

WHY THE BARGAIN REWARD FOR IBRAHIM AL-ASIRI?

For 5 years, Ibrahim al-Asiri has been the chief boogeyman in US efforts to scare Americans about terrorism from AQAP (and to justify huge outlays for dumb machines TSA can use). Almost yearly, the CIA leaks to ABC News that Asiri has mastered yet another new scary feat, such as surgically implanting bombs in someone's stomach cavity. More recently, the story has been that Asiri trained some of the western terror recruits in Syria (never mind McClatchy's report the real threat stems from a French defector).

Which is why I'm surprised that the Rewards for Justice announcement including him yesterday only offered \$5 million for his capture (as compared to Nasir al-Wuhayshi – though admittedly Wuhayshi is actually the leader of AQAP, contrary to what the press implies).

Just as interesting is the description the Rewards for Justice announcement and an earlier terrorist designation uses for Asiri. Both make absolutely no mention of the UndieBomb 1.0, toner cartridge, or UndieBomb 2.0 plots in which Asiri has always been claimed to be a central figure.

Instead, State mentions only Asiri's alleged attempt to kill our chief Saudi intelligence partner, Mohammed bin Nayef, with a bomb hidden in his brother's rectum. Or maybe underwear. Details, as they always are with Asiri, are fuzzy.

The Secretary of State has designated al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) operative and bomb maker Ibrahim Hassan Tali al-Asiri under E.O. 13224, which targets terrorists and their supporters. This action will help stem the flow of finances to al-Asiri by blocking all property subject to U.S.

jurisdiction in which al-Asiri has an interest and prohibiting all transactions by U.S. persons with al-Asiri. AQAP has previously been designated by the United States under Executive Order 13224 and as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

Al-Asiri is an AQAP operative and serves as the terrorist organization's primary bomb maker. Before joining AQAP, al-Asiri was part of an al-Qa'ida affiliated terrorist cell in Saudi Arabia and was involved in planned bombings of oil facilities in the Kingdom.

Al-Asiri gained particular notoriety for the recruitment of his younger brother as a suicide bomber in a failed assassination attempt of Saudi Prince Muhammed bin Nayif. Although the assassination attempt failed, the brutality, novelty and sophistication of the plot is illustrative of the threat posed by al-Asiri. Al-Asiri is credited with designing the remotely detonated device, which contained one pound of explosives concealed inside his brother's body.

Al-Asiri is currently wanted by the Government of Saudi Arabia. In addition, Interpol has published an Orange Notice warning the public about the threat posed by him.

Remember, even by the time Asiri was designated as a terrorist in 2011, US prosecutors were well on their way to prosecuting Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab in his attempt to take down a Detroit-bound jet; Abdulmutallab was charged with conspiracy, and FBI allegedly found Asiri's fingerprint on the bomb. Plus, they had Abdulmutallab's confession implicating Asiri.

And yet ... not a mention of these things

in State's descriptions of Asiri.