

I WONDER WHAT FAHD AL-QUSO THOUGHT OF THE AP'S UNDieBOMB 2.0 STORY?

It turns out Fahd al-Quso, whom the government alleged was Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's external operations director when he was killed in a drone strike May 6 of last year, never lived to see the AP's UndieBomb 2.0 story, which presumably described a plot he masterminded. That's because he died during the time period AP was delaying publication at the government's request.

As part of its effort to show how ridiculous it is for the Administration to seize 20 phone lines of call records to investigate a story on which the AP ceded to White House requests, the AP released this timeline of Administration statements surrounding their UndieBomb 2.0 plot.

Most of the dates were previously known (and have appeared in my posts on the subject). But I believe this one—the date AP first went to the White House with the UndieBomb story—is new.

May 2, 2012: Federal government officials ask the AP to delay publishing a story about a foiled plot by al-Qaida's affiliate in Yemen to destroy a U.S.-bound airliner, which the AP had recently discovered. They cite national security concerns. The AP agrees to temporarily delay publishing until national security concerns are allayed.

Which makes the timeline from that period look like this:

April 18: Greg Miller first reports on debate over signature strikes

Around April 20: UndieBomb 2.0 device recovered

Around April 22: John Brennan takes over drone targeting from JSOC

April 22: Drone strike that—WSJ reports, “Intelligence analysts [worked] to identify those killed” after the fact, suggesting possible signature strike

April 24: Robert Mueller in Yemen for 45 minute meeting, presumably to pick up UndieBomb

April 25: WSJ reports that Obama approved use of signature strikes

April 30: John Brennan gives speech, purportedly bringing new transparency to drone program, without addressing signature strikes

May 2: Government asks AP to delay reporting the UndieBomb 2.0 story, citing national security

May 6: Fahd al-Quso killed

May 7: Government tells AP the national security concerns have been allayed; AP reports on UndieBomb 2.0

May 8: ABC reports UndieBomb 2.0 was Saudi-run infiltrator

May 15: Drone strike in Jaar kills a number of civilians

While it was fairly clear in any case (and reporting had linked the UndieBomb 2.0 plot with Quso’s death), this timeline makes it crystal clear.

The delay was about killing Fahd al-Quso.

And yet, even after the AP waited 5 days to break the story, allowing the government to drone kill a human being in the interim, the Administration still launched a witch hunt against the AP for a story that became damaging only after John Brennan ran his blabby mouth.