

DEAD MEDIATORS BELIEVE THE CLAIM US DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT PIERRE KORKIE

A number of people have been pointing to the buried lead in a NYT story about the US killing South African aide worker Pierre Korkie the day before the charity he worked for finalized his freedom. Back in November, a group of tribal leaders who were brokering the deal got killed in a drone strike.

After months of silence, Gift of the Givers had a breakthrough in August, when tribal leaders sent a delegation, acting on behalf of the charity, into the remote badlands. The assembled Qaeda fighters took a vote on reducing the ransom, and half the jihadists voted "yes" while half voted "no," Mr. Sooliman said. In October, the abductors said that they would accept \$700,000. The family, which had already said it could not afford \$3 million, still did not have enough money.

In November, the tribal leaders went back to meet with Qaeda members. The car was hit by a drone strike, killing the mediators, according to Mr. Sooliman. "We thought it was over," he said.

Not only is it fairly shocking that the US first killed these mediators, then killed the guy they were trying to free, but this detail undermines the US claim they had no idea who was with Luke Somers when they tried to rescue him.

US special forces who tried to rescue photojournalist Luke Somers from al-Qaeda in Yemen were not aware of the identity of the other hostage held with him, a US official has told the BBC.

Both South African teacher Pierre Korkie and Mr Somers were shot by the militants during the raid, US officials say, and died as a result.,

A charity working with Mr Korkie said he was to have been freed on Sunday.

Its project director said the US rescue attempt had “destroyed everything”.

To believe this claim you’d have to believe the NSA’s 2-degree spying techniques, which just weeks ago had gotten some tribal leaders killed, had completely collapsed such that the US had no affirmative intelligence on the kidnappers (which of course they did because they knew where to try to rescue Somers). You’d also have to believe that a South African charity had managed to set up ongoing communications with the kidnappers, but the NSA wasn’t monitoring those communications (or, just as likely, using them as a means to track the kidnappers). The only way that’d be true is if we had forsworn SIGINT in favor of dodgy intelligence from our partners in the neighborhood; while I think many of our catastrophes in Yemen and Syria can be blamed on our dodgy partners lying to us, it is inconceivable we would not at the same time be checking their claims with SIGINT.

It may be convenient for the US to pretend it doesn’t engage in SIGINT in Yemen. But it is not longer believable.