IS OBAMA THREATENING THE "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" TO HIDE TORTURE?

I noted, when David Cameron was in town, that his Justice Secretary, Kenneth Clarke, was pushing to expand "closed material proceedings" as a way to better protect secret information. The effort was a response, Clarke claimed, to courts forcing the government to release information about Binyam Mohamed's torture, which ended up revealing the US was using some torture techniques before the Bybee Memo purportedly approved torture.

Now, Cameron's government is ratcheting up the fear-mongering, claiming that the US withheld information about a terrorist threat 18 months ago because of the the Mohamed release.

> The CIA warned MI6 that al-Qaeda was planning an attack 18 months ago, but withheld detailed information because of concerns it would be released by British courts.
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> British intelligence agencies were subsequently forced to carry out their own investigations, according to Whitehall sources.
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> Several potential terrorists were identified with links to a wider European plot, but it is still not known whether the British authorities have uncovered the full extent of the threat.

I flew through London 18 months ago during what I suspect was this terror threat. It was the kind of threat where one airline—American—had rolled out the full heightened security theater, but another—Delta—had nothing special, both on the same day.

That kind of terrorist threat.

If it is true the CIA is withholding such information (I'm not saying I buy that the US withheld information from a serious threat), then consider what this means. Back in August 2006, the US (specifically, Dick Cheney and Jose Rodriguez) betrayed the "Special Relationship" by asking the Pakistanis to arrest one of the plotters in the liquid planes plot, which in turn forced the Brits to roll up their own investigation before they had solidified the case against the plotters. Several of the plotters had to be tried two times to get a conviction. The Bush Administration did all this as an election stunt.

And yet we're the ones purportedly complaining about information sharing?

What's interesting about all this is that, in supporting his fear-mongering, Cameron tied this plan with his plan to suck up all the Toobz data in the UK.

> As I see it, there are some significant gaps in our defences, gaps because of the moving-on of technology – people making telephone calls through the internet, rather than through fixed line – but also gaps in our defences because it isn't currently possible to use intelligence information in a court of law without sometimes endangering national security.

FWIW, I had already been wondering whether the Brits' last attempt to expand their data collection derived from the 2006 fiasco—not least given questions regarding data sharing (we withheld some NSA data until 2008) and the role of the murdered GCHQ scientist Gareth Williams in the investigation. Why spend a lot of money recreating what we've already got in UT, unless the traditional data-sharing between the US and UK wasn't working out that well?

Note, these national security power grabs are

slightly different: one aspires to replicate what the US already has and—at least in theory—willingly shares, while the other purportedly responds to actions we've taken.

But the implication is that Cameron says Brits need to sacrifice several important legal protections so the US can hide its torture.