

Beat: Politics

White House blows cover of CIA station chief in Afghanistan

-, 26.05.2014, 20:39 Time

USPA News - The cover of the Central Intelligence Agency's top officer in Afghanistan was accidentally disclosed by the White House on Sunday in a disastrous mistake that could make him a top target for insurgents and likely forcing the officer to flee the country. The mistake was made on Sunday evening after U.S. President Barack Obama landed at Bagram Air Field in Afghanistan as part of an unannounced visit to receive a battlefield update, to visit wounded troops in hospital, and to address thousands of U.S. troops who are currently serving in the war-torn country.

As part of the visit, the White House provided reporters with a list of people participating in a military briefing with the president. One of the fifteen individuals was identified as "Chief of Station," the CIA title for a senior officer who manages all of the CIA's operations in a country. dts News, along with other news agencies, chose to withhold the individual's identity and some other details at the request of the White House and the CIA. Intelligence officials stressed the importance of keeping the individual's name a secret as disclosure would likely make the individual a top target for insurgents and terrorists. Both the White House and the CIA declined to comment on the extraordinary mistake that revealed the identity of the individual in charge of one of America's most important spy posts. The disclosure may force the station chief to flee Afghanistan, though a Google search indicated that the individual's name had not been publicly posted as of Monday. It was not immediately clear how the CIA chief's name ended up on the list provided to journalists. Disclosing the identity of undercover intelligence officers is a crime in the United States under the National Security Act of 1947 and is punishable by up to 10 years imprisonment. In December 2010, Jonathan Banks, the then-CIA station chief in Pakistan, was forced to flee the country after his cover was blown as part of a lawsuit from a tribesman who accused Banks of being responsible for the deaths of his brother and son in a U.S. drone strike a year earlier. Banks later took up other positions at the CIA's headquarters at Langley in the United States.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-2246/white-house-blows-cover-of-cia-station-chief-in-afghanistan.html>

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619