

STILL NO ANSWER ON HOW MINH QUANG PHAM MATERIALLY SUPPORTED TERROR WHILE IN CUSTODY

The WaPo has an interesting story about US intelligence efforts to disrupt the most recent release of Inspire magazine. While the confirmation that the US was responsible for the recent disrupted release is not surprising, I find this rather interesting.

“You can make it hard for them to distribute it, or you can mess with the content. And you can mess with the content in a way that is obvious or in ways that are not obvious,” said one intelligence official, who, like others, spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive internal debates.

WaPo’s sources are now bragging that they’ve altered the content of Inspire, in addition to delaying its release.

While the article focuses on this most recent sabotage, it rather bizarrely makes no mention that the first installment of Inspire was hacked in very similar way (purportedly by the Brits).

In the case of Inspire, the debate stretches back three years. The first issue contained a recipe for making a bomb using common materials, such as nails and a pressure cooker like the ones used in Boston. The title of the article was “Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom.”

There was also a threat to Molly Norris, a Seattle cartoonist who published a satirical cartoon about the prophet

Muhammad. "She should be taken as a prime target of assassination," wrote Anwar al-Awlaki, the American-born cleric who was killed in a U.S. drone strike.

Though it does quote Keith Alexander making the case for sabotage.

"It's obvious if people are calling for crazies to murder a U.S. citizen, why wouldn't you stop it?" said one former official, recalling the debate in which National Security Agency Director Gen. Keith B. Alexander argued on behalf of disruption.

In that case, the administration decided against action, in part because the CIA preferred to use the site to gather intelligence. In subsequent debates, the danger of an imminent threat "really made the difference" in terms of whether to disrupt issues of the magazine, according to a former administration official.

DOD and CIA have, according to public reports without details, had significant deconfliction issues in the past on cyber operations. Are we so convinced DOD didn't help the Brits insert cupcake recipes in that first installment?

And this article doesn't mention something I've been tracking for a while: the case of Vietnamese-English Minh Quang Pham graphic artist, whom the US charged with materially support Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula last year. Of note, when they charged him, they called for him to forfeit any means he had to influence AQAP.

As a result of planning and perpetuating Federal crimes of terrorism against the United States ... defendant [] shall forfeit ... all right, title, and interest in all assets, foreign and domestic,

affording a source of influence over al Shabaab and AQAP.

Which is all the more interesting still considering the period for which the US charged Pham for material support includes five months – from July to December 2011 – during which a great deal of evidence suggests he was in British custody.

I suppose it might make it easier to hack Inspire if you had their graphic artist in secret custody.