

AND ABOUT THAT NUCLEAR HELLSTORM KHALID SHEIKH MOHAMMED PROMISED IF OSAMA BIN LADEN WAS KILLED?

When the WikiLeaks Gitmo Files were first released last week, the Telegraph's top headline warned of a "nuclear hellstorm" if Osama bin Laden were captured or killed.

One of the terrorist group's most senior figures warned that al-Qaeda had obtained and hidden a nuclear bomb in Europe that would be detonated if Osama bin Laden was killed or captured.

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the al-Qaeda mastermind currently facing trial in America over the 9/11 atrocities, was involved in a range of plans including attacks on US nuclear plants and a "nuclear hellstorm" plot in America.

[snip]

According to the US WikiLeaks files, a Libyan detainee, Abu Al-Libi, "has knowledge of al-Qaeda possibly possessing a nuclear bomb". Al-Libi, the operational chief of al-Qaeda and a close associate of Osama bin Laden before his detention, allegedly knew the location of a nuclear bomb in Europe that would be detonated if bin Laden were killed or captured.

That headline was based on two details from the Gitmo files. First, this passage from Abu Faraj al-Libi's Detainee Assessment Brief:

(S//NF) Detainee has knowledge of al-

Qaida possibly possessing a nuclear bomb. Al-Qaida associate Sharif al-Masri stated in June or July 2004, upon encountering difficulties in moving the nuclear bomb, detainee commented if al-Qaida was able to move the bomb, al-Qaida would find operatives to use it. However, detainee told Sharif al-Masri that al-Qaida currently had no operatives in the US. The operatives would be Europeans of Arab or Asian descent. The device was reportedly located in Europe.⁴⁰ Sharif al-Masri reported detainee would know about the bomb and its exact location.⁴¹ Sharif al-Masri believes if UBL were to be captured or killed, the bomb would be detonated in the US, detainee would be one of those able to give the order.⁴²

And this single line from Khalid Sheikh Mohammed's DAB.

(U) Detainee told his interrogators that al-Qaida had planned to create a "nuclear hell storm" in America.

Now, the reference to al-Libi is of particular interest given accounts of how we found Osama bin Laden, as I have laid out here. I think it likely that al-Libi was the source of the information on the courier(s) that ultimately led to OBL's compound.

That said, note the intelligence in that passage. The first sentence claims, uncritically, that al-Libi "has knowledge of al-Qaida possibly possessing a nuclear bomb"—though the use of the word "possibly" suggests some doubt. And the remaining 6 sentences of that paragraph are cited to Sharif al-Masri, not al-Libi himself. (Note, CNN appears to have gotten this utterly and completely wrong in this article.)

Al-Masri was detained in 2004 and reports from

his interrogation—with the news on WMD—were leaked. As of 2006, his whereabouts remained unknown; I'm checking to see if his whereabouts are still unknown. [Update: His whereabouts were still unknown in March 2008, h/t Jeff Kaye.] [Update: Andy Worthington confirms that al-Masri is one of the detainees who has disappeared; he was never in Gitmo.] (Remember, too, that the Bradbury memos were written to retroactively authorize torture committed in this 2004 time period.)

But none of the reporting on nukes in al-Libi's file comes from al-Libi himself, and it notes that "detainee ha[d] neither confirmed nor denied" ... "knowledge of an al-Qaida nuclear device" by September 10, 2008.

Does the fact that he had neither confirmed nor denied the allegation a full 3 years after being captured mean we never asked?

The KSM intelligence is of even sketchier provenance. KSM's DAB cites WorldNetDaily (!) as the source.

69 Al-Qaida warning- WorldnetDaily.com
17 -Sep-06, Al-Qaida warns Muslims: Time
to get out of U.S. Afghan terror
commander hints at a big attack on N.Y.
and Washington.

Not only should the WND source raise questions, but reading the article reveals there is only one mention of KSM, and it has nothing to do with what he told his interrogators.

And all of this is more suspect considering Abd al Rahim al-Nashiri claimed he told his torturers that Osama bin Laden had a nuclear bomb, but later recanted the claim.

Usama bin Laden having a nuclear bomb.
[REDACTED]. Then they used to laugh.
Then they used to tell me you need to
admit to those information. So I used to
invent some of the stuff for them to say
Usama bin laden had a, had a nuclear

bomb. And they use to laugh and they were very happy. They were extremely happy because of the news. Then after that I told them, listen. He has no bomb. [my emphasis]

Al-Nashiri's Gitmo file makes no claim he knew anything about al Qaeda and nukes.

In other words, when we tortured prisoners—and all of the detainees to whom this claim can be traced were in CIA custody—we asked them to tell us al Qaeda had nukes.

So I'm guessing the Telegraph's big headline is not keeping our national security experts up at night.

Update: Titled changed. After all, KSM promised hellstorm, according to WND, if OBL was captured or killed.