IN TERROR FIGHT, "RUSH FOR IMMEDIATE RESULTS" LEADS TO LOSS OF TRADECRAFT, MISSES REAL THREATS

Adam Goldman and Matt Apuzzo have a long AP article this morning, outlining yet another huge blow to CIA operations, this time in the form of the loss of a number of agents in Lebanon. However, in describing that situation, Goldman and Apuzzo provide a description of a likely root cause of the problem that I think may apply more globally than just to the CIA and counterintelligence:

> The Lebanon crisis is the latest mishap involving CIA counterintelligence, the undermining or manipulating of the enemy's ability to gather information. Former CIA officials have said that once-essential skill has been eroded as the agency shifted from outmaneuvering rival spy agencies to fighting terrorists. In the rush for immediate results, former officers say, tradecraft has suffered.

As described by Robert Baer in his description of the utter failure of tradecraft in the Khost bombing, the loss of tradecraft in the CIA started when it was under the direction of John Deutch (whom I think of as likely Clinton's worst appointment and entirely inappropriate for the job), but as Baer described, the massive expansion in CIA activities post 9/11 with so few properly trained field agents contributed even more strongly to the current shortage of tradecraft.

But it is not just within CIA where a massive shift in actions and priorities occurred post 9/11. Consider what has been put forward just in

the past few months from the FBI and NYPD and it is easy to see that here, too, a "rush for immediate results" has hurt the fight against terrorists, producing laughable arrests while missing real threats.

Just last night, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Police Commissioner Ray Kelly staged "terror porn", in which they described the arrest of the "Christmas Light Bomber" in a case that it appears even the FBI found not worth pursuing. The FBI looks no better, however, having chosen to indict a group of Georgia crackers who met at Waffle House to discuss making ricin from a few castor beans. And, of course, the FBI really outdid itself in concocting and making an arrest in the Scary Iran Plot, where we are asked to believe in a connection between Iran's Revolutionary Guard and a Mexican drug cartel.

But, as Baer describes for Khost and as Goldman and Apuzzo describe today for Lebanon, this mindless focus on immediate results also leaves the country open to real attacks that escape detection. And here, again, the damage is not just limited to CIA. Marcy notes here how NYPD's massive counterterrorism efforts completely missed the two most significant recent attempts to attack New York City. Also, despite the huge attention that was being paid to Anwar al-Awlaki, contact with him was one of several clues the intelligence community did not connect with other clues from Nidal Hasan prior to his attack on Fort Hood.

Where is the function within NYPD, FBI and the counterterrorism effort in general that subjects allocation of efforts to the "laugh test"? Is there no process within the FBI that would flag a group of elderly militia wannabe types as worthy of only an occasional drive-by rather than infiltration with a confidential informant who helps push them toward indictable actions? Is there not a single person within NYPD who looks at allocation of efforts and says it's not worth spending the funds to produce a video of a

car bomb to use in terror theater for announcing the arrest of someone for building a single pipe bomb? (And come to think of it, why was the video available Sunday night if Pimentel was arrested Saturday night?) What big disaster awaits the country because the intelligence apparatus has been tied up in chasing down the next lame press conference material instead of filtering through the vast amount of information collected to identify the legitimate threats?