

AP REPORTS “STRONG CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE” CARTEL INVOLVED IN TRES MARIAS HIT

The AP presents as exclusive news something that has been obvious for weeks: it appears likely a drug cartel—the Beltran Leyva Cartel—targeted two American CIA officers for assassination.

A senior U.S. official says there is strong circumstantial evidence that Mexican federal police who fired on a U.S. embassy vehicle, wounding two CIA agents, were working for organized crime on a targeted assassination attempt.

Let’s be clear what this is: it is not news that a cartel was likely behind this hit, nor that the hit was intentional. Rather, what’s new is that a single US official will admit as much in anonymous quotes, even while the AP’s Mexican sources are much less coy about this likelihood, and one second-hand source in the article says the attack was an attempt to annihilate all three passengers of the car.

Raul Benitez, a security expert at Mexico’s National Autonomous University, said Mexican military sources have told him that “the attack was not an error,” and “the objective was to annihilate the three passengers in the car.”

“The same car with the same people had been going up and back (to the marine training camp) for a week, so perhaps some lookout who worked for drug traffickers informed the police, or the Beltrans” about the vehicle, Benitez said.

Though that story, too, is inconsistent with the bullet patterns on the car, which were clearly focused primarily on the guy in the passenger seat, avoiding almost entirely the Navy captain who was in the back seat. That is, the attackers were targeting the Americans, and probably one of them more aggressively than the other (remember that one of them was on a temporary trip to Mexico, whereas the other was stationed at the Embassy).

All sources still seem a bit credulous about what the CIA officers were doing however, repeating earlier reports they were headed to a military base (though not specifying the CIA officers-who-would-sound-more-like-JSOC-guys were training Mexicans in sharp-shooting).

The CIA agents were heading down a dirt road to the military installation with a Mexican Navy captain in the vehicle when a carload of gunmen opened fire on them and chased them.

I've laid out here why it would be well to at least question that story: the description of where they were headed doesn't make sense, the local press seemed to hint at other activities, and so on.

In any case, Mexicans appear much readier to admit that Mexico's cartels are both knowledgeable of and responding to Americans fighting the drug war in Mexico than Americans are. That's the news in this story.