

DID ANOTHER SAUDI DOUBLE AGENT “TIP” US OFF TO A “PLOT” AGAINST AMERICA?

ABC reports that the UndieBomber 2.0 plot revealed yesterday in breathless fashion was exposed by a double agent that—given that he delivered the bomb to Saudi Arabia—was presumably being run by the Saudis just like all the other men the Saudis have infiltrated into AQAP.

In a stunning intelligence coup, a dangerous al Qaeda bomb cell in Yemen was successfully infiltrated by an inside source who secretly worked for the CIA and several other intelligence agencies, authorities revealed to ABC News.

The inside source is now “safely out of Yemen,” according to one international intelligence official, and was able to bring with him to Saudi Arabia the bomb al Qaeda thought was going to be detonated on a U.S.-bound aircraft.

So as happened when Jabir al-Fayfi revealed the toner cartridge plot, we can now celebrate the skill of our spooks without thinking too much about what it means that the Saudis are running this terror show. (Though at least we’ve reached the point where US outlets are reporting this, rather than just British outlets.)

But here are a few questions:

Have Republicans already claimed this guy was a “recidivist” Gitmo detainee, as they have with other double agents? That effectively gives them a two-fer on detainee exploitation, “proof” that Gitmo detainees are too dangerous to release, followed by “proof” that the terrorists are

planning attacks (not to mention “proof” that the CIA has good intelligence on al Qaeda).

Was the “international intelligence official” who revealed this double agent to ABC Yemeni? The Yemenis leaked Jabir al-Fayfi’s role back in 2010. If they again leaked the involvement of this double agent, we might want to start asking ourselves whether they can be trusted to keep these double agents secret.

I argued that the decision to use signature strikes in Yemen seems like a Saudi-driven demand rather than a well-considered US decision. We apparently made that decision around the same time the US reportedly learned of this “plot.” If the Saudis were—as I suspect—running this double agent like all the other double agents we’ve infiltrated into AQAP, then did they “tip” this plot as a way to convince us to make what on its face looks like a boneheaded decision?

One more bit of possible irony to contemplate. Ibrahim al-Asiri—the AQAP bombmaker reportedly behind this plot—sent his own brother, Abdullah, out to assassinate Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Nayef back in 2009. The attempt failed. Since then, two of the men Nayef presumably infiltrated into AQAP have foiled Asiri’s bomb plots. It sort of makes you wonder how Saudi double agents keep getting close enough to al-Asiri to foil his plots, doesn’t it?