

CIA: MONEY IS FUNGIBLE, EXCEPT WHEN IT IS OUR MONEY

Keep in mind as you read these four paragraphs from WaPo's follow-up on NYT's story on Mohammed Zia Salehi that the person quoted is almost certainly from the same CIA that profiles terrorist organizations that, regardless of the charitable work they do, may not legally receive money.

U.S. officials did not dispute that Salehi was on the CIA payroll, which was first reported by The New York Times. But officials sought to draw a distinction between agency payments and corruption probes.

"The United States government had nothing to do with the activities for which this individual is being investigated," the second U.S. official said. "It's not news that we sometimes pay people overseas who help the United States do what it needs to get done. . . . Nor should it be surprising, in a place like Afghanistan, that some influential figures can be both helpful and – on their own, separate and apart – corrupt to some degree."

The flow of CIA money into the region dates to the agency's support for mujaheddin fighters who ousted Soviet forces three decades ago.

The spigot was tightened during the 1990s but reopened after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Much of the money went to support warlords whose militias helped to overthrow the Taliban regime, which had provided sanctuary for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda training camps. Salehi had served as an interpreter for one of the most

prominent of those warlords, Abdurrashid Dostum, an ethnic Uzbek whose forces played a critical role in the campaign against the Taliban.

The unnamed "second US official" almost certainly is at the CIA or it's close vicinity. And this person wants to claim that the money CIA pays to Salehi has absolutely nothing to do with the corruption of which he stands accused. The story elsewhere details the alleged corruption to include sheltering New Ansari (a money transfer firm used to drain aid money out of Afghanistan), doling out cash and cars to Hamid Karzai supporters, and negotiating with the Taliban. So the CIA actually wants to claim that the money it pays to Salehi is not then laundered into payments to Karzai supporters or cooperative Taliban members.

You know, the Taliban? The guys we claim to be fighting, since there are no more al Qaeda members in Afghanistan?

And you have to love the understated irony of the passage, the way Greg Miller and Joshua Partlow remind readers that the CIA has funded a lot of Islamic extremists, including some who loosely cooperated with other mujahadeen groups like those that would become al Qaeda. It'd be nice, mind you, if they also reminded readers that Rashid Dostum is the creep behind the Convoy of Death massacre, but that might just be too much irony for this short passage.

It's bad enough that the CIA openly admits funding this guy, yet claims their payments could have nothing to do with the deep corruption of which he is accused.

But on top of that there's this blind belief that these kind of payments never, ever, have blowback.