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Obama's Gulf of Tonkin

By Justin Raimondo

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The claim by the US government that the Times Square would-be bomber, [Faisal Shahzad](#), was “trained” and “directed” by the Pakistani Taliban is looking more bogus by the moment. [The latest](#): one of at least three people arrested in connection with the alleged “plot,” Mohammad Shafiq Rahman, hadn’t seen Shahzad in years, and even admitted to his employer that he knew the accused. One Larry Adlerstein, who had hired Rahman to do some computer work for his art business, told reporters:

“Just a few days ago he had a conversation with Rahman about the attempted bombing in New York City [in the course of which] his employee made a surprising admission. ‘As a matter of fact’ [said Rahman] ‘I know this guy accused of trying to bomb Times Square. I haven’t seen him in 8 or 9 years but I know him.’”

“Adlerstein says Rahman described the suspected bomber, Faisal Shahzad as ‘an undirected person....no political positions, just a drifter.’”

Rahman has been [arrested](#) on trumped-up immigration charges, but ask yourself: if you were part of a terrorist plot, and had assisted someone already in custody, would you admit to knowing the accused? This is just plain ordinary common sense: but that’s not what inspires our intrepid G-men.

In an [attempt](#) to follow the money trail, and find – or invent – a foreign link, US investigators have spread their net far and wide, apparently including any individuals who ever had significant financial dealings with Shahzad *over a ten year period*. This has led, so far, to arrests – all on immigration charges – in Brookline, and Watertown, [both in Massachusetts](#), and one in Maine. There is no information coming out of the immigration cops, since they aren't answerable to anyone – and refuse to even confirm the identities of those being held. The authorities often use vague and constantly-shifting immigration laws, easily violated by non-lawyers, to wring information out of green card holders and non-citizens in general. No need to ship them off to Guantanamo, or Bagram – just let [ICE](#) deal with them.

Yet as those who know the detainees are coming forward to present [a fuller picture](#), it looks like there's nothing at the end of the money trail but the administration's Taliban conspiracy theory asserted as fact.

It took a Republican senator, [Kit Bond](#), to point out the obvious: that US Attorney General Eric Holder is “playing games” – political games – with the case. The senior Republican on the Senate intelligence committee, Bonds averred that he has seen no convincing evidence “so far” of Shahzad's purported link to the Pakistani Taliban. Holder “is only interested in looking tough on terrorism on TV, since he's now told the intelligence community to skirt the national security law and give only the details he wants and when to Congress.” The administration is invoking “national security” to shield what it knows about the alleged plot from Congress, while [going on television](#) announcing the “link” had been established.

Dianne Feinstein, the senior Democrat on the intelligence committee, [claims](#) she has definitive evidence of the Taliban link, but refuses to debate the matter with Bond “in public.” What a curious, and sudden, [reversal](#): now we have Democrats claiming to have “inside” information that justifies a war, whilst Republicans are skeptical. Well, not so curious, really, since the Democrats now have a war of their own, the war against Pakistan, to defend.

This war, covert up until [a few months ago](#), first reared its head when Hillary Clinton paid a [tempestuous visit](#) to Pakistan and directly accused her hosts of sheltering Osama bin Laden. The resulting firestorm marked a new low in US-Pakistani relations, and one has trouble believing it was merely a random temper tantrum on Hillary's part. You'll recall that during the presidential campaign, Obama openly [declared his intention](#) to go into Pakistan, given the chance to do so, and it's entirely unsurprising he's doing just that.

First, however, his administration must come up with a rationale, and apparently they've settled on the [pathetic](#) act of a demented “[lone wolf](#)” – as Gen. David Petraeus characterized Shahzad – as being good enough for government work. In short, the Shahzad case is Obama's Gulf of Tonkin incident.

The parallels are striking, and instructive: in both cases, the government constructed a completely made up story in order to pursue a preordained path to war. Just as [there was no attack](#) on any US ship in the Tonkin gulf, so there was no attempted Taliban plot to blow up Times Square – just another American nut who went [postal](#). And this time, too, the media is falling down on the job, refusing to question what increasingly looks like a crude fabrication.

As for the Pakistanis, they too [believe](#) Shahzad was a lone nut: Pakistan's ambassador to the UN, Hussain Haroon, described him as a "misguided soul" who acted alone. While acknowledging Washington may have other intelligence, in an interview with CBS News Haroon averred: "All I am saying is that the evidence I have points in one direction that it does not have the signature of the Taliban. This is not, and I repeat *not*, a Pakistan terror threat."

The ambassador went on to note Shahzad is not even a Pakistani citizen, and he brought up Hillary's accusation – [reiterated this month](#) – that his government is hiding bin Laden. Haroon and the Pakistanis see the looming threat of direct and massive US intervention in Pakistan, and are doing everything possible to stave it off. Yet the floating of this absurd conspiracy theory is a clear signal that the Obama-ites are hell-bent on war.

The irony here is that, as Haroon reminded his American audience, Pakistan has captured and handed over to the US more actual terrorists – i.e. top al-Qaeda operatives – than [our own FBI](#), or any other law enforcement agency anywhere. This is how we thank them – by setting them up for an invasion on bogus charges of "harboring" terrorists.

When it comes to reporting the Shahzad case, it's incredible that the "mainstream" media isn't challenging the administration's narrative. Although maybe, given the media's longstanding [infatuation](#) with the President, this is just a case of love being blind.

As it turns out, Shahzad was fingered in a [leak to the media](#) even *before* he was arrested. This has all the earmarks of a manufactured story, straight out of the Bush administration's neocon-written [play-book](#) [.pdf]. Except that the tall tales told by the boys over in [the Pentagon's policy shop](#) were a helluva lot more credible and believable, on the face of it, than this ill-smelling narrative about Shahzad and his tenuous "connections."

Here at Antiwar.com, we've been [pursuing](#) this story – [challenging](#) it, offering [alternative explanations](#) for Shahzad's actions, all the while wondering why we seem to be a lone voice in the wilderness. Well, actually, there's no need to wonder: the media sure doesn't have a very good record of speaking truth to power – or even questioning the assertions of the powerful, no matter how arbitrary and fact-free they may be. These glorified stenographers are happy enough feeding on "leaks" from their favorite government insiders, but are remarkably incurious when it comes to pursuing the motive behind the leakage.

That's why Antiwar.com is so necessary – and why *you need to act now* to ensure that we're still around asking the questions the "mainstream" doesn't even dream of broaching.

Speaking frankly, our current fundraising drive is seriously deficient, and rapidly heading toward disaster. If this goes on much longer, the only media outlet with any reach that's challenging the administration's big lie won't be exposing much of anything. Because we'll be out of business – gone, *kaput*.

I'm not exaggerating. Unless our fundraising picks up significantly, we'll have to start laying people off – and, in a surprisingly brief time, we'll have to close our doors. Antiwar.com has always operated on a shoe-string – and now the string is about to break.

It isn't just our survival that's at stake. This financial crisis is hitting us at a moment when the danger of a greatly-expanded war in Pakistan looms large. Unless we can expose the utter falsity of their ludicrous conspiracy theory involving Shahzad, this administration will surely take us into a greatly expanded war on Pakistani soil. The need for Antiwar.com has never been greater. So please give, today, right now, before we have to call it quits.