

HOW MANY OF THE PROTESTS HAVE GOTTEN DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENTS?

Here's a few data points to suggest that the protests in Muslim countries may have been, in part, an effort to grab sensitive diplomatic correspondence.

I noted—but did not quote—this report on the documents taken from the US Consulate in Benghazi.

Sensitive documents have gone missing from the consulate in Benghazi and the supposedly secret location of the “safe house” in the city, where the staff had retreated, came under sustained mortar attack. Other such refuges across the country are no longer deemed “safe”.

Some of the missing papers from the consulate are said to list names of Libyans who are working with Americans, putting them potentially at risk from extremist groups, while some of the other documents are said to relate to oil contracts.

Then on Saturday, Yemeni lawyer Haykal Bafana suggested we might soon see secret files taken from the Yemeni Embassy last week.

Forecasted in the local press : #Wikileaks #Yemen soon from secret info in computers & documents looted from the US Embassy, Sanaa.

Here's a picture of “protestors” in Sanaa carrying out computer equipment.

Today, Tim Shorrock described a military person on Fox admitting that Marines at Embassies

prioritize protecting classified information over lives.

Military guy on Fox: Marines' priorities at the embassies are 1) protect classified communications & 2) protect human lives. In that order.

Now, possibly it's only the Libyan attack that got or even deliberately sought documents. Libyans have proven to be master information operatives in the past. After all, somebody conveniently left documents implicating the US and UK in rendition to Libya and torture. Human Rights Watch used those files to compile its recent report on torture.

But the US Embassy in Tunis was also breached (though not, I think, sufficiently to get files). And the German Embassy in Khartoum was overrun, so the "protestors" there probably got close enough to get files as well (I'm less sure about the breaches at the British and US Embassies in Khartoum).

In all of these successful breaches, there seems to have been some cooperation from local guards who allowed the protestors to get close or into the diplomatic properties, so they may also have had information on where to look for the most sensitive files.

It's possible that none of these breaches was designed specifically to get diplomatic correspondence (and remember, these would presumably be far more sensitive than what we've seen from WikiLeaks, none of which were Top Secret) and only in Libya is it clear attackers did get documents.

But it's worth considering that all the places we've sent Marine response teams, there may be very compromising documents floating around.

Update: The AP reports the Lebanese Embassy is preemptively destroying classified documents. (h/t TPM via fatser)