

OBAMA STARTS SYRIAN BOMBING USING COVER OF KHORASAN CLAIMS

Last night, President Obama said the word “imminent” and started bombing Syria.

It appears the legal logic behind the attack (besides the fact that Congress hurriedly approved funding for war through December so it could get back to the campaign trail) is that in addition to striking ISIS in Syria (an attack we don't have any reasonable legal justification for) we are also attacking a group that James “Too Cute by Half” Clapper just rolled out, “Khorasan,” which unlike ISIS has not been kicked out of Al Qaeda and therefore might be targetable under the 2001 AUMF.

In spite of the fact that DOD allegedly had these Khorasan plans already in place, sources apparently felt like it'd be a good idea to alert them by telling Ken Dilanian they were the hot new thing just 10 days ago.

While the Islamic State group is getting the most attention now, another band of extremists in Syria – a mix of hardened jihadis from Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria and Europe – poses a more direct and imminent threat to the United States, working with Yemeni bomb-makers to target U.S. aviation, American officials say.

At the center is a cell known as the Khorasan group, a cadre of veteran al-Qaida fighters from Afghanistan and Pakistan who traveled to Syria to link up with the al-Qaida affiliate there, the Nusra Front.

Today's continuation of that narrative appears in CNN (and ABC, which I won't link to because of their infernal auto-play ads), which doesn't

ask how the US hoped to surprise Khorasan if they had just rolled them out as the big new boogeymen.

Among the targets of U.S. strikes across Syria early Tuesday was a collection of buildings to the west of Aleppo, some distance from ISIS strongholds.

While the United States worked with Arab partners to attack ISIS targets, the U.S. military alone took aim at the Khorasan Group, an organization formed by senior al Qaeda members based in Pakistan who traveled to Syria, CNN national security analyst Peter Bergen has reported.

“Khorasan” is an ancient term for an Islamic empire.

The sites the United States struck overnight included “training camps, an explosives and munitions production facility, a communication building and command and control facilities,” the military said in a statement.

The group was actively plotting against a U.S. homeland target and Western targets, a senior U.S. official told CNN on Tuesday. The United States hoped to surprise the group by mixing strikes against it with strikes against ISIS targets.

The official said the group posed an “imminent” threat. But another U.S. official later said the threat was not imminent in the sense that there were no known targets or attacks expected in the next few weeks.

The plots were believed to be in an advanced stage, the second U.S. official said. There were indications that the militants had obtained materials and were working on new improvised explosive devices that would be hard to detect,

including common hand-held electronic devices and airplane carry-on items such as toiletries.

The threat of Ibrahim al-Asiri –who with one bomb that could not have worked and several more claimed attacks identified by double agents in Saudi employ not only created the excuse for millions of dollars in TSA scanner profits, but also the ability to label Yemen an “imminent” threat and therefore bomb it – has moved to Syria.

Label the country an “imminent” threat. Then bomb.

In Obama’s statement, he emphasized the Khorasan tie.

Some questions smart people have been asking:

Micah Zenko: If Khorasan group was truly an imminent threat, why would the US delay bombing them just so they could bomb ISIS simultaneously?

Gregory Johnsen: Are people asking why a group calling itself “khurasan” is basing itself in Syria? Or is this just a USG name for a cell?

Spencer Ackerman: Why did a senior official say, just yesterday, that Khorasan was not an imminent threat.

Also: Why was Asiri claimed to be helping ISIS back in July?

The sources on which this latest justification relies seem to be people – James Clapper and Mike Rogers are two – who have a somewhat strained relationship with the truth and a very cozy relationship with disinformation. Moreover, Congress still hasn’t been briefed on the covert ops (which both Clapper and Rogers do know about) that the CIA has been working, with their Saudi partner, in Syria.

But we’ve got some claim to “imminent” now, so it’s all good.