by the known evidence. The suggestion is it may be a false claim—perhaps made by someone overselling his knowledge, perhaps to negotiate an informant deal or distract the FBI.

But in the following paragraph, as if to corroborate what the data say—which is that no such communication happened—Webster treats the claims Awlaki made to a journalist in a November 2009 interview as credible.

While Webster doesn't say it, the journalist in question is Abdulelah Haider Shaye, the Yemeni journalist who remains in jail based in part on Obama's direct request to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

In his first interview with a journalist since the Fort Hood rampage, Yemeni American cleric Anwar al-Aulaqi said that he neither ordered nor pressured Maj. Nidal M. Hasan to harm Americans, but that he considered himself a confidant of the Army psychiatrist who was given a glimpse via e-mail into Hasan's growing discomfort with the U.S. military.

[snip]

Aulaqi declined to be interviewed by an American journalist with The Washington Post. But he provided an account of his relationship with Hasan — which consisted of a correspondence of a dozen or so e-mails — to Abdulelah Hider Shaea, a Yemeni journalist and terrorism expert with close ties to Aulaqi whom The Post contacted to conduct the interview. The Post reimbursed Shaea's travel expenses but did not pay him.

On Sunday, Shaea offered details of his interview with Aulaqi, an influential preacher whose sermons and writings supporting jihad have attracted a wide

following among radical Islamists. Shaea allowed a Post reporter to view a video recording of a man who closely resembles pictures of Aulaqi sitting in front of his laptop computer reading the e-mails, and to hear an audiotape in which a man, who like Aulaqi speaks English with an American accent, discusses his e-mail correspondence with Hasan.

Now, as I'll post later, it looks like the representations of the emails that both Shaye and government sources provided underplayed the degree to which Awlaki comes off as a disinterested egotist rather than terror inspiration (though both seem to be a response to the way Pete Hoekstra framed the emails; notably, Crazy Pete has, AFAIK, remained utterly silent about the Webster report which shows his demagoguery to be overblown).

But I find it notable that the Webster report treats Awlaki's comments—as mediated by Shaye and the WaPo—to be more credible than the FBI interview.