

THE SAUDI INTELLIGENCE WITHOUT A NAME

I had been wondering why John Kerry closed his meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal the day after the Boston Marathon bombing, followed by Chuck Hagel's unscheduled meetings in Saudi Arabia later that week.

The Daily Mail claims this is why:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia sent a written warning about accused Boston Marathon bomber Tamerlan Tsarnaev to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in 2012, long before pressure-cooker blasts killed three and injured hundreds, according to a senior Saudi government official with direct knowledge of the document.

[snip]

Citing security concerns, the Saudi government also denied an entry visa to the elder Tsarnaev brother in December 2011, when he hoped to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, the source said. Tsarnaev's plans to visit Saudi Arabia have not been previously disclosed.

It even reports Prince Saud had an unscheduled meeting with President Obama the day after meeting with Kerry.

Now, the article implicates the Saudi Interior Ministry, though perhaps Saudi Interior Minister Mohammed bin Nayef is not the senior Saudi official with direct knowledge of a report handed from the Saudi Interior Ministry to (the article says) top people at the Department of Homeland Security. (Keep in mind that MbN rarely gives or at least gave anything to the US without going through his old buddy John Brennan, though also note the DM included his

picture in the article.)

But there are other things about this I find interesting. First, the publication in the DM, which feels more like an info op than a report to, say, the WaPo. Then there's the DM's inclusion of people like House Homeland Security Chair Michael McCaul in its article (and, apparently, confirmation of a "Homeland Security Official" that the letter exists, which sounds like the same person as the HHSC aide quoted anonymously), heightening the partisan nature of this scoop.

Then there are apparent logical contradictions in the story, such as the detail that the Saudis apparently didn't share Tamerlan's name, but nevertheless expected the US to sort through his mail to get bomb components he could have gotten (and appears to have gotten) in a store.

It 'did name Tamerlan specifically,' he added. The 'government-to-government' letter, which he said was sent to the Department of Homeland Security at the highest level, did not name Boston or suggest a date for his planned attack.

[snip]

The Saudi government, he added, alerted the U.S. in part because it believed American authorities should be inspecting packages that came to Tsarnaev in the mail in order to search for bomb-making components.

There's the suggestion this intelligence came from Yemen.

He dismissed the idea that Tamerlan Tsarnaev was likely trained by al Qaeda while he was outside the United States last year.

The Saudis' Yemen-based sources, he explained, said militants referred to Tamerlan dismissively as 'the volunteer.'

'He was a gung-ho, self motivated jihadi who wasn't tasked by a larger group,' he said.

Then, finally, there's this: the brag about the four plots the Saudis tipped us off to.

'This is the fourth time the Saudi Arabian government has given the U.S. specific intel' about a possible terror plot, the official said, citing prior warnings about Richard Reid, the so-called shoe bomber who repeatedly tried to light a fuse in his shoe to bring down American Airlines flight 63 bound for Miami in December 2001.

He also cited the 300-gram 'ink-cartridge bombs' planted on two cargo planes headed for the United States from Yemen in October 2010. Those explosives were intercepted in Dubai, and at an East Midlands airport in Great Britain.

The DM names two plots: Richard Reid and the toner cartridge plot.

It doesn't name another obvious one of the four: the Saudi double agent UndieBomb plot last year, which appears to have been designed to provide the justification to allow signature strikes in Yemen.

And the fourth?