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May 23, 2003 Friday

SECTION: MAIN; Pg. 5A

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HEADLINE: Bush advisers weigh undermining Iran regime

BYLINE: BY WARREN P. STROBEL; Washington Bureau

BODY:

WASHINGTON -- Prompted by evidence that Iran is harboring top al-Qaida operatives linked to last week's suicide bombings in Saudi Arabia and fears that Tehran may be closer to building a nuclear weapon than previously believed, the Bush administration has begun debating whether to try to destabilize the Islamic republic, U.S. officials said Thursday.

Officials in Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's office are using both issues to press their view that the United States should adopt overt and covert measures to undermine the regime, said the officials, who are involved in the debate.

Other officials argue that such a campaign would backfire by discrediting the moderate Iranians who are demanding political reforms.

Although one senior official engaged in the debate said "the military option is never off the table," others said no one was suggesting an invasion of Iran.

However, some officials say the United States should launch a limited airstrike on Iran's nuclear weapons facilities if Iran appears on the verge of producing a nuclear weapon. By some estimates, Iran could have a nuclear weapon within two years.

Some Pentagon officials suggested using the remnants of an Iranian opposition group once backed by Saddam Hussein, the Mujahedeen el-Khalq (MEK), to instigate armed opposition to the Iranian government. U.S. military forces in Iraq have disarmed the roughly 6,000-strong MEK, which is on the State Department's list of foreign terrorist groups. But the group's weapons are in storage, and it hasn't disbanded.

However, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice and other top officials rejected the idea, saying that while some might consider the MEK freedom fighters, "a terrorist is a terrorist is a terrorist," according to officials involved in the debate.

Bush has designated Iran a member of an "axis of evil," along with Iraq and North Korea. But until now, he's pursued a middle course with Iran, approving talks on issues of common concern such as Afghanistan, while not trying to re-establish diplomatic ties.

A formal statement of U.S. policy toward Iran, called a National Security Presidential Directive, has been on hold about a year because of internal administration debates and the war in Iraq, American officials said. The document is being resurrected, they said.

Bush's senior foreign-policy advisers were to have met at the White House on Thursday to discuss Iran policy, said a knowledgeable administration official, but the meeting was postponed until next week to give Iran several more days to meet U.S. demands that it turn over the suspected al-Qaida terrorists. If it doesn't, Washington is likely to react with harsher measures, the official said.

The United States has suspended a series of meetings between U.S. and Iranian diplomats in Geneva at which the two countries -- which have no formal diplomatic relations -- have been discussing terrorism, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The suspension followed intelligence data, including intercepted telephone calls, indicating that an al-Qaida cell based in Iran helped organize the bombings in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, which were apparently part of a larger al-Qaida plot that was partially foiled by Saudi authorities. The bombings killed 34 people.

The cell of 10 or so al-Qaida members is run by top al-Qaida operative Salf al Adel, who is third on the U.S. government's list of most-wanted al-Qaida leaders, following Osama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahri.

"There's no question but that there have been and are today senior al Qaida leaders in Iran, and they are busy," Rumsfeld said this week.

Iranian officials have denied harboring al-Qaida fugitives, and U.S. officials acknowledge that Iran has turned over some al-Qaida suspects to Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and blocked others from entering Iran.

On Thursday, a close aide to Iranian President Mohammad Khatami demanded that Washington prove its charges.

Saeed Pourazizi said in Tehran that it was Iran's policy to crack down on al-Qaida -- not support it -- and that the network "is a terrorist group threatening Iran's interests."

"Its extremist interpretation of Islam contradicts the Islamic democracy Iran is trying to promote. There is no commonality of anything between us."

The senior U.S. intelligence official said it wasn't clear whether al-Adel's group, which is believed to be in an area of southeastern Iran near the Pakistan border, was operating with the acquiescence of at least part of the Iranian government.

Advocates of regime change want to bolster popular opposition in Iran to the religious leadership.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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June 15, 2003 Sunday
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HEADLINE: Pressure Builds for President to Declare Strategy on Iran

BYLINE: Michael Dobbs, Washington Post Staff Writer

BODY:

Soon after George W. Bush took office in January 2001, his advisers began drafting a strategy for dealing with Iran, a radical Islamic state long suspected by Washington of supporting international terrorism and pursuing weapons of mass destruction.

More than two years later, the national security presidential directive on Iran has gone through several competing drafts and has yet to be approved by Bush's senior advisers, according to well-placed sources. In the meantime, experts in and outside the government are focusing on Iran as the United States' next big foreign policy crisis, with some predicting that the country could acquire a nuclear weapon as early as 2006.

Critics on the left and the right point to the unfinished directive as evidence the administration lacks a coherent strategy toward a country Bush described as a key member of the "axis of evil," along with North Korea and Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

"Our policy toward Iran is neither fish nor fowl, neither engagement nor regime change," said Flynt L. Leverett, a Bush adviser on the Middle East who left the National Security Council staff in March and is now with the Brookings Institution.

The Bush administration has yet to formulate a true Iran policy, agreed Michael A. Ledeen, a Middle East expert with the American Enterprise Institute. With other neoconservative intellectuals, Ledeen has founded the Coalition for Democracy in Iran, which is looking for ways to foment a democratic revolution to sweep away the mullahs who came to power in 1979.

Senior administration officials refused to talk about the status of the Bush policy directive on Iran, on the grounds that it is classified, but they say they have had some success in mobilizing international opinion against Iran's nuclear weapons program. As evidence, they cite recent threats by Russia to cut off nuclear assistance to Tehran and moves by the International Atomic Energy Agency to censure Iran for failing to report the processing of nuclear materials.

While the officials have stopped short of embracing a policy of "regime change" in Iran, U.S. officials from Bush down have talked about providing moral support to the "reform movement" in Iran in its struggle against an unelected government. As defined by Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, the U.S. goal is to speak directly to the Iranian people "over the heads of their leaders to let them know that we agree with them."

The internal and external debate about what to do about Iran has been brought to a head by recent revelations suggesting the Iranian nuclear weapons program is much further along than many suspected. Tomorrow, the IAEA Board of Governors in Vienna is to discuss findings showing that Iran has a wide range of options for producing fissile material for a nuclear bomb, from using heavy water reactors to produce plutonium to experiments in uranium enrichment.

U.S. officials have also accused Iran of harboring members of the al Qaeda terrorist network who escaped from Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban in December 2001. They say some al Qaeda supporters hiding in Iran appear to have known in advance about recent terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia, although there is no direct evidence of operational ties between the Iranian government and al Qaeda.

The escalating Iranian nuclear threat and suspicions of Iranian ties to terrorists have sharpened long-standing divisions in the administration over how to deal with Tehran. In the past, the State Department has put the emphasis on opening a dialogue with reformist elements in the Iranian leadership while the Pentagon has been more interested in looking for ways to destabilize the authoritarian Islamic government.

Bureaucratic tensions have reached the level where each side has begun accusing the other of leaking unfavorable stories to the media to block policy initiatives. "The knives are out," said a Pentagon official, who criticized national security adviser Condoleezza Rice for failing to end the dispute by issuing clear policy guidelines.

Powell, meanwhile, insisted to journalists that there has been no change in policy on Iran, despite what he depicted as frenzied media speculation "about what this person in that department might think or that person in another department might think."

The Iran debate goes back to a failed attempt by the Clinton administration to open an "unconditional dialogue" with Tehran. Even though the Iranians rejected the U.S. offer of unconditional talks, some Bush administration officials led by the State Department's director for policy planning, Richard N. Haass, favored making renewed overtures.

The proposals for a dialogue with Iran were partly inspired by the 1994 framework agreement with North Korea under which the North Korean government agreed to accept international controls over its nuclear program in return for economic assistance, including the construction of a civilian nuclear reactor. But the State Department approach ran into strong opposition from the Pentagon and Vice President Cheney's office, and was shot down in interagency meetings at the end of 2001.

While there would be no "grand bargain" with the Iranian leadership, the Bush administration agreed to a more limited diplomatic dialogue, focusing on specific areas such as the war in Afghanistan or cooperation over Iraq. Several rounds of such talks took place in Geneva and Paris, with the involvement of a special presidential envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, but were suspended after the bombings in Saudi Arabia on May 12.

The administration debate has been echoed by a much more public debate among Middle East analysts,

nuclear proliferation experts, and leaders of the Iranian diaspora. Congress has also weighed in with legislation sponsored by Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) that would funnel more than \$ 50 million to Iranian pro-democracy initiatives, including private California-based satellite television and radio stations set up by Iranian exiles.

"We are not calling for a military attack on Iran," said Brownback, whose proposed Iran Democracy Act has drawn bipartisan support but is opposed by the leadership of the Foreign Relations Committee. The goal, he said, is to support Iranian democracy activists, including students who took to the streets of Tehran again last week to protest the closure of opposition newspaper and the jailing of dissidents.

Just how far the United States should go in supporting the protests is the subject of heated argument inside and outside the government, even among conservatives. Some argue Iran is ripe for revolution. Others contend there is little guarantee of radical change in Tehran in the three-year period some independent proliferation experts estimate it will take before Iran could acquire nuclear weapons, and the United States should be thinking about other options, including preemptive action against suspected nuclear sites.

"The internal democratic forces in Iran are real and growing, but they're not going to save us from having to think about what we are going to do about the Iranian nuclear program and support for terrorism," said Reuel Marc Gerecht, a CIA case officer for Iran now with the American Enterprise Institute.

Some analysts say that U.S. financial and propaganda support for the Iranian democracy movement could be counterproductive. "It allows the hardliners to argue that there is an external threat, and they must crack down in the name of national unity," said Kaveh Ehsani, an editor of the pro-reform journal Dialogue in Iran, now visiting the United States. "There is a kind of an unholy alliance between the Bush administration and the Iranian hardliners."

"We have tried appeasement, we have tried containment, and we have tried engagement," countered S. Rob Sobhani, a co-founder of the Coalition for Democracy in Iran and adjunct professor of government at Georgetown University. "All these policies have failed. What have we got to lose by empowerment?"

The White House has avoided taking a position on the Brownback legislation and has restricted its encouragement of democracy in Iran to verbal broadsides against the mullahs. In comments Thursday, Rice described Iran's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction as "not acceptable" and said that the United States "cannot tolerate circumstances in which al Qaeda operatives come in and out of Iran." She also accused Iran of stirring up trouble among Shiite communities in southern Iraq.

"We have to stand with the aspirations of the Iranian people which have been clearly expressed," she told a meeting in Los Angeles, as thousands of Iranians took to the streets of Tehran in anti-government protests.

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HEADLINE: Meetings With Iran-Contra Arms Dealer Confirmed

BYLINE: Bradley Graham and Peter Slevin, Washington Post Staff Writers

BODY:

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld acknowledged yesterday that Pentagon officials met secretly with a discredited expatriate Iranian arms merchant who figured prominently in the Iran-contra scandal of the mid-1980s, characterizing the contact as an unexceptional effort to gain possibly useful information.

While Rumsfeld said that the contact occurred more than a year ago and that nothing came of it, his aides scrambled during the day to piece together more details amid other reports that Rumsfeld's account may have been incomplete.

Last night, a senior defense official disclosed that another meeting with the Iranian arms dealer, Manucher Ghorbanifar, occurred in June in Paris. The official said that, while the first contact, in late 2001, had been formally sanctioned by the U.S. government in response to an Iranian government offer to provide information relevant to the war on terrorism, the second one resulted from "an unplanned, unscheduled encounter."

A senior administration official said, however, that Pentagon staff members held one or two other meetings with Ghorbanifar last year in Italy. The sessions so troubled Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, the official said, that he complained to Rumsfeld and Condoleezza Rice, President Bush's national security adviser.

Powell maintained that the Pentagon activities were unauthorized and undermined U.S. policy toward Iran by taking place outside the terms defined by Bush and his top advisers. The White House instructed the Pentagon to halt meetings that do not conform to policy decisions, said the official, who requested anonymity.

The Defense Department personnel who met with Ghorbanifar came from the policy directorate. Sources identified them as Harold Rhode, a specialist on Iran and Iraq who recently served in Baghdad as the Pentagon liaison to Iraqi National Congress leader Ahmed Chalabi, and Larry Franklin, a Defense

Intelligence Agency analyst.

State Department officials were surprised by news of the latest meeting with Ghorbanifar. Tension runs deep in the Bush administration between State and the Pentagon, which under Rumsfeld has aspired to a powerful role in foreign policy. The two agencies have sparred repeatedly over strategy toward Iran and Iraq.

The United States does not have formal relations with Iran, although a small number of sanctioned meetings between U.S. and Iranian officials have taken place, most notably to address U.S. war plans in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Bush administration has struggled to develop a coherent and consistent approach to Iran. In his State of the Union address last year, Bush characterized Iran as being part of an axis of evil, along with Iraq and North Korea, and administration officials have repeatedly accused Iran of supporting terrorist groups and of seeking to acquire nuclear weapons. While broad agreement exists within the administration favoring changes in Iran's Islamic government, officials differ on how to accomplish them.

More than two years after the administration began drafting a national security presidential directive on Iran, the policy document remains unfinished. While the State Department favors increased dialogue and engagement with potential reformers inside Iran, prominent Pentagon civilians believe the policy should be more aggressive, including measures to destabilize the existing government in Tehran.

The Iran-contra scandal erupted over a decision by the Reagan administration to sell weapons to Iran in an effort to win the release of U.S. hostages in Lebanon. The proceeds of the arms sales were illegally funneled to contra fighters opposing Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista government.

Ghorbanifar was enlisted in the effort, helping to arrange the delivery by Israel of 508 TOW antitank missiles to Iran. The White House had drafted him as an intermediary despite warnings from the CIA that he was a cheat and had failed lie-detector tests.

The intelligence agency had instructed its operatives not to do business with him.

News of the Pentagon's contact with Ghorbanifar was first reported yesterday by Newsday, and Rumsfeld was asked about the story when he emerged with Bush from a meeting at the president's ranch in Crawford, Tex.

Saying he had just been told of the Newsday article by a senior aide and by Rice, Rumsfeld acknowledged that "one or two" Pentagon officials "were approached by some people who had information about Iranians that wanted to provide information to the United States government."

He said that a meeting took place "more than a year ago" and that the information received was circulated to various federal departments and agencies but did not lead to anything.

"That is to say, as I understand it, there wasn't anything there that was of substance or of value that needed to be pursued further," he said.

Asked if the Pentagon contact was intended to circumvent official U.S. exchanges with Iran, Rumsfeld replied: "Oh, absolutely not. I mean, everyone in the interagency process, I'm told, was apprised of it, and it went nowhere. It was just -- this happens, of course, frequently, that in -- people come in, offering suggestions or information or possible contacts, and sometimes they're pursued. Obviously, if it looks as

though something might be interesting, it's pursued. If it isn't, it isn't."

Standing by Rumsfeld's side, Bush was asked if the meeting was a good idea and if his administration wants a change in government. "We support the aspirations of those who desire freedom in Iran," the president said, then took a question on a different subject.

According to the account given later by the senior Pentagon official, the contact in 2001 occurred after Iranian officials passed word to the administration that they had information that might be useful in the global war on terrorism. Two Pentagon officials met with the Iranians in several sessions over a three-day period in Italy. Ghorbanifar attended these meetings, "but he was not the individual who had approached the United States or the one with the information," the official said.

What his role was, however, the official did not know.

The official said the June meeting involved one of the two Pentagon representatives who had been present at the 2001 meeting, but he declined to say which one.

Staff writer Dana Priest contributed to this report.

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August 10, 2003

SECTION: Observer News Pages, Pg. 22

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HEADLINE: IRAQ CONFLICT: Make Iran next, says Ayatollahs grandson: Khomeini calls US freedom the best in the world from base in occupied Baghdad

BYLINE: by Jamie Wilson, Baghdad

BODY:

SAYYID Hussein Khomeini is sitting cross-legged on a sofa inside a garish palm-fringed mansion nestled on the banks of the Tigris. It is the very heart of American-occupied Baghdad, not the first place that you might look for the grandson of Ayatollah Khomeini. The late Iranian leader built his Islamic revolution on a deep hatred of everything associated with the Stars and Stripes.

But then very little about the younger Khomeini is quite what might be expected.

'American liberty and freedom is the best freedom in the world,' he said, puffing on a cigarette and sipping a glass of sweet tea. 'The freedom for the individual that is written into the American Constitution you do not see in such concentration in any other constitution in the world. The Americans are here in Iraq, so freedom is here too.'

It is an extraordinary statement from a man whose grandfather labelled the US 'the Great Satan', but what Khomeini has to say about the current situation in Iran is even more radical: 'Iranians need freedom now, and if they can only achieve it with American interference I think they would welcome it. As an Iranian, I would welcome it.'

Not surprisingly, Khomeini, 45, has caused something of a stir in Baghdad, with the US media beating a path to the door of the house where he is staying.

According to his armed bodyguards, the luxurious house has been taken over by an Iraqi cleric, who shares Khomeini's view that religion and state should be separated. It used to belong to Izzat Ibrahim, vice-chairman of the deposed Revolutionary Command Council and one of Saddam Hussein's closest advisers. The King of Clubs on the list of most wanted Baathists, Ibrahim remains at large, although he is unlikely to return to evict the current tenants. There is, however, plenty to remind the visitor of the previous owner. A black Rolls-Royce with a golden grill is gathering dust in the drive, while the sitting room, with its three gold-trim sofas, is also home to a couple of enormous glass tanks containing dozens of tropical fish and several cages of canaries, chirping away merrily.

Wearing a black turban - a piece of clothing that marks him out as a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad - Khomeini dismisses as 'nonsense' a question about whether his grandfather would approve of his support for the Americans. 'He is not here, and in this case we cannot predict what position he would take,' he said.

As for Iraqi resistance to the US occupying forces - or liberators as Khomeini insists on calling them - in his opinion there is none.

'The persons who are carrying out the attacks have been paid previously to attack the US and the Americans are just in a position of defending themselves,' he said.

So what is a man whose grandfather cemented the Islamic theocracy in Iran by exploiting the 1979 US Embassy hostage crisis doing espousing views that could have come straight from an American foreign policy briefing or have been written by the press office of the Coalition Provisional Authority situated in the former presidential palace a couple of miles down the road?

Exactly how close Khomeini's ties are with the US is not clear, but the cleric has met officials from the CPA on several occasions. 'He's my favourite Khomeini!', one senior US official joked at a dinner the other night. A spokesman said that they found his ideas about the separation of religion and state 'interesting'.

Although he does not command a wide following, the very fact of who he is could in time make him a significant player, while any voice helping to dilute calls from some Iraqi Shia leaders for a system of clerical rule in Iraq will be welcomed with open arms by the Americans.

But the US might just have bigger plans for Khomeini. He spent 14 years of his life in Iraq, between 1964 and 1979, while his grandfather was plotting the Islamic revolution and conducting a campaign of snapping at the heels of the Shah from the holy city of Najaf. Listening to his grandson condemning the current situation in Tehran, it is difficult not to get a sense that perhaps history is repeating itself.

The Bush administration, which includes Iran in its diminishing axis of evil, has repeatedly accused the country of supporting terrorist groups and seeking to acquire nuclear weapons. But apart from general agreement that a change of government in Iran would be a good thing, there is no broad consensus within the administration about how best to achieve that aim. It is two years since the State Department began drafting a national security presidential directive on Iran, but the document remains unfinished.

Doves in Colin Powell's State Department are said to favour increased dialogue with potential reformers in the country, while Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon is thought to be intent on pursuing aggressive destabilisation tactics towards Tehran.

Whatever way the administration decides to play it, Khomeini could be useful to both sides.

Asked when he thought he might return to Iran, Khomeini replied 'Inshallah' - It is God's will.

But some observers might argue that it is just as likely to be the Pentagon's.

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Lawrence Franklin, center, surrounded by his attorneys, leaves U.S. District Court in Martinsburg, W.Va., Thursday. (Photo credit: by Kevin G. Gilbert / Staff Photographer)

Friday June 10, 2005

Franklin case goes to grand jury

by PEPPER BALLARD

pepperb@herald-mail.com

MARTINSBURG, W.Va. - Probable cause was found Thursday at the U.S. District Courthouse in Martinsburg to send to a grand jury a charge that a Pentagon analyst illegally took classified government documents to his Kearneysville, W.Va., home.

The charge against Lawrence Anthony Franklin, 58, who holds a doctorate in Asian studies and taught history courses at Shepherd University for the past five years, will be referred to the next grand jury, U.S. Magistrate Judge David J. Joel said

Thursday after his finding at the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of West Virginia.

"Dr. Franklin knowingly and unlawfully possessed classified documents in a place he was not permitted to keep them," Joel said. "He admitted he possessed these documents."

Franklin faces up to 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine if convicted of the charge.

A June 30, 2004, search of Franklin's home turned up 83 classified documents, 37 of which were classified as top secret, meaning the release of which would cause "exceptionally great damage" to national security, and 34 of which were classified as secret, meaning the release of which would cause "great damage" to national security, FBI Special Agent Thomas Convoy, who specializes in counterterrorism and espionage, testified Thursday.

The charge centered on six documents, written between October 2003 and June 2004, which included CIA documents about al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden, terrorism documents and an Iraq memorandum, Convoy testified.

Franklin was authorized to carry classified documents in Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C., but not in West Virginia, Convoy testified.

Convoy testified that Franklin was a member of the Department of Defense since 1979 and held top-secret clearance since then, but it since has been revoked.

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Franklin's attorney, Plato Cacheris, contended that his client was inappropriately charged.

"There is no allegation in this complaint that he intended to injure the U.S.," Cacheris said. He said that such an allegation would have needed to support the claim that Franklin unlawfully held the documents.

Franklin, wearing a dark suit, sat behind Cacheris' chair throughout the hearing, nearly motionless.

Cacheris said Franklin "had those documents in his home because he was preparing for an interview" for a government position.

Convoy testified Franklin was under surveillance prior to the search.

"Did you see him transmit those documents to any unauthorized people?" Cacheris asked Convoy.

"No, I did not," he responded.

U.S. Attorney Thomas E. Johnston, of West Virginia's northern district, said Franklin "was not authorized to retain these documents, at least at his home."

"There is no evidence he delivered them to the employee or officer of the U.S. intended to receive them," he said.

Johnston said Cacheris' contention that he had to show intent to cause injury to the country "does not apply to this particular charge."

Joel, in announcing his finding, said, "Whether or not the government properly charged" Franklin is "a matter for another day."

In May, Franklin was charged with providing top-secret information about potential attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq to two executives of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the influential pro-Israel lobbying group.

Already out on \$100,000 bond on the May charge, Franklin was released after this most-recent charge on \$50,000 bond. Joel ordered Thursday that Franklin continue on his present bond.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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Cheers for Wolfy

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The New York Post

May 31, 2003

<http://www.nypost.com/seven/05312003/postopinion/opedcolumnists/35893.htm>

Last Sunday saw a remarkable event in Washington - one that defied stereotypes about Muslims and the Bush administration's "hard-liners": Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz, widely identified (and denounced) as the main architect of America's Iraq intervention, won multiple standing ovations from an audience of hundreds of Muslims.

He praised the coalition's use of force to remove evil, and he hailed the new reality in Iraq. For the first time in 26 years, he said, Shia Muslims had freedom to observe their Arbæen festival in Iraq. The room exploded in applause.

The venue: the first-ever national convention of Shia Muslims from the United States and Canada.

Wolfowitz is said to be the hardest of neoconservative hardliners. The Shias have a reputation as the most extreme, anti-Western, ultraradical Muslims. Yet they came together through the ideal of freedom, and the principle of liberation through the exercise of U.S. military power.

Pundits and experts have been wrong about both Wolfowitz and his Shia hosts.

Most of the media paint Wolfowitz as an arch-conspiratorial fanatic. Yet the truth, as anybody who has met with him quickly learns, is that he has an extensive and nuanced understanding of Islam. He served as U.S. ambassador to Indonesia for three years under President Ronald Reagan.

He is also a defender of democracy, taking pride in his key role in helping change the Philippines in the 1980s. He supported the removal of dictator Ferdinand Marcos and the triumph of democratic champion Corazon Aquino.

Shia Muslims, for their part, are typically described as extremists in the mold of Ayatollah Khomeini - dismissed with claims that all Shias everywhere support the Lebanese radicals of Hezbollah. The most recent dire prediction is that the Shia majority in Iraq will establish a rigid Islamic order.

But Shias are victims of mass murder in Pakistan, where followers of the Saudi-backed Wahhabi sect hunt and kill them relentlessly. When the Pakistani group Sipah-e-Sahaba (Order of the Prophet's Companions) murdered American reporter Daniel Pearl, he was their first victim who was not a Shia Muslim. Before him, the group had slain hundreds of innocents.

In addition, Shia Muslims, including a considerable community in the New York area, are better educated than many other Muslims. Their dedication to self-improvement often makes them a target.

In Saudi Arabia, where they are the majority in the oil-rich Eastern Province, they are also an economic elite. But within the Saudi kingdom, they still suffer extraordinary cruelties at the hands of the Wahhabis, who teach in Saudi schools that Shia Islam is the product of a Jewish conspiracy.

Life is tough for Shias, a minority of 200 million, or 15 percent of the world's Muslims. In America, where estimates of the total Muslim population vary from 2 million to 10 million, one in four is Shia. Most came here from Pakistan and Iraq to escape violence.

The Shia national convention in Washington, held by the Universal Muslim Association of America

(UMAA) with 3,000 participants, represented a new trend in American Muslim life. Until now, the discourse on Islam in America was dominated, from the Muslim side, by the "Wahhabi lobby" - groups toeing the extremist line of the Saudi regime.

The "Wahhabi lobby" includes such entities as the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). These groups have skewed discussion of Islam and Muslims in this country, by presenting America as an aggressive power internationally and as an enemy of Muslims.

Shia Muslims living in America see the world in very different terms. Agha Shaukat Jafri, a Shia community leader in New York and organizer of the UMAA convention, said, "We see America as our homeland and ourselves as American Muslims. We consider ourselves an integral part of its body politic. We condemn all forms of terrorism, and we consider these so-called Muslim fighters, who carry out terror, as enemies of our faith."

He described the reception for Wolfowitz as "very warm." He added: "We should thank the Bush administration for liberating the Shias of Iraq. I think Dr. Wolfowitz understands our viewpoint and our deep opposition to extremism. We were thrilled to have him attend and to hear his words."

Others, including non-Muslims, who attended the event were struck by the enthusiasm shown to Paul Wolfowitz. But Jafri put the emphasis in the right place: "The convention inaugurated a new period in the history of American Muslims, of heightened awareness of our responsibilities to the country we live in and hope for the future flourishing of Islam and democracy. At our convention next year, we would like to have President Bush as a guest."

And why did a story like this go unreported in the rest of our media?

Stephen Schwartz is author of "The Two Faces of Islam: The House of Sa'ud From Tradition to Terror," published by Doubleday, and director of the Islam and Democracy Program at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.

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FOREIGN MEDIA PERCEPTION SUMMARY

Tuesday, July 22, 2003

Terrorism	Afghanistan			
Iraq (IZ)	IZ-North	IZ-Central	IZ-South	
IZ-WMD	IZ-Regime/Political	IZ- Humanitarian Issues		
Yemen/Horn of Africa	Iran	GCC	India/Pakistan	Central Asian States

Disclaimer: The articles presented in the Foreign Media Perception are derived entirely from open sources in and around the CENTCOM AOR. The articles selected are a representative sample of the local media views and interpretations of current events. The "General Themes" section is a summary of the most prevalent messages and is not an endorsement of the validity of the information contained in the articles.

General Themes: A foreign media source in the CENTCOM AOR reported that an organization calling itself Al-Jihad Brigades Organization called on the Iraqis not to deal with the new provisional Governing Council. They threatened to kill anyone who supports the Governing Council and the coalition forces occupying Iraq. Foreign media sources report that the Iraqi Christian Democratic Party has refused to recognize Iraq's transitional Governing Council, describing its members as administrative workers without powers. Foreign sources report that Pakistan is seriously considering sending troops to Iraq as a result of the formation of the Governing Council should the Iraqi people request support.

13. Jedda Arab News (Saudi Arabia): Tis the Season to Be Worried

Paul Wolfowitz, in the latest Vanity Fair, basically justified using a "convenient" argument, i.e. weapons of mass destruction, to achieve the great goal: Iraqi oil. Such politically vulgar messages are not new from Wolfowitz and his neo-con gang, but they spread reasonable doubt regarding America's "democratic" intentions for the Middle East. Now as Wolfowitz is visiting Baghdad, his face can't conceal a sense of worry.

Worry regarding the exposed lies, the increased number of killings of American military personnel, and the growing public opinion against the war. Wolfowitz is like a stray cat stuck in a corner. Stray cats when stuck in a corner usually attack. The question that is asked frequently is: Who fed all these lies about the Iraqi weapons WMD program to the president? Most fingers point at the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans, headed by Adam Shulsky, a hard-line neo-conservative. The Office of Special Plans was set up in the fall of 2001 as a two-man shop, but it grew into an eighteen-member nerve center of the Pentagon's effort to create disinformation, alleging that Iraq possessed WMD and had connections with terrorist groups.

Much of the garbage produced by that office found its way into speeches by Rumsfeld, Cheney and Bush. It should be noted that the office was created after Sept. 11 by two of the most fervent and determined neo-cons: Paul Wolfowitz himself, the deputy defense secretary, and Douglas Feith, undersecretary of defense for policy, to probe into Saddam's WMD programs and his links to al-Qa'ida, because, it is alleged, they did not trust other intelligence agencies of the US government to come up with the goods. Most prominent neo-cons are right-wing Jews, and tend to be pro-Israeli zealots who believe that American and Israeli interests are inseparable -- much to the alarm of the liberal pro-peace Jews, whether in America, Europe, or Israel itself. Friends of Ariel Sharon's Likud party, they tend to loathe Arabs and Muslims.

For them, the cause of "liberating" Iraq had little to do with the well being of Iraqis, just as the cause of "liberating" Iran and ending its nuclear program -- recently advocated by Shimon Peres -- has little to do with the well being of Iranians. What they seek is an improvement in Israel's military and strategic environment. So who will put the brakes on this madness, defend US national interests and give the administration wise counsel? Congress? It doesn't appear that way. The issue should go back to the American people. The integrity and credibility of their values and their future economic prosperity are very much at stake here. People in the Middle East need to see the ugly words of Wolfowitz and his like muted, and they need to see objective democratic results. Only then will Wolfowitz and his gang be marginalized. At least for a while.

The United States and Shi'ite Religious Factions in Post-Ba'thist Iraq

Juan Cole

In post-Saddam Husayn Iraq, Shi'ite militias rapidly established their authority in East Baghdad and other urban neighborhoods of the south. Among the various groups which emerged, the Sadr Movement stands out as militant and cohesive. The sectarian, anti-American Sadrists wish to impose a puritanical, Khomeinist vision on Iraq. Their political influence is potentially much greater than their numbers. Incorporating them into a democratic Iraq while ensuring that they do not come to dominate it poses a severe challenge to the US Administration.

In planning the war on Iraq, the American Defense Department and intelligence organizations appear to have been unaware that millions of Iraqi Shi'ites had joined a militant and puritanical movement dedicated to the establishment of an Iran-style Islamic Republic in Iraq, even though these developments had been detailed in many Arabic-language books and articles. On February 18, 2003, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz gave an interview on National Public Radio in which he maintained that "The Iraqis are . . . by and large quite secular. They are overwhelmingly Shi'a which is different from the Wahabis of the peninsula, and they don't bring the sensitivity of having the holy cities of Islam being on their territory."¹ Even more disturbingly, this quote shows that Wolfowitz did not realize that religious Iraqi Shi'ites are extremely sensitive about foreigners in their shrine cities such as Najaf and Karbala, or that these cities are religious power centers of great symbolic potency.

US Defense Department leaders such as Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his deputies, Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith, mistakenly thought that the middle and lower strata of the Ba'th bureaucracy, police, and army would survive the war, and that they could simply hand it over to secular expatriate figure Ahmad Chalabi and his Iraqi National Congress. Although from a Shi'ite background, Chalabi was largely unknown in Iraq and was wanted in Jordan on embezzlement charges. The CIA and the State Department broke with Chalabi late in 2002 when he proved unable

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1. "Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Interview with National Public Radio," February 19, 2003 at <http://www.washingtonfile.net/2003/Feb/Feb21/EUR509.HTM>.
MIDDLEEAST JOURNAL ★ VOLUME 57, NO. 4, AUTUMN 2003

to account for about \$2 million of the \$4 million they had given his Iraqi National Congress. The major religious Shi'ite groups with which the Americans were negotiating were part of Chalabi's group and included the Tehran-based Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the London branch of the al-Da'wa Party, and the Khoei Foundation, of which only al-Da'wa had much popularity on the ground in Iraq. The US was ignorant of the Sadr Movement, the main indigenous Shi'ite force. This ignorance was to cost the US great political capital in the first months of the occupation.

When the Ba'th fell on April 9, 2003, Shi'ite militias seemed suddenly to emerge and take control of many urban areas in the south of the country, as well as in the desperately poor slums of East Baghdad. The moral authority of Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani and his more quietist colleagues in Najaf had been known to the US, but it transpired that other ayatollahs and leaders had more political clout. The rank and file of Iraqi Shi'ites in the urban areas was far more radicalized by the last decade of Ba'th rule than anyone on the outside had realized. These developments alarmed Washington, given that some 60% to 65% of Iraqis are Shi'ites, and this group would therefore predominate in a democratic Iraq. The religious groups constitute only one section of the Shi'ite population, perhaps a third or more, but they are well organized and armed.

My thesis here is that the Sadr Movement is at the moment the most important tendency among religious Shi'ites in post-Ba'thist Iraq, and that it is best seen as a sectarian phenomenon in the "sociology of religions" sense. It is primarily a youth movement and its rank and file tend to be poor. It is highly puritanical and xenophobic, and it is characterized by an exclusivism unusual in Iraqi Shi'ism. To any extent that it emerges as a leading social force in Iraq, it will prove polarizing and destabilizing. In spring and summer of 2003 its leadership had decided not to challenge actively the coalition military. In contemporary theories of the sociology of religion, a "sect" is characterized by a high degree of tension with mainstream society, employing a rhetoric of difference, antagonism, and separation.² The "high-tension" model of the sect predicts that it will attempt strongly to demarcate itself off from the mainstream of society. It will also cast out those members who are perceived to be too accommodating of non-sectarian norms. That is, it demands high levels of loyalty and obedience in the pursuit of exclusivism.

IRAQI SHI'ISM IN HISTORY

Under the Ottomans, a Sunni political elite flourished in what is now Iraq, with political ties to Istanbul. Shi'ism remained vigorous, however. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many tribespeople of the south converted to the Shi'ite branch of Islam, under the influence of missionaries sent out from the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala, where Shi'ite holy figures Imam 'Ali and Imam Husayn were interred.

2. Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 19-34, 135.

The Rule of the Turban

Last September, Paul Wolfowitz was the special guest at a memorial service in Arlington, Va., for an influential Shiite cleric killed in a car bombing in Najaf, Iraq. The deputy defense secretary hailed Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim as a "true Iraqi patriot," and he quoted from the Gettysburg Address as he likened the slain leader to the Union soldiers who had died to preserve their country. It was a eulogy that al-Hakim undoubtedly would have found jarring. His Islamist political party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, and its 15,000-man militia had been funded by Iran, a member of President Bush's "axis of evil." And al-Hakim himself had long been wary of perceived American imperialism in the Middle East, even as his party, known as SCIRI (pronounced "SEA-ree") [and otherwise also known in Supreme Assembly for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI)], cooperated with the Coalition Provisional Authority on the transfer to Iraqi sovereignty -- the likely reason he was targeted for assassination.

As symbolism goes, the memorial service served to highlight the tangled politics in post-Saddam Iraq, where idealized notions of "friend" and "foe" have dissolved into a murkier reality. Once, Pentagon war planners like Wolfowitz envisioned the toppling of Saddam Hussein with clarity, predicting that the long-suppressed Shiite majority in Iraq would greet Americans as liberators and that democracy would naturally flower. But clarity has been washed away by images of charred American bodies swinging from bridges and naked Iraqi prisoners on dog leashes. Yet to emerge is a clear outline of a new Iraq, which has been tugged in opposite directions by official enemies -- Iran and the United States -- that happen to have shared a common interest in Saddam's removal. As the largest mainstream Shiite party, SCIRI is an important player in Iraq's future, but one with an ambivalent history with the United States. It was one of the opposition groups that the United States counted on to help bring down Saddam.

Yet SCIRI is also a vehicle in which Iran has invested heavily in a bid for influence in post-Saddam Iraq. And so despite Wolfowitz's hailing of the slain Ayatollah al-Hakim as a kind of Shiite Abraham Lincoln, it is far from clear that his Islamist party, which supports an Iraqi government run according to Islamic principles, will help build the kind of secular democracy that the United States said it hoped to leave behind in Iraq. It is likely that the new Iraqi constitution will be influenced in some manner by Islamic principles, but it's anybody's guess whether a sovereign Iraq -- assuming it stays united -- will look more like a secular Turkey, a cleric-run Iran or something in between.

There are too many competing motives and agendas to predict any outcome with certainty, no matter what face US policymakers put on it. The blurring of Iranian, American and Iraqi interests came into sharp relief last month when Iraqi and American forces raided the Baghdad home and offices of Iraqi National Congress leader Ahmad Chalabi on suspicion that the one-time Pentagon favorite had betrayed US secrets to Iran. It was a confusing turn of events, made even more perplexing by the fact that Chalabi, a Shiite, had worked openly with Iranians for many years, most prominently through his contacts with SCIRI, which was known to be an arm of Iranian intelligence. In fact, SCIRI was active in Chalabi's INC from 1992 through 1996 and was named in the 1998 Iraqi Liberation Act, signed into law by President Clinton, as one of the opposition groups that the United States should work with to topple Saddam. It was thus no secret that Chalabi had a relationship

with Iranian intelligence. But the salient question quickly became: Which American official was so stupid as to tell the INC leader that the United States had broken Iran's secret communications code, information that US intelligence said Chalabi then passed on to Iran? Chalabi had long been an informal conduit between the United States and Iran, which have not had formal diplomatic relations since American hostages were seized in the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Through SCIRI, the United States kept a back door to Tehran propped open. Had that game now gone awry? SCIRI was founded in 1980, at the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war, by Iraqi Shiite clerics who sought a haven from oppression by Saddam with fellow Shiites in neighboring Iran. But the relationship was controversial from the beginning, according to Imam Mustafa al-Qazwini, an Iraqi-born Shiite in Los Angeles whose father was a founder of SCIRI. A handsome 42-year-old with a neatly trimmed, graying beard, al-Qazwini wears a black turban, symbolizing his family's descent from the prophet Mohammed. A naturalized US citizen, he speaks fluent, colloquial English. We met earlier this month at a Washington conference of the Universal Muslim Association of America, an organization of politically active American Shiite Muslims. His father, Ayatollah Mortada al-Qazwini, broke with SCIRI's al-Hakim soon after the group's founding amid a dispute about its alliance with Iran, al-Qazwini told me. His father believed that Iraqi Shiites would be better served by leaders who remained independent of foreign governments -- Iranian or American.

In the mid-1980s, the Qazwini clan left Iran for the United States and its open political system. The elder al-Qazwini returned to Iraq last year, settling in Karbala, and, in the model of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, remains aloof from politics in the belief that clergy should not play a direct role in governance, his son told me. Al-Qazwini said that he and his father have rebuffed overtures from the US State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency over the years because they did not want to align themselves with any foreign governments. "I always feel, if you can work freely from these governments you should," al-Qazwini said. "Generally Iraqis don't like the idea of dependence. Once someone is seen as collaborating with a foreign government, they might not be as trusted." That has been a problem to varying degrees for both Chalabi and SCIRI in Iraq, he added. Still, SCIRI, now led by Ayatollah al-Hakim's younger brother, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, retains significant clout as the best organized Shiite party, in part because of the support it had from Iran. SCIRI is believed to have taken from Iran an amount similar to the more than \$30 million Chalabi's INC accepted in U.S. funding before being abruptly cut off last month. And despite its quasi-official relationship with the United States, SCIRI mostly kept the Great Satan at arm's length.

Until 2002, most contacts with the United States were made informally through Chalabi and Kurdish representatives, according to SCIRI's US-based representative, Karim Khutar al-Musawi, who told me about the group over coffee recently in Washington's Mayflower Hotel. Aside from acting as a kind of liaison between the United States and Iran, in the mid-'90s SCIRI agents also worked openly with Chalabi in northern Iraq on operations to undermine Saddam. Chalabi was then working for the CIA, whose small team in northern Iraq was headed by former CIA operative Bob Baer. "SCIRI was never under any sort of Western supervision or control. They did exactly what they wanted. And they reported to Tehran," Baer told me. As an American agent, Baer was keen to learn all he could about Iran. Chalabi invited him to meet his contacts in Tehran, but Baer had to decline. "I would

have been happy to, but that was a firing offense. The State Department would have gone nuts," he said. But there was no restriction on meeting with SCIRI, which, after all, was part of the American-backed Iraqi National Congress.

So, Baer said, he talked often with SCIRI agents in northern Iraq, where the Americans and Iranians shared a common enemy in Saddam Hussein. A master manipulator, Chalabi frequently played Iranian and American intelligence off each other, Baer said. The most serious stunt occurred in February 1995, when Chalabi was gathering support for an uprising against Saddam. The Americans were noncommittal and, among other moves, the INC leader went fishing for Iranian support. He forged a letter from America's National Security Council that appeared to direct him to assassinate Saddam, then left it on his desk for Iranian intelligence agents to read, hoping the disinformation would convince the Iranians that the United States was serious about toppling Saddam, Baer said. "He was being very practical about this. He needed the Iranians to think the plan would go through so they would let loose with the Badr Brigades," the armed wing of SCIRI. Chalabi's uprising, and a parallel coup planned by Sunni Iraqi military officers inside Iraq, collapsed amid betrayals by the Kurds and continued ambivalence from Washington.

The debacle caused both the CIA and SCIRI to part ways with Chalabi in 1996. But by 2002, when it looked as if President Bush was serious about toppling Saddam, SCIRI began sniffing around again. Its representative, al-Musawi, set up shop in Washington. And in August 2002, SCIRI logged its first formal contact with the United States when Ayatollah al-Hakim's younger brother, Abdul, traveled to Washington as its representative for a pre-war round of meetings with Bush administration officials. Al-Hakim and other Iraqi opposition figures met with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Colin Powell and (via satellite hookup) Vice President Dick Cheney, al-Musawi said. Also at the 2002 meetings were Chalabi, Iyad Allawi -- the recently named interim prime minister of Iraq, who has longtime ties to the CIA -- and two Kurdish representatives, Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani. "This was the first official contact for SCIRI, because before we did not automatically believe in the American direction -- whether they meant it or not," al-Musawi said, referring to the United States' historical ambivalence toward removing Saddam, most prominently its failure to support Kurds and Shiites in their revolt after the Persian Gulf War, which Saddam brutally suppressed.

Graham Fuller, former vice chairman of the National Intelligence Council at the CIA and an expert on Islam, said that the United States must deal with SCIRI, despite America's preference that Iraq have a strictly secular government. Although SCIRI wants Iraq's government to be run according to Islamic principles, that probably does not mean an Iranian-style theocracy Fuller said. SCIRI's al-Musawi confirmed that view, explaining that the party wants a "kind of separation of church and state" in which clergy would not become politicians or government officials. Added Fuller of SCIRI: "They are uncomfortable with American goals in the region, and they would see the American policy as hostile, rightly or wrongly, to any Islamic state, however you interpret that ... They're wary of American imperialism in general. But that doesn't mean they weren't willing to cooperate in furthering the greater goal of removing Saddam." Abdul Aziz al-Hakim became SCIRI's representative on the United States' handpicked Iraqi Governing Council after the March 2003 invasion of Iraq. But when his brother was killed in the car bombing at the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf last August, al-Hakim blamed the United States for creating instability and demanded an end to the occupation. Such positions are part of

SCIRI's balancing act, Fuller said. "As the majority, the Shiites are the beneficiary of [any] democracy, so they're willing to cut the United States a lot of slack as long as the US is bringing about the goal of democracy. But once they get to democracy, they want the United States to please leave," he said.

A SCIRI member, Adel Abdul Mahdi, will serve as Iraq's finance minister in the interim government that takes power in Iraq June 30. Mahdi recently declared that the majority Shiites would not stand for limited Kurdish self-rule in the north, setting the stage for a showdown with the Kurds, who have said they will secede from the central government without some guarantee of autonomy. Shiites, meanwhile, believe that radical Sunni Muslims -- both Iraqis and those newly arrived from other countries -- are targeting their leaders for assassination with suicide bombings in an attempt to drive a wedge between the two sects. What's more, "Al-Qaida is trying to make a war between the Sunni and Shia, to destroy the American project in Iraq and break up the country so the Wahhabis can have influence" with Sunnis, asserted al-Musawi, referring to the strict fundamentalist brand of Islam that is the official state religion in Saudi Arabia. In that regard Iran, like the United States, also faces uncertainty about its interests in post-Saddam Iraq. A Wahhabi foothold in its next-door neighbor would be an unwelcome development for Iranian Shiites, whom Wahhabis loathe as infidels. Saddam had kept both Sunni and Shiite religious fervor in check through his authoritarian rule. But now there is no guarantee it can be contained. Looming behind this internal political struggle between religious factions are the two major powers of the Gulf, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The degree to which Iraq might become a chessboard on which they move their pawns remains uncertain. There are already indications that Wahhabi Islam is taking root in Iraq, worried Shiites say. Al-Qazwini, the Shiite imam from Los Angeles, said that on a recent visit to Baghdad he discovered that the Um al-Tubul mosque had been renamed after 13th century Islamic theologian Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya, an intellectual founder of Saudi Arabia. "There are big signs for the Ibn Taymiyya mosque now. You can see them from the highway," al-Qazwini said. Fuller thinks it makes sense, with all the countervailing forces in the region, for the United States to deal with all major players, even those that have ties to Iran. "The United States has slowly come around," he said. "The first Bush administration didn't want to touch the Shia. They were afraid the Shia would take over in Iraq" with an Iranian-style theocracy. But, he added, "I think now the US has learned something about the Shia and their more complex nature. The Shia do not love us, but they are grateful that we threw out Saddam. Now they want us to complete the job and leave." It remains unclear which legacy will have the most lasting imprint in the new Iraq -- that of Abraham Lincoln or that of the turbaned clerics in Tehran.

Source: Salon (US), Mary Jacoby, June 16, 2004

<http://fairuse.1accesshost.com/news2/salon24.htm>

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Chalabi-gate: None Dare Call It Treason

Neocons behind bars? Sounds good to me....

by Justin Raimondo

The fallout from Chalabi-gate continues to rain down on the heads of the War Party, opening up the exciting prospect that some neocons might well wind up behind bars.

The charge? Espionage, as Sidney Blumenthal informs us:

"At a well-appointed conservative think tank in downtown Washington and across the Potomac River at the Pentagon, FBI agents have begun paying quiet calls on prominent neoconservatives, who are being interviewed in an investigation of potential espionage, according to intelligence sources. Who gave Ahmed Chalabi classified information about the plans of the U.S. government and military?"

This information, says Vince Cannistraro, formerly at the CIA and the Pentagon, was so "very, very sensitive" that only a few U.S. government officials had access to it:

"The evidence has pointed quite clearly, not only the fact that Chalabi might be an agent of influence of the Iranian government and that [Chalabi's intelligence chief, Aras Karim Habib] may be a paid agent of the Iranian intelligence service, but it is shown that there is a leak of classified information from the United States to Iran through Chalabi and Karim and that is the particular point that the FBI is investigating. In other words, some U.S. officials are under investigation on suspicion of providing classified information to these people that ended up in Iran."

Blumenthal has more:

"A former staff member of the Office of Special Plans and a currently serving defense official, two of those said to be questioned by the FBI, are considered witnesses, at least for now. Higher figures are under suspicion. Were they witting or unwitting? If those who are being questioned turn out to be misleading, they can be charged ultimately with perjury and

obstruction of justice. For them, the Watergate principle applies: It's not the crime, it's the coverup."

The lies Chalabi fed to Washington policymakers, who eagerly scarfed them up and regurgitated them to the American public, originated with Iranian intelligence, as we are beginning to learn. But the neocon-Tehran information superhighway ran in both directions. As Julian Borger reports in the *Guardian*:

"An intelligence source in Washington said the CIA confirmed its long-held suspicions when it discovered that a piece of information from an electronic communications intercept by the National Security Agency had ended up in Iranian hands. The information was so sensitive that its circulation had been restricted to a handful of officials. 'This was 'sensitive compartmented information' – SCI – and it was tracked right back to the Iranians through Aras Habib,' the intelligence source said."

UPI's Richard Sale reports that "the Federal Bureau of Investigation has launched a full field investigation into the matter," and gives more information on what was compromised and how the Iranians pulled off this intelligence coup:

"Chalabi allegedly passed National Security Agency/CIA intercepts to intelligence agents of the Iranian government using intermediaries or 'cut-outs' or 'gophers' within the INC, another former CIA agent said. Some of the intercepts, dated from December, were the basis for a recent Newsweek story, but there are others of a later date in possession of the FBI, this source said."

How did Chalabi get his hot little hands on highly secret information? That's why the FBI – instead of going after, say, Brandon Mayfield, or some other completely innocent person, as per usual – is now calling on "prominent" neocons at Washington's poshest thinktanks. I hope they're bringing an ample supply of handcuffs. But whom might they be handcuffing and frog-marching out the door, into a waiting paddywagon? UPI gives us the scoop, citing "a former very senior CIA official" as saying:

"Chalabi passed specially compartmented intelligence, extraordinarily sensitive stuff, to the Iranians.' This source said that some of the intercepts are believed to have been given Chalabi by two U.S. officials of the Coalition Provision Authority, both of whom are not named here because UPI could not reach them for comment."

Well, they aren't named, but they might as well have been:

"One former CPA official has returned to the United States and is employed at the American Enterprise Institute, the former very senior

official said, a fact which FBI sources confirmed without additional comment. The other is still a working Pentagon official, federal law enforcement officials and former CIA officials said."

Independent journalist Bob Dreyfuss, whose excellent articles on the neocons in *The American Prospect* and *Mother Jones* puts him up there with Jim Lobe, Michael Lind, and Joshua Marshall as a veritable maven of neocon-ology, names names:

"The two officials in the UPI story are, according to my sources, Harold Rhode, an official in the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessment, and Michael Rubin, now at the American Enterprise Institute."

Rubin, formerly of the Office of Special Plans and the CPA, who served as liaison with Chalabi's group, the Iraqi National Congress, certainly fits the bill. No wonder he's been so ... cranky lately, what with FBI agents barging into his office and giving him the third degree.

Rhode, a longtime Pentagon official assigned to the Office of Net Assessment and a specialist on Islam, is reportedly Douglas Feith's chief enforcer of the anti-Arab party line among the civilian Pentagon hierarchy. In refusing to be interviewed by Dreyfuss for a piece on the neocons in *Mother Jones*, Rhode's laconic reply was:

"Those who speak, pay."

Prescient words, and truer than perhaps even Rhode realized at the time. Hauled up before a grand jury, however, Rhode, Rubin, and the rest of Chalabi's Pentagon fan club may have no choice about speaking – especially with the prospect of a long "vacation" at a federal facility staring them in the face.

Much is being made of how the Iranians "duped" us into invading Iraq, and "used" the U.S. in getting rid of Saddam Hussein and "paving the way," as Julian Borger puts it, for a Shi'ite-ruled Iraq. But a simple map of the region and rudimentary knowledge of the history of the past decade or so would have revealed as much. As I wrote in this space over a year ago:

"In view of Iran's growing sphere of influence in Iraq, it seems rather disingenuous to destroy the Sunni minority government run by the Ba'ath Party and then deny any responsibility for the Shi'ite-y outcome. The U.S. has made a gift of Iraq to Teheran, reigniting the religious passions that overthrew the U.S.-backed Shah Reza Pahlavi of Iran and propelled Khomeini to power."

In charting the outlines of "phase two" of the invasion of Iraq, that same week last year, I pointed out:

"The main political consequence of the war, internally, is to increase Iranian influence: if free elections were held in the southern Shi'a provinces of Iraq, they would undoubtedly usher in some sort of 'Islamic Republic.' The effort by the neocons in the administration to install Ahmed Chalabi as the Pentagon's puppet, far from forestalling this possibility, only makes it a more credible threat to the postwar order."

But why would the militantly pro-Israel neocons, American partisans of the ultra-nationalist Likud party, act as patrons and promoters of an outfit, Chalabi's INC, that was really a cover for Iranian intelligence – their alleged mortal enemies? That's what I couldn't quite figure out, at least not until I read Robert Parry's excellent piece on the subject, and here's the money quote:

"As Chalabi's operation fed anti-Saddam propaganda into the U.S. decision-making machinery, Bush also should have been alert to the Israeli role in opening doors for Chalabi in Washington. One intelligence source told me that Israel's Likud government had quietly promoted Chalabi and his Iraqi National Congress with Washington's influential neoconservatives. That would help explain why the neoconservatives, who share an ideological alliance with the conservative Likud, would embrace and defend Chalabi even as the CIA and the State Department denounced him as a con man."

"The idea of Israel promoting an Iranian agent also is not far-fetched if one understands the history. The elder Bush could tell his son about the long-standing strategic ties that have existed between Israel and Iran, both before and after the Islamic revolution of 1979. It was Menachem Begin's Likud Party that rebuilt the covert intelligence relationship in 1980. Since then, it has been maintained through thick and thin, despite Iran's public anti-Israeli rhetoric."

The enemy of my enemy is my friend: it's a principle often invoked to justify a course of action seemingly in contradiction to the professed ideology of the actors. Lined up against a common enemy, American Likudniks and Ahmed Chalabi, an Iranian intelligence asset, teamed up to drag us into the Iraqi quagmire, with both members of this oddly coupled tag-team benefiting from the deal. While the neocons fed Chalabi – and his intelligence chief, Arras Karim Habib, a paid Iraqi agent – a steady diet of U.S. secrets, Chalabi fed the neocons (in government and much of the American media) a fresh serving of tall tales cooked up in the INC's kitchen, and delivered piping hot to Judith Miller's doorstep.

The Iranians, for their part, feasted on U.S. secrets so deep and dark that only a few top officials were privy to them – and had a good chunk of Iraq handed to them, while a *de facto* Kurdish state emerged as a buffer between Israel and the Shi'ite power rising in the East. The whole thing was

supposed to have been presided over by the ostensibly pro-Western Chalabi, the neocons' Alger Hiss. That was the plan, at any rate, but something seems to have gone awry....

As in the Abu Ghraib photo-gallery of horrors, the nature of the crime suggests that a few lowly spear carriers – Rubin is just barely out of knee pants, and Rhode was certainly not in the loop on super-sensitive intelligence – didn't pull this off all on their own. Before it's all over, Chalabi-gate will reach into the favored nesting place of the neocons, the very top echelons of the Pentagon.

As UPI editor Martin Walker reports:

"The real target goes beyond Chalabi. The hunt is on, in the Republican Party, in Congress, in the CIA and State Department and in a media which is being deluged with leaks, for Chalabi's friends and sponsors in Washington – the group known as the neo-cons. In particular, the targets seem to be Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, the former assistant secretary (in Reagan's day) Richard Perle, Vice President Dick Cheney's national security aide Scooter Libby, and the National Security Council's Middle East aide Elliott Abrams. The leaking against them – from sources who insist on anonymity, but some CIA and FBI veterans – is intense. Some of the sources are now private citizens, making a good living through business connections in the Arab world."

Speaking of business connections, how does Richard Perle make his living except by using his government connections to profit handsomely from the war-driven neocon agenda? Oh well, never mind that: let's get to the juicy part. Walker also reports that these poor persecuted neocons "are now beginning to fight back," and in a familiar fashion:

"Richard Perle told this reporter Tuesday that the gloves were off. ... Perle has no doubts that some of the attacks on him are coming directly from the CIA, in order to cover their own exposed rears, attacking Chalabi's intelligence to distract attention from their own mistakes. 'I believe that much of the CIA operation in Iraq was owned by Saddam Hussein,' Perle said. 'There were 45 decapitation attempts against Saddam – and he survived them all. How could that be, if he was not manipulating the intelligence?'"

Gee, I guess this means that, on account of all those failed "decapitation attempts" on Fidel Castro over the years, the Cuban Communists exercised joint ownership of the CIA along with Saddam's Ba'athists. Oh, what a Perle of wisdom, but the Prince of Darkness was just getting started:

"Perle went on to suggest an even darker motive behind the attacks on the neo-cons; that the real target was Israel's Likud government and the

staunch support for Israel's prime minister Ariel Sharon in the Bush administration. When this was put to one CIA source, the reply was mocking: 'That's what they always do. As soon as these guys get any criticism, they scream Israel and anti-Semitism, and I think people are finally beginning to see through that smokescreen.'"

How and why an investigation into Iranian penetration of our most closely guarded secrets constitutes evidence of "anti-Semitism" is a question I'll leave for weightier intellects to ponder. But such an unseemly outburst ought to put to rest any doubts about a neocon-Iranian convergence of interests: we know something's afoot when both Richard Perle and the Iranian mullahs sound absolutely identical in tone as well as content.

We knew what the neocons were capable of: smearing their enemies, lying about practically anything, even outing a CIA agent doing high-priority undercover work. Is anyone surprised that they're capable of espionage?

Perle is right about one thing: it's time to take the gloves off.

—Justin Raimondo

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THE NEW YORKER FACT

LETTER FROM WASHINGTON REAL INSIDERS

by JEFFREY GOLDBERG

A pro-Israel lobby and an F.B.I. sting.

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Several years ago, I had dinner at Galileo, a Washington restaurant, with Steven Rosen, who was the director of foreign-policy issues at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. The group, which is better known by its acronym, AIPAC, lobbies for Israel's financial and physical security. Like many lobbyists, Rosen cultivated reporters, hoping to influence their writing while keeping his name out of print. He is a voluble man, and liked to demonstrate his erudition and dispense aphorisms. One that he often repeated could serve as the credo of K Street, the Rodeo Drive of Washington's influence industry: "A lobby is like a night flower: it thrives in the dark and dies in the sun."

Lobbyists tend to believe that legislators are susceptible to persuasion in ways that executive-branch bureaucrats are not, and before Rosen came to AIPAC, in 1982 (he had been at the RAND Corporation, a defense-oriented think tank), the group focussed mainly on Congress. But Rosen arrived brandishing a new idea: that the organization could influence the outcome of policy disputes within the executive branch—in particular, the Pentagon, the State Department, and the National Security Council.

Rosen began to court officials. He traded in gossip and speculation, and his reports to AIPAC's leaders helped them track currents in Middle East policymaking before those currents coalesced into executive orders. Rosen also used his contacts to carry AIPAC's agenda to the White House. An early success came in 1983, when he helped lobby for a strategic cooperation agreement between Israel and the United States, which was signed over the objections of Caspar Weinberger, the Secretary of Defense, and which led to a new level of intelligence sharing and military sales.

AIPAC is a leviathan among lobbies, as influential in its sphere as the National Rifle Association and the American Association of Retired Persons are in theirs, although it is, by comparison, much smaller. (AIPAC has about a hundred thousand members, the N.R.A. more than four million.) President Bush, speaking at the annual AIPAC conference in May of 2004, said, "You've always understood and warned against the evil ambition of terrorism and their networks. In a dangerous new century, your work is more vital than ever." AIPAC is unique in the top tier of lobbies because its concerns are the economic health and security of a foreign nation, and because its members are drawn almost entirely from a single ethnic group.

AIPAC's professional staff—it employs about a hundred people at its headquarters, two blocks from the Capitol—analyzes congressional voting records and shares the results with its members, who can then contribute money to candidates directly or to a network of pro-Israel political-action committees. The Center for Responsive Politics, a public-policy group, estimates that between 1990 and 2004 these PACs gave candidates and parties more than twenty million dollars.

Robert H. Asher, a former AIPAC president, told me that the PACs are usually given euphemistic names "I started a PAC called Citizens Concerned for the National Interest," he said. Asher, who is from Chicago, is a retired manufacturer of lamps and shades, and a member of the so-called Gang of Four—former presidents of AIPAC, who steered the group's policies for more than two decades. (The three others are Larry Weinberg, a California real-estate developer and a former owner of the Portland Trail

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Blazers; Edward Levy, a construction-materials executive from Detroit; and Mayer "Bubba" Mitchell, a retired builder based in Mobile, Alabama.)

AIPAC, Asher explained, is loyal to its friends and merciless to its enemies. In 1982, Asher led a campaign to defeat Paul Findley, a Republican congressman from Springfield, Illinois, who once referred to himself as "Yasir Arafat's best friend in Congress," and who later compared Arafat to Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

"There was a real desire to help Findley out of Congress," Asher said. He identified an obscure Democratic lawyer in Springfield, Richard Durbin, as someone who could defeat Findley. "We met at my apartment in Chicago, and I recruited him to run for Congress," he recalled. "I probed his views and I explained things that I had learned mostly from AIPAC. I wanted to make sure we were supporting someone who was not only against Paul Findley but also a friend of Israel."

Asher went on, "He beat Findley with a lot of help from Jews, in-state and out-of-state. Now, how did the Jewish money find him? I travelled around the country talking about how we had the opportunity to defeat someone unfriendly to Israel. And the gates opened." Durbin, who went on to win a Senate seat, is now the Democratic whip. He is a fierce critic of Bush's Iraq policy but, like AIPAC, generally supports the Administration's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Durbin says that he considers Asher to be his "most loyal friend in the Jewish community."

Mayer Mitchell led a similar campaign, three years ago, to defeat Earl Hilliard, an Alabama congressman who was a critic of Israel. Mitchell helped direct support to a young Harvard Law School graduate named Artur Davis, who challenged Hilliard in the Democratic primary, and he solicited donations from AIPAC supporters across America. Davis won the primary, and the seat. "I asked Bubba how he felt after Davis won," Asher said, "and he said, 'Just like you did when Durbin got elected.'" Mitchell declined to comment.

AIPAC's leaders can be immoderately frank about the group's influence. At dinner that night with Steven Rosen, I mentioned a controversy that had enveloped AIPAC in 1992. David Steiner, a New Jersey real-estate developer who was then serving as AIPAC's president, was caught on tape boasting that he had "cut a deal" with the Administration of George H. W. Bush to provide more aid to Israel. Steiner also said that he was "negotiating" with the incoming Clinton Administration over the appointment of a pro-Israel Secretary of State. "We have a dozen people in his"—Clinton's—"headquarters . . . and they are all going to get big jobs," Steiner said. Soon after the tape's existence was disclosed, Steiner resigned his post. I asked Rosen if AIPAC suffered a loss of influence after the Steiner affair. A half smile appeared on his face, and he pushed a napkin across the table. "You see this napkin?" he said. "In twenty-four hours, we could have the signatures of seventy senators on this napkin."

Rosen was influential from the start. He was originally recruited for the job by Larry Weinberg, one of the Gang of Four, and he helped choose the group's leaders, including the current executive director, Howard Kohr, a Republican who began his AIPAC career as Rosen's deputy. Rosen, who can be argumentative and impolitic, was never a candidate for the top post. "He's a bit of a *kochlefft*"—the Yiddish term for a pot-stirrer, or meddler—Martin Indyk, who also served as Rosen's deputy, and who went on to become President Clinton's Ambassador to Israel, says. Rosen has had an unusually eventful private life, marrying and divorcing six times (he is living again with his first wife); and he has a well-developed sense of paranoia. When we met, he would sometimes lower his voice, even when he was preparing to deliver an anodyne pronouncement. "Hostile ears are always listening," he was fond of saying.

Nevertheless, he is a keen analyst of Middle East politics, and a savvy bureaucratic infighter. His

views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are not notably hawkish; he once called himself “too right for the left, and too left for the right.” He is a hard-liner on only one subject—Iran—and this preoccupation helped shape AIPAC’s position: that Iran poses a greater threat to Israel than any other nation. In this way, AIPAC is in agreement with a long line of Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who fears Iran’s nuclear intentions more than he ever feared Saddam Hussein’s. (AIPAC lobbied Congress in favor of the Iraq war, but Iraq has not been one of its chief concerns.) Rosen’s main role at AIPAC, he once told me, was to collect evidence of “Iranian perfidy” and share it with the United States.

Unlike American neoconservatives, who have openly supported the Likud Party over the more liberal Labor Party, AIPAC does not generally take sides in Israeli politics. But on Iran AIPAC’s views resemble those of the neoconservatives. In 1996, Rosen and other AIPAC staff members helped write, and engineer the passage of, the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act, which imposed sanctions on foreign oil companies doing business with those two countries; AIPAC is determined, above all, to deny Iran the ability to manufacture nuclear weapons. Iran was a main focus of this year’s AIPAC policy conference, which was held in May at the Washington Convention Center. Ariel Sharon and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, among others, addressed five thousand AIPAC members. One hall of the convention center was taken up by a Disney-style walk-through display of an Iranian nuclear facility. It was kitsch, but not ineffective, and Rosen undoubtedly would have appreciated it. Rosen, however, was not there. He was fired earlier this year by Howard Kohr, nine months after he became implicated in an F.B.I. espionage investigation. Rosen’s lawyer, Abbe Lowell, expects him to be indicted on charges of passing secret information about Iranian intelligence activities in Iraq to an official of the Israeli Embassy and to a *Washington Post* reporter. A junior colleague, Keith Weissman, who served as an Iran analyst for AIPAC until he, too, was fired, may face similar charges.

The person who, in essence, ended Rosen’s career is a fifty-eight-year-old Pentagon analyst named Lawrence Anthony Franklin, who is even more preoccupied with Iran than Steven Rosen. Franklin, until recently the Pentagon’s Iran desk officer, was indicted last month on espionage charges. The Justice Department has accused him of giving “national-defense information” to Rosen and Weissman, and classified information to an Israeli official. Franklin has pleaded not guilty; a tentative trial date is set for September. If convicted, he will face at least ten years in prison.

I first met Franklin in November of 2002. Paul Wolfowitz, then the Deputy Secretary of Defense, was receiving the Henry M. (Scoop) Jackson award from the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, a conservative-leaning group that tries to build close relations between the American and Israeli militaries. In the ballroom of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel at Pentagon City, a shopping mall, were a number of American generals and the Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Danny Ayalon.

Franklin, a trim man with blond hair and a military bearing, is a colonel in the Air Force Reserve who spent several years as an analyst at the Defense Intelligence Agency. He has a doctorate in Asian studies and describes himself as a capable speaker of Farsi. In addition, he was a Catholic in a largely Jewish network of Pentagon Iran hawks.

Franklin was particularly close to the neoconservative Harold Rhode, an official in the Office of Net Assessment, the Pentagon’s in-house think tank. Franklin was also close to Michael Ledeen, who, twenty years ago, played an important role in the Iran-Contra scandal by helping arrange meetings between the American government and the Iranian arms dealer Manucher Ghorbanifar. Ledeen, now a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, is one of the most outspoken advocates in Washington of confrontation with the Tehran regime.

The conversation at the banquet, and just about everywhere else in official Washington at that time, centered on the coming war in Iraq. "We may well hope that with the demise of a truly evil and despotic regime in Iraq, we will see the liberation of one of the most talented peoples in the Arab world," Wolfowitz said in his speech. Franklin did not seem especially concerned with the topic at hand. As we stood outside the banquet hall, he said that Iran, not Iraq, would turn out to be the most difficult challenge in the war on terror.

Then, as now, the Administration was divided on the question of Iran. Many of the political appointees at the Defense Department hoped that America would support dissidents in an attempt to overthrow Iran's ruling clerics, while the State Department argued for containment. Even within the Defense Department, many officials believed that it would be imprudent to make regime change in Tehran a top priority. "There are neocons who thought Iran should come sooner and neocons who thought it should come later," Reuel Marc Gerecht, of the American Enterprise Institute, told me. As for Franklin, Gerecht, a former Iran specialist in the C.I.A.'s Directorate of Operations, said, "It's fair to say that Larry was impatient with Bush Administration policy on Iran." In the Pentagon's policy office, I learned later, it was sometimes said that Franklin inhabited a place called Planet Franklin. Gerecht referred to him as "sweet, bumbling Larry."

A year later, on a reporting assignment in Israel, I ran into Franklin at the Herzliya Conference, which is the Davos of the Israeli security establishment. He said that he was there on Defense Department business. We talked briefly about Iraq—it was eight months after the invasion—and, as we spoke, General Moshe Ya'alon, then the Israeli Army chief of staff, swept into the room surrounded by bodyguards and uniformed aides. "Wow," Franklin said.

We stepped outside, and he talked only about Iran's threat to America. "Our intelligence is blind," he said. "It's the most dangerous country in the world to the U.S., and we have nothing on the ground. We don't understand anything that goes on. I mean, the C.I.A. doesn't have anything. This goes way deeper than Tenet"—George Tenet, who was the director of central intelligence at the time. He continued, "Do you know how dangerous Iran is to our forces in the Gulf? We have great force-concentration issues now"—the presence of American troops in Iraq—"and the Iranians are very interested in making life difficult for American forces. They have the capability. You watch what they're doing in Iraq. Their infiltration is everywhere."

Franklin seemed more frustrated with American policy in Iran than he had the year before. "We don't understand that it's doable—regime change is doable," he said. "The people are so desperate to become free, and the mullahs are so unpopular. They're so pro-American, the people." Referring to the Bush Administration, he said, "That's what they don't understand," and he added, "And they also don't understand how anti-American the mullahs are." Franklin was convinced that the Iranians would commit acts of terrorism against Americans, on American soil. "These guys are a threat to us in Iraq and even at home," he said.

Franklin was not a high-ranking Pentagon official; he was five steps removed in the hierarchy from Douglas Feith, the Under-Secretary for Policy. For two years, though, he had been trying to change American policy. His efforts took many forms, including calls to reporters, meetings with Rosen and Weissman and with the political counsellor at the Israeli Embassy, Naor Gilon. According to Tracy O'Grady-Walsh, a Pentagon spokeswoman, he was not acting on behalf of his superiors: "If Larry Franklin was formally or informally lobbying, he was doing it on his own."

Franklin also sought information from Iranian dissidents who might aid his cause. In December of 2001, he and Rhode met in Rome with Michael Ledeen and a group of Iranians, including Manucher Ghorbanifar. Ledeen, who helped arrange the meeting, told me that the dissidents gave Franklin and Rhode information about Iranian threats against American soldiers in Afghanistan.

(Rhode did not return calls seeking comment.) Franklin was initially skeptical about the meeting, Ledeen said, but emerged believing that America could do business with these dissidents.

Franklin's meetings with Gilon and with the two AIPAC men make up the heart of the indictment against him. The indictment alleges that Rosen—"CC-1," or "Co-Conspirator 1"—called the Pentagon in early August of 2002, looking for the name of an Iran specialist. He made contact with Franklin a short time later, but, according to the indictment, they did not meet until February of 2003. In their meetings, according to several people with knowledge of the conversations, Franklin told the lobbyists that Secretary of State Colin Powell was resisting attempts by the Pentagon to formulate a tougher Iran policy. He apparently hoped to use AIPAC to lobby the Administration.

The Franklin indictment suggests that the F.B.I. had been watching Rosen as well; for instance, it alleges that, in February of 2003, Rosen, on his way to a meeting with Franklin, told someone on the phone that he "was excited to meet with a 'Pentagon guy' because this person was a 'real insider.'" Franklin, Rosen, and Weissman met openly four times in 2003. At one point, the indictment reads, somewhat mysteriously, "On or about March 10, 2003, Franklin, CC-1 and CC-2"—Rosen and Weissman—"met at Union Station early in the morning. In the course of the meeting, the three men moved from one restaurant to another restaurant and then finished the meeting in an empty restaurant."

On June 26, 2003, at a lunch at the Tivoli Restaurant, near the Pentagon, Franklin reportedly told Rosen and Weissman about a draft of a National Security Presidential Directive that outlined a series of tougher steps that the U.S. could take against the Iranian leadership. The draft was written by a young Pentagon aide named Michael Rubin (who is now affiliated with the American Enterprise Institute). Franklin did not hand over a copy of the draft, but he described its contents, and, according to the indictment, talked about the "state of internal United States government deliberations." The indictment also alleges that Franklin gave the two men "highly classified" information about potential attacks on American forces in Iraq.

In mid-August of 2002, according to the indictment, Franklin met with Gilon—identified simply as "FO," or "foreign official"—at a restaurant, and Gilon explained to Franklin that he was the "policy" person at the Embassy. The two met regularly, the indictment alleges, often at the Pentagon Officers' Athletic Club, to discuss "foreign policy issues," particularly regarding a "Middle Eastern country"—Iran, by all accounts—and "its nuclear program." The indictment suggests that Franklin was receiving information and policy advice from Gilon; after one meeting, Franklin drafted an "Action Memo" to his supervisors incorporating Gilon's suggestions. Gilon is an expert on weapons proliferation, according to Danny Ayalon, the Israeli Ambassador, and has briefed reporters about Israel's position on Iran. According to Lawrence Di Rita, a Pentagon spokesman, it is part of the "job description" of Defense Department desk officers to meet with their foreign counterparts. "Desk officers meet with foreign officials all the time, not with ministers, but interactions with people at their level," he said. The indictment contends, however, that on two occasions Franklin gave Gilon classified information.

The issue of Israel's activities in Washington is unusually sensitive. Twenty years ago, a civilian Naval Intelligence analyst named Jonathan Pollard was caught stealing American secrets on behalf of an Israeli intelligence cell—a "rogue" cell, the Israelis later claimed. Pollard said that he was driven to treason because, as a Jew, he could not abide what he saw as America's unwillingness to share crucial intelligence with Israel. Pollard's actions were an embarrassment for American Jews, who fear the accusation of "dual loyalty"—the idea that they split their allegiance between the United States and Israel. For Israel, the case was a moral and political disaster. And there are some in the American intelligence community who suspect that Israel has never stopped spying on the United States.

Earlier this month, Ayalon told me that Israel does not "collect any intelligence on the United States, period, full stop. We won't do anything to risk this most important relationship." In any case, he said, there was no need to spy, "because cooperation is so intimate and effective between Israel and the U.S." Ayalon also said that Gilon, who is returning to Jerusalem later this summer, remains an important member of his staff; in recent months, Gilon has attended meetings at the State Department, the Pentagon, and the White House.

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In June of 2004, F.B.I. agents searched Franklin's Pentagon office and his home in West Virginia, and allegedly found eighty-three classified documents. Some had to do with the Iran debate, but some pertained to Al Qaeda and Iraq. (A separate federal indictment, citing the documents, has been handed down in West Virginia.) According to a person with knowledge of Franklin's case, the agents told Franklin that Rosen and Weissman were working against America's interests. Franklin faced ruin—the documents found in his house could cost him his job, the agents said. Franklin, who did not have a lawyer, agreed to cooperate in the investigation of Rosen and Weissman, although apparently he was not given in return a specific promise of leniency. Soon, he was wired, and was asked to contact the two AIPAC employees. On July 21st, Franklin called Weissman and said that he had to speak to him immediately—that it was a matter of life and death. They arranged to meet outside the Nordstrom's department store at Pentagon City.

A month before that meeting, *The New Yorker* had published an article by Seymour Hersh about the activities of Israeli intelligence agents in northern Iraq. Franklin, who held a top-secret security clearance, allegedly told Weissman that he had new, classified information indicating that Iranian agents were planning to kidnap and kill the Israelis referred to by Hersh. American intelligence knew about the threat, Franklin said, but Israel might not. He also said that the Iranians had infiltrated southern Iraq, and were planning attacks on American soldiers. Rosen and Weissman, Franklin hoped, could insure that senior Administration officials received this news. It is unclear whether what Franklin relayed was true or whether it had been manufactured by the F.B.I. The Bureau has refused to comment on the case.

Weissman hurried back to AIPAC's headquarters and briefed Rosen and Howard Kohr, AIPAC's executive director. According to AIPAC sources, Rosen and Weissman asked Kohr to give the information to Elliott Abrams, the senior Middle East official on the National Security Council. Kohr didn't get in touch with Abrams, but Rosen and Weissman made two calls. They called Gilon and told him about the threat to Israeli agents in Iraq, and then they called Glenn Kessler, a diplomatic correspondent at the *Washington Post*, and told him about the threat to Americans.

A month later, on the morning of August 27, 2004, F.B.I. agents visited Rosen at his home, in Silver Spring, Maryland, seeking to question him. Rosen quickly called AIPAC's lawyers. That night, CBS News reported that an unnamed Israeli "mole" had been discovered in the Pentagon, and that the mole had been passing documents to two officials of AIPAC, who were passing the documents on to Israeli officials.

Within days, the names of Franklin, Rosen, and Weissman were made public. The F.B.I. informed Franklin that he was going to be charged with illegal possession of classified documents. Franklin was said by friends to be frightened, and surprised. He said that he could not afford to hire a lawyer. The F.B.I. arranged for a court-appointed attorney to represent him. The lawyer, a former federal prosecutor, advised him to plead guilty to espionage charges, and receive a prison sentence of six to eight years.

At about this time, Franklin received a call from Michael Edeeen, his ally in matters of Iran.

policy. "I called him and said, 'Larry, what's going on?'" Ledeen recalled. "He said, 'Don't worry, Sharansky'" —Natan Sharansky, the former Soviet dissident— " 'survived years in the Gulag, and I'll survive prison, too.' I said, 'What are you talking about?' He told me what was going on. I asked him if he had a good lawyer." Ledeen called the criminal-defense attorney Plato Cacheris. "I knew him from when he served as Fawn's attorney," Ledeen said, referring to Fawn Hall, who was Colonel Oliver North's secretary at the time of the Iran-Contra affair. Cacheris has also represented Monica Lewinsky and the F.B.I. agent Robert Hanssen, who spied for Moscow. Cacheris offered to represent Franklin pro bono, and Franklin accepted the offer.

AIPAC launched a special appeal for donations—for the organization, not for Rosen and Weissman. "Your generosity at this time will help ensure that false allegations do not hamper our ability or yours to work for a strong U.S.-Israel relationship and a safe and secure Israel," AIPAC's leaders wrote in the letter accompanying the appeal.

But in December four AIPAC officials, including Kohr, were subpoenaed to testify before a grand jury in Alexandria, Virginia. In March, AIPAC's principal lawyer, Nathan Lewin, met with the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, Paul McNulty, who agreed to let Lewin see some of the evidence of the Pentagon City sting. According to an AIPAC source, an eleven-second portion of the telephone conversation between Rosen, Weissman, and the *Post's* Glenn Kessler, which the F.B.I. had recorded, was played for Lewin. In that conversation, Rosen is alleged to have told Kessler about Iranian agents in southern Iraq—information that Weissman had received from Franklin. In the part of the conversation that Lewin heard, Rosen jokes about "not getting in trouble" over the information. He also notes, "At least we have no Official Secrets Act"—the British law that makes journalists liable to prosecution if they publish classified material.

Prosecutors argued to Lewin that this statement proved that Rosen and Weissman were aware that the information Franklin had given them was classified, and that Rosen must therefore have known that he was passing classified information to Gilon, a foreign official. Lewin, who declined to comment on the case, recommended that AIPAC fire Rosen and Weissman. He also told the board that McNulty had promised that AIPAC itself would not be a target of the espionage investigation. An AIPAC spokesman, Patrick Dorton, said of the firing, "Rosen and Weissman were dismissed because they engaged in conduct that was not part of their jobs, and because this conduct did not comport with the standards that AIPAC expects and requires of its employees."

When I asked Abbe Lowell, Rosen's lawyer, about the firings, he said, "Steve Rosen's dealings with Larry Franklin were akin to his dealings with executive-branch officials for more than two decades and were well known, encouraged, and appreciated by AIPAC."

Last month, I met with Lowell and Rosen in Lowell's office, which these days is a center of Washington scandal management. (He also represents the fallen lobbyist Jack Abramoff.) Lowell had instructed Rosen not to discuss specifics of the case, but Rosen expressed disbelief that his career had been ended by an F.B.I. investigation. "I'm being looked at for things I've done for twenty-three years, which other foreign-policy groups, hundreds of foreign-policy groups, are doing," Rosen said, and went on, "Our job at AIPAC was to understand what the government is doing, in order to help form better policies, in the interests of the U.S. I've never done anything illegal or harmful to the U.S. I never even dreamed of doing anything harmful to the U.S." Later, he said, "We did not knowingly receive classified information from Larry Franklin." Lowell added, "When the facts are known, this will be a case not about Rosen and Weissman's actions but about the government's actions." Lowell said that he would not rehearse his arguments against any charges until there is an indictment.

Rosen said that he was particularly upset by the allegation that, because he had informed Gilon

that Israeli lives might be in danger, he was a spy for Israel. "If I had been given information that British or Australian soldiers were going to be kidnapped or killed in Iraq, I think I would have done the same thing," he said. "I'd have tried to warn them by calling friends at those embassies." He wants to believe that he could return to AIPAC if he is exonerated, but this does not seem likely. AIPAC leaders are downplaying Rosen's importance to the organization. "AIPAC is focussed primarily on legislative lobbying," Dorton told me. Rosen's severance pay will end in September, although AIPAC, in accordance with its bylaws, will continue to pay legal fees for Rosen and Weissman.

Rosen's defenders are critical of AIPAC for its handling of the controversy. Martin Indyk, who is now the director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy, a think tank within the Brookings Institution, thinks that AIPAC made a tactical mistake by cutting off the two men. "It appears they've abandoned their own on the battlefield," he says. "Because they cut Steve off, they leave him no choice." Indyk wouldn't elaborate, but the implication was clear: Rosen and Weissman will defend themselves by arguing that they were working in concert with the highest officials of the organization, including Kohr.

Until there is an indictment, the government's full case against Rosen and Weissman cannot be known; no one in the Justice Department will comment. The laws concerning the dissemination of government secrets are sometimes ambiguous and often unenforced, and prosecutors in such cases face complex choices. According to Lee Strickland, a former chief privacy officer of the C.I.A., prosecutors pressing espionage charges against Rosen and Weissman would have to prove that the information the two men gave to Gilon not merely was classified but rose to the level of "national-defense information," meaning that it could cause dire harm to the United States. Yet a reporter who called the Embassy to discuss the same information in the course of preparing a story—thus violating the same statute—would almost certainly not be prosecuted. Strickland continued, "Twice in the Clinton Administration we had proposals to broaden the statutes to include the recipients, not just the leakers, of classified information. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* went bat-shit about this legislation. They saw it as an attempt to shut down leaks." If American law did punish those who receive, and then pass on, or publish, privileged information, much of the Washington press corps would be in jail, according to Lee Levine, a First Amendment lawyer. So would a great many government officials, elected and appointed, for whom classified information is the currency of conversation with reporters and lobbyists.

Strickland, who said that he had spent much of his career at the C.I.A. "shutting down" leaks, called the AIPAC affair "uncharted territory." It is uncommon, he said, for an espionage case to be built on the oral transmission of national-defense information. He also said, "Intent is always an element. If I were a defense attorney, I would argue that this was a form of entrapment. The F.B.I. agents deliberately set my client up, put him in a moral quandary." He added, however, that although a jury might recognize the quandary, the law does not. "Just because you have information that would help a foreign country doesn't make it your job to pass that information."

Even some of AIPAC's most vigorous critics do not see the Rosen affair as a traditional espionage case. James Bamford, who is the author of well-received books about the National Security Agency, and an often vocal critic of Israel and the pro-Israel lobby, sees the case as a cautionary tale about one lobbying group's disproportionate influence: "What Pollard did was espionage. This is a much different and more unique animal—this is the selling of ideology, trying to sell a viewpoint." He continued, "Larry Franklin is not going to knock on George Bush's door, but he can get AIPAC, which is a pressure group, and the Israeli government, which is an enormous pressure group, to try to get the American government to change its policy to a more aggressive policy." Bamford, who believes that Weissman and Rosen may indeed be guilty of soliciting information and passing it to a foreign government, sees the case as a kind of brushback pitch, a way of limiting AIPAC's long—and, in Bamford's view, dangerous—reach.

Other AIPAC critics see the lobby's behavior as business as usual in Washington. "The No. 1 game in Washington is making people talking to you feel like you're an insider, that you've got information no one else has," Sam Gejdenson, a former Democratic congressman from Connecticut, says. When Gejdenson opposed a proposal to increase Israel's foreign-aid allocation at the expense of more economically needy countries, AIPAC, he said, responded by "sitting on its hands" during his reelection campaigns, despite the fact that he is Jewish. "It's like any other lobbying group," he said. "Its job isn't to come up with the best ideas for mankind, or the U.S. It's narrowly focussed."

AIPAC officials insist that the case has not affected the organization's effectiveness. But its operations have certainly been hindered by the controversy of the past year, and the F.B.I. sting may force lobbyists of all sorts to be more careful about trying to penetrate the executive branch—and about leaking to reporters. And AIPAC now seems acutely sensitive to the appearance of dual loyalty. The theme of this year's AIPAC conference was "Israel, an American Value," and, for the first time, "Hatikvah," the Israeli national anthem, was not sung. The only anthem heard was "The Star-Spangled Banner." †

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National News

Lawyer: Franklin Used In AIPAC Sting

Ron Kampeas and Matthew E. Berger
Special to the Jewish Times

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Washington

Lawrence Franklin, the Pentagon analyst at the center of the government's espionage case against two former employees of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, "walked onstage" into an ongoing investigation of AIPAC officials, according to his attorney:

Plato Cacheris, one of Washington's best-known espionage lawyers, told JTA in a recent interview that he is representing Franklin for free because he feels his client was unfairly targeted.

"I felt for him," Cacheris said. "I felt he was unfairly put upon."

Franklin was indicted last month on charges that he conspired to reveal classified information to two AIPAC officials, former policy director Steve Rosen and former Iran analyst Keith Weissman, and an Israeli Embassy employee.

Franklin's trial is set to start Sept. 6. The midlevel Iran analyst has plead not guilty.

"Franklin walked onstage; there already was an investigation going on not involving him," Cacheris said.

Prosecutors and other government officials have refused to comment on the case.

The information that Franklin allegedly relayed to Rosen and Weissman centered on Iran's activities in post-invasion Iraq.

Cacheris' assertion that Franklin was an accidental target in the case reinforces the perception held by those close to the defense of Weissman and Rosen that the two former AIPAC employees were the FBI's original targets.

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Indeed, Franklin's indictment cites as evidence apparently tapped phone conversations of Rosen even before he met Franklin, suggesting that the government stumbled across Franklin in the course of tracking Rosen.

Another source familiar with the government's case against Rosen says an investigation was launched as early as September 2001 because the Bush administration wanted to quash what it believed was a promiscuous culture of leaking in Washington. Rosen was renowned for his access to inside information.

Cacheris would not speculate about the government's rationale for the case. "There seems to me there is something driving it," he said. "What it is, I don't know yet."

Five of the six charges in Franklin's indictment focus on his relationship with Rosen and Weissman; the sixth involves his relationship with Naor Gilon, head of the political desk at the Israeli Embassy in Washington. According to the indictment, Franklin's acquaintance with Gilon predates his meetings with Rosen and Weissman.

Cacheris said a relationship between Gilon and Franklin -- two men with a professional interest in Iran -- was hardly surprising. He characterized the indictment's implication that Franklin sought something from Israel in exchange for information as "rather flimsy."

The indictment mentions a store gift card Franklin received from Gilon and a letter of reference Gilon wrote on behalf of Franklin's daughter, who was going to visit Israel.

Franklin sought Cacheris' legal assistance late last year after the FBI said it would press charges against him, even though he had cooperated with the government's investigation of Rosen and Weissman.

Asked why Franklin agreed to the FBI's alleged request last June to participate in a sting operation involving Weissman and Rosen without even asking for a lawyer or any quid pro quo, Cacheris smiled.

"Larry's a little bit guileless -- maybe a lot guileless -- and maybe a bit unsophisticated for a guy with a Ph.D. in Asian studies," said Cacheris, a Southerner with an avuncular manner and a fondness for seersucker suits. "The questions that you would have asked, he didn't ask."

"If he had a lawyer up front, we wouldn't be talking today," Cacheris said.

In the alleged sting on July 21, 2004, Franklin called Weissman and insisted that they meet as soon as possible. When they met later that day at a shopping mall, Franklin told Weissman that Iranian agents planned to imminently kidnap, torture and kill Israeli and American agents in northern Iraq, according to sources.

Franklin reportedly asked Weissman to relay the information to Elliott Abrams, then the assistant national security adviser at the White House in charge of dealing with the Middle East. The presumption was that AIPAC would have better access to the White House than a mid-level Iran analyst at the Pentagon.

The reliability of the information has never been verified, but Cacheris insists Franklin was embroiled in a sting operation.

"He was given a script," the attorney said.

Weissman relayed the information to Rosen, and together they told their boss, AIPAC's executive director Howard Kohr, asking him to pass it on to Abrams, according to multiple sources. There is no evidence that Kohr shared the information with Abrams or anyone else or that he knew it was classified.

The government has assured AIPAC that neither it nor Kohr are targets in the investigation, AIPAC has said.

Cacheris said he does not know if the alleged sting was directed at anyone beyond Rosen or Weissman.

The two AIPAC staffers also relayed the information to Gilon at the Israeli Embassy and to Glenn Kessler, The Washington Post's State Department correspondent, according to sources close to the defense.

Those two conversations are expected to be central to the case against Rosen and Weissman. Indictments against the two are expected to be handed down sometime this summer.

The government will argue that relaying classified information to a foreign agent is an act of espionage and that Rosen and Weissman made it clear in their conversation with Kessler that the information was classified, according to defense sources familiar with the government's case.

Weissman and Rosen will say they did not know that the information was classified and that the government is distorting their conversation with Kessler, according to sources close to the former AIPAC officials.

In August 2004, about a month after the alleged sting, FBI agents raided the offices of Rosen and Weissman at AIPAC headquarters. In

January, the government convened a grand jury in Virginia to consider the case.

Cacheris, famous for handling high-profile espionage cases — including those against the FBI's Robert Hannsen and the CIA's Aldrich Ames — doesn't believe the government has a lot to go on.

The exchanges that Rosen, Weissman and Franklin allegedly had are "very common," Cacheris said. "People in this city are talking every day about stuff they're not allowed to talk about. It's not inappropriate."

AIPAC fired Weissman and Rosen in March, after months of defending their integrity, citing information that arose out of the FBI investigation.

Franklin also faces charges in West Virginia, his place of residence, where he is alleged to have violated a ban on removing classified documents from the Virginia-Maryland-D.C. region by taking some items home. Franklin was reprimanded in the late 1990s for the same reason but was allowed to keep his security clearance.

Cacheris said he wasn't currently negotiating a deal for Franklin.

"We will not plead to an espionage count because we don't think that is justified," he said.

Cacheris did not rule out agreeing to a plea bargain on a lesser charge in the future.

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