

PESHAWAR JAIL RETALIATES AGAINST AFRIDI FOR FOX NEWS INTERVIEW, AFRIDI GOES ON HUNGER STRIKE

The day before the fateful attack in Benghazi that killed four Americans and gave the Republicans Mitt's desired "Jimmy Carter moment", Fox News published an interview purported to be with Dr. Shakil Afridi, who helped the CIA in its quest to locate Osama bin Laden by carrying out a bogus "immunization" program aimed at collecting DNA. At the time, it was entirely unclear whether the interview was genuine. Now, however, there is no doubt that the interview was real. In response to his actions, authorities at Peshawar's Central Jail have beaten and tortured Afridi and put him into more restrictive solitary confinement with no family or attorney visits allowed. In response, Afridi has started a hunger strike in an apparent attempt to bring attention to his plight and to get back the amenities which were taken away from him.

Reuters gives us the bare bones of the solitary confinement and hunger strike:

The Pakistani doctor who helped the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) hunt down Osama bin Laden started a hunger strike in his jail cell this week to protest against his living conditions, prison officials said on Thursday.

/snip/

Prison officials in the northwestern city of Peshawar said they are keeping Afridi in solitary confinement and will not allow him to have visitors nor speak

to anyone by telephone as punishment for a media interview he gave in September.

“After the interview in which Dr. Shakil Afridi levelled serious allegations against the country’s top spy agency, the prison authorities barred his family members and lawyers from meeting him,” said a prison official, who asked not to be identified because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

“In protest, Dr. Shakil has begun a hunger strike for an indefinite period.”

The “prison official, who asked not to be identified because he was not authorized to speak to the media” appears to have no appreciation of the irony of his making an unauthorized statement to the media describing Afridi’s punishment for making an unauthorized statement to the media.

It appears that Afridi made more telephone calls than just the one in which Fox News interviewed him:

An investigation following the September interview found that Afridi had bribed guards to use their cell phones to speak to journalists, family and friends, making a total of 58 calls, prison officials said. Six prison guards have been suspended.

I had suggested in my September post that if the interview were real, then Afridi must have accomplished it through bribing guards:

Presumably, if the prison officials can be bribed by the family for food to be brought in, a bribe to bring in a phone and to turn off the jammers at a selected moment doesn’t seem out of the question.

We learn a few more details of Afridi’s

punishment from Dawn:

The official said that Dr Shakil had now been confined to a room situated inside a small compound in the prison and the facility of a walk was also withdrawn from him. The authorities searched his room regularly so that he could not keep any objectionable item including cellular phone with him, he added.

Even more details come from Pakistan Today, where we get the cell number where Afridi is being held and the accusation that he was beaten and tortured in response to publication of the interview:

Through highly placed sources, Pakistan Today learnt that Afridi had time and again approached the jail administration to provide him with blankets, newspapers and magazines and to allow him to walk inside the prison. Afridi is locked in cell No 17 inside Peshawar Jail where, sources say, he is being looked after by fellow prisoners.

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Jamil Afridi, brother of Dr Shakil Afridi through his lawyers had filed an application before Peshawar commissioner on November 22nd, pleading [sic] for restoration of facilities along with a complete medical check-up for the captive by specialist doctors.

Jamil Afridi in his plea reminded that Dr Shakil was recently beaten and tortured by jail administration through policemen, following which he suffered severe chest infection. He requested for complete treatment of Dr. Shakil on these grounds.

It is interesting that for the Peshawar Central Jail, a prisoner said to be in solitary

confinement is also described as “being looked after by fellow prisoners”. It is also very interesting that word of Afridi’s hunger strike would get out so quickly. The Reuters article states that the strike started this week and the Pakistan Today article suggests that it started yesterday.