

The Times Square Bombing: Were US Special Forces Involved in the Arrest of Faisal Shahzad?

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Reports are emerging suggesting that secret US military intelligence aircraft were used to find and locate Faisal Shahzad, the man accused of attempting to set off a crude car bomb in Times Square. The CBS affiliate in New York [reported](#) today: "In the end, it was secret Army intelligence planes that did him in. Armed with his cell phone number, they circled the skies over the New York area, intercepting a call to Emirates Airlines reservations, before scrambling to catch him at John F. Kennedy International Airport." The post at 5:34 PM was titled "Army Intelligence Planes Led To Suspect's Arrest." But then at 6:21 PM, the article's title was [changed](#) to "Total Time Of Investigation: 53 Hours, 20 Minutes: Faisal Shahzad In Custody After Nearly Fleeing United States." As Rayne [observed](#) on FireDogLake, the paragraph about the Army planes was deleted from the CBS story. Screenshot of the original post [here](#).

A US Special Operations Force source told me that the planes were likely RC-12s equipped with a [Guardrail Signals Intelligence \(SIGINT\) system](#) that, as the plane flies overland "sucks up" digital and electronic communications. "Think of them as manned drones. They're drones, but they have men sitting in them piloting them and they can be networked together," said the source. "You have many of them—four, five, six of them—and they all act as a node and they scrape up everything, anything that's electronic and feed it back." The source added: "It sucks up everything. We've got these things in Jalalabad [Afghanistan]. We routinely fly these things over Khandahar. When I say everything, I mean Bluetooth would be effected, even the wave length that PlayStation controllers are on. They suck up everything. That's the point."

Guardrail has been used for years by the US military. In recent years, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military has also used the "Constant Hawk" and "Highlighter" aerial sensor platforms. All of these programs have recently undergone a series of upgrades.

So were US special forces involved with Shahzad's arrest?

"My conjecture at the moment is that immediately after this went down and they knew that he was on the loose, parts of the domestic counter-terrorism operations that they had set up during the Bush administration were reactivated," says the Special Forces source. "They're compartmentalized. So they kicked into high gear and were supporting law enforcement. In some cases, law enforcement may not have even known that some of the signals intelligence was coming from covert military units."

If true, that could mean that secretive programs such as "[Power Geyser](#)" or "Granite Shadow," remain in effect. These were the unclassified names for reportedly classified,

compartmentalized programs under the Bush administration that allegedly gave US military special forces sweeping authority to operate on US soil in cases involving WMD incidents or terror attacks.

“They sidestep Posse Comitatus,” said the source.

The Joint Special Operations Command, which was run by Gen. Stanley McChrystal from 2003-2008, is reportedly allowed to operate on US soil. That’s a result of Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD-25), an executive order drafted by President Clinton on May 3, 1994. The complete text remains classified, however, “The full text of PDD-25 is reported to exempt the Joint Special Operations Command from the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 18USC Sec.1385, PL86-70, Sec. 17[d]. which makes it illegal for military and law enforcement to exercise jointly,” according to GlobalSecurity.org.

Among the questions raised by the apparently central role of US special forces in the arrest of Faisal Shahzad is this: To what extent are US Special Forces permitted to operate on US soil under President Obama?

Also, Why did CBS scrub the initial mention of the involvement of Army Intelligence aircraft from its story?

UPDATE: The big story today is how the FBI team tracking Faisal Shahzad in Connecticut allegedly lost track of him. According to reports, Shahzad actually made it onto the Emirates aircraft scheduled to fly to Dubai. As [The New York Times](http://TheNewYorkTimes) reported:

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“Though Mr. Shahzad was stopped before he could fly away, there were at least two significant lapses in the security response of the government and the airline that allowed him to come close to making his escape, officials of the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other agencies said on Tuesday.

First, an F.B.I. surveillance team that had found Mr. Shahzad in Connecticut lost track of him — it is not clear for how long — before he drove to John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York, the officials said.”

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This is all entirely plausible. But what if that is not the entire story? At this point, this is just a thought, a possibility to ponder: It could be that the Feds lost track of Shahzad, but that other US forces, namely US military special operations forces (perhaps JSOC), were tracking him and waiting to see if he made any calls, met with any contacts, took any action while he was still a free man.

Consider the confidence of Attorney General Eric Holder, who [said](#) bluntly: “I was never in any fear that we were in danger of losing him.” Those could be the words of a man trying to downplay what could have been a major FBI failure that, in part, would have played badly for Holder. Or they could be the honest words of a man who knew it was all being taken care of and how.

The official [timeline](#) of events released by the White House contains some [interesting details](#) that suggest US military special forces involvement. On Sunday at 3pm, according to the timeline, “Nicholas Rasmussen, Senior Director for Combating Terrorism Strategy, convenes an interagency meeting on this incident in the White House Situation Room.” Rasmussen is

a shadow figure. He [cut his teeth](#) in the Bush administration after 9/11 where he worked on the “dark side” as a director of the National Security Council’s office of combating terrorism, putting him in regular proximity to [Special Access Programs](#) and other activities of which we dare not speak. To give context to Rasmussen’s current job, one of his predecessors was [Vice Admiral William McRaven](#), the current head of JSOC. “McRaven has managed to bridge both the civilian and military worlds,” [reported](#) Newsweek. “While working at the National Security Council after 9/11, he was principal author of the White House strategy for combating terrorism.”

If the hunt for Shahzad was being run through the National Security Council, which it was, the commander of the Joint Task Force would report to the NSC, which would in turn report to either John Brennan, the Deputy National Security Adviser for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism or National Security Advisor Jim Jones, and then they would report to the President. From the White House timeline, Brennan seemed to be serving that function. And remember, Brennan also comes from the dark side.

The point of all of this being that the story may not be as simple as the FBI losing Shahzad. One cog in the wheel may not have necessarily known what another was doing at any given time. It could be that there were forces at play in this operation whose involvement may not be a part of the story the White House wants divulged. Just a thought.

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