

BANDAR BUSH KICKS THE POODLE

Via AmericaBlog, the Guardian reports that Bandar bin Sultan, adoptive member of the Bush family, is alleged to have threatened Tony Blair to convince him to spike the investigation into BAE-related bribery of Bandar.

Saudi Arabia's rulers threatened to make it easier for terrorists to attack London unless corruption investigations into their arms deals were halted, according to court documents revealed yesterday.

Previously secret files describe how investigators were told they faced "another 7/7" and the loss of "British lives on British streets" if they pressed on with their inquiries and the Saudis carried out their threat to cut off intelligence.

Prince Bandar, the head of the Saudi national security council, and son of the crown prince, was alleged in court to be the man behind the threats to hold back information about suicide bombers and terrorists. He faces accusations that he himself took more than £1bn in secret payments from the arms company BAE.

He was accused in yesterday's high court hearings of flying to London in December 2006 and uttering threats which made the prime minister, Tony Blair, force an end to the Serious Fraud Office investigation into bribery allegations involving Bandar and his family. [my emphasis]

Now, it appears that Bandar threatened to "hold back information about suicide bombers and terrorists" in the UK—I don't think this

suggests that Bandar was going to direct terrorists to attack the UK. Here is what the Poodle said about the meeting:

The critical difficulty presented to the negotiations over the Typhoon contract ... All intelligence cooperation was under threat ... It is in my judgment very clear that the continuation of the SFO investigation into al-Yamamah risks seriously damaging confidence in the UK as a partner ... I am taking the exceptional step of writing to you myself

And here is what the British Ambassador (to Saudi Arabia, I guess?) said to the Serious Fraud Office:

We had been told that 'British lives on British streets' were at risk ... If this caused another 7/7, how could we say that our investigation was more important? ... If further investigation will cause such damage to national and international security, [the head of the SFO] accepted it would not be in the public interest

This explains why Bandar has, in the past, boasted about how critical the intelligence he provided to the US and UK about ongoing terrorist activities. By reminding—or claiming—that the biggest successes in thwarting terrorism have come only with the cooperation of Bandar Bush, it increases his ability to wield that cooperation to such great effect.

Still, if the allegation is true, it demonstrates the degree to which the Saudis (or at least Bandar) are willing to use Saudi-based terrorism as a weapon to retain the upper hand in its relations with the US and its allies.

It sure makes you wonder why Bandar didn't make similar threats against the US—or if he did, why Bush didn't respond?

Update: Here's another description of how the investigation might affect relations with Saudi Arabia:

[REDACTION] raises the prospect that Saudi co-operation on counter terrorism and the relationship on Iraq and the wider Middle East will suffer. The Cabinet Secretary has raised the possibility of harm to intelligence gathering, [REDACTION] and to multinational initiative to try to resolve the Israel/Palestine conflict concluding that "if the Saudis are already starting to take such steps in relation to the Typhoon programme, then we must anticipate that they could follow though (sic) [REDACTION] in relation to counter terrorism and the bi-lateral relationship.

Read that passage and contemplate the fact that the Poodle is now the Middle East envoy, purportedly in charge of negotiating a resolution to the Palestinian problem. Why do we need someone who has been threatened to go easy on the Saudis in charge of these negotiations?