

FOX NEWS BLAMES BENGAZI ATTACK ON GITMO DETAINEE

Fox News quotes sources claiming that former Gitmo detainee Sufian Ibrahim Ahmed Hamouda Bin Qumu was involved in—and may have planned—the attack on American’s Consulate in Benghazi.

Intelligence sources tell Fox News they are convinced the deadly attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya, was directly tied to Al Qaeda – with a former Guantanamo detainee involved.

That revelation comes on the same day a top Obama administration official called last week’s deadly assault a “terrorist attack” – the first time the attack has been described that way by the administration after claims it had been a “spontaneous” act.

[snip]

Sufyan Ben Qumu is thought to have been involved and even may have led the attack, Fox News’ intelligence sources said. Qumu, a Libyan, was released from the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in 2007 and transferred into Libyan custody on the condition he be kept in jail. He was released by the Qaddafi regime as part of its reconciliation effort with Islamists in 2008.

His Guantanamo files also show he has ties to the financiers behind the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The declassified files also point to ties with the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, a known Al Qaeda affiliate.

Like Fox, I strongly suspect the Benghazi attack was planned in advance.

But Fox has grasped on one of the most damning pieces of evidence in Hamouda's Gitmo file to insinuate close ties to al Qaeda—that his alias was found on Mustafa Al Hawsawi's laptop—without considering that his role as a truck driver for an Osama bin Laden company might explain it. Nor does it look at Hamouda's participation in an LIFG splinter group, which may have caused him financial troubles and might make his role in factional politics today rather interesting.

Plus, there's more interesting details about Hamouda in the public record. For example, in a July 2, 2007 Administrative Review Board, Hamouda reportedly said he didn't want to go back to Libya for fear he'd be held responsible for earlier drug charges. But a September 25, 2007 WikiLeaks cable records his lawyer saying he had no such fears—both in June 2007 (so before the ARB) and again in September. He also reportedly said the same to Gitmo JAGs and the ICRC.

- Hamouda's counsel's unsolicited contact with a DOJ attorney in June 2007, through which counsel represented to DOJ that Hamouda was "okay to go back [i.e., to Libya]";

- Counsel's September 10 representations to DOJ and State Department attorneys that, if the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR – a detainee advocacy group that employs Hamouda's counsel as a staff attorney) learned that the USG intended to transfer Hamouda to Libya, CCR would not pursue legal action to block the transfer, as it previously has done when it learned that the USG intended to transfer to Libya other individuals detained at Guantanamo who did not wish to return;

- Hamouda's September 19 representations to JTF-GTMO judge advocates that he was not afraid of returning to Libya and that he would go to Libya; and

– Hamouda’s representations to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on this matter. ICRC officials informally confirmed that Hamouda previously told them that he wished to return to Libya and had no fears about returning. ICRC officials met with Hamouda again on September 19 to confirm this fact; during this interview, he expressed his willingness to be repatriated to Libya.

By the time Hamouda got transferred, the Embassy was already concerned about an earlier transferred detainee, Muhammad Abdallah Mansur al-Rimi, who had an arm injury (al-Rimi repeatedly said he got the injury from guards at Gitmo). The Embassy worked over time through the Qaddafi Development Foundation and Moussa Koussa to get access to the two former Gitmo detainees. Chris Stevens, both as Deputy Chief of Mission and the Charge d’Affaires, played a role throughout this period of observation, repeatedly interceding with Libyans to ensure they upheld humanitarian standards for the two repatriated detainees. After US intervention, Hamouda got his first familial visit in December 2007. And as Hamouda was charged, tried, and (apparently) declared innocent, the Embassy (and Stevens personally) tracked his status.

None of that means Hamouda wasn’t involved in the attack on Benghazi. You could have an entirely innocent person repatriated to Libya who bore ill will to the US over treatment at Gitmo. One thing the cables make clear, for example, is in Hamouda’s absence he got divorced and estranged from his wife. And all that’s before more details on the US role in rendering Libyan opposition figures to Libya for torture came out.

But if Hamouda did participate in or plan the attack, it means his actions led to the death of a man who worked for two years to make sure he got decent custody in Qaddafi’s custody.