

Spy Scandal Centers On AIPAC Role

by Jeffrey Steinberg

According to sources close to the Bush Administration, Attorney General John Ashcroft moved in August to put the kibosh on an FBI counterintelligence probe into top operatives of the official Israeli lobby in America, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC); and when it became clear that there was a top-down cover-up under way, government officials leaked details of the spy probe to CBS News to prevent the probe from being shut down altogether.

While the CBS story, which was aired on Aug. 27, focused on a Pentagon desk officer, Larry Franklin, who is suspected of passing classified documents on Bush Administration policy towards Iran to Israel, the center of the probe, according to sources, has been the ties between AIPAC and top officials of the Israeli Embassy in Washington. Both the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* have reported that the FBI has been conducting a counterintelligence investigation into AIPAC for more than two years, and that National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and her deputy Stephen Hadley were briefed by FBI officials in 2002 about the probe.

The Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* reported Sept. 9 that AIPAC had sent a letter to its supporters, seeking donations "to help it combat the allegations leveled against it in the context of a counterespionage investigation at the Pentagon. According to media reports, the FBI suspects two AIPAC officials of receiving a classified document from a Pentagon official and then passing it on to Israel."

The AIPAC letter, from President Bernice Manocherian and Executive Director Howard Kohr, read, in part: "We are writing to keep you informed and to ask for your help. Decision makers in Washington will be measuring your commitment to AIPAC as an indicator of AIPAC's overall strength. One of the few ways they can gauge confidence in AIPAC is by looking at our relative financial strength. . . . 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." The letter later complained that "The very essence of the U.S.-Israel relationship is under assault."

Ha'aretz noted that "Manocherian and Kohr flatly denied the allegations. They also stressed that the scandal would not deter the organization from continuing to lobby Congress

and the Administration on Israel-related issues, particularly the fight against Palestinian terror and Iran's nuclear ambitions."

Indeed, U.S. intelligence sources reported to this news service that the leak to CBS and other news outlets of the spy probe, was timed to pre-empt a massive public relations and lobbying mobilization by AIPAC, set to begin when Congress resumed on Sept. 7. The subject: The need for a more militant U.S. policy towards Iran, in keeping with the Sharon government's threat of a "breakaway ally" military strike against Iran's Bushehr nuclear reactor.

Lyndon LaRouche wrote a widely circulated memo on the Franklin case on Aug. 30 (see *EIR*, Sept. 10), assessing that the revelations about a new spy probe were aimed at preventing just such a "breakaway ally" attack on Iran, characterizing the leak as an "institutional intervention" to prevent the catastrophic provocation. LaRouche's memo "Franklin: A Non-Partisan Institutional Reflex," began:

"1. The 'Pollard Affair'-like issue of Paul Wolfowitz's asset Larry Franklin, and others, is the subject of a non-partisan response of relevant institutions of the U.S. Presidency to the active threat posed by the role of certain frankly lunatic, contaminated, and obviously expendable elements inside Israel, whose actions threaten to set off a nuclear version of 'A New Middle East War.' This would become immediately a globally spreading forest-fire of asymmetric warfare involving nuclear and other special weapons. Such a war would have immediately far, far more extensive immediate mass-homicidal ramifications and continuing reverberations than any earlier so-called 'Middle East War' of modern times.

"Oil prices of much more than \$100 a barrel would be only one among the likely early consequences.

"2. The subsuming intent of the culpable elements within U.S. institutions, is to set some of the military capabilities of Israel into an activated form of what RAND and related institutions defined, already decades ago, as a 'breakaway ally' mode of nuclear 'chicken,' including use of nuclear weapons, against Iran and other targets of that region. That is, a U.S. ally, who, ostensibly impatient at lack of such desired military action from the U.S.A. itself, starts a war, sneering at the U.S. itself, as if to say: 'We will start the war, and then you will have to fight it!'"

Policy Brawl

According to U.S. government sources, just prior to the CBS leak on Aug. 27, Attorney General John Ashcroft interceded to assign responsibility for the AIPAC/Larry Franklin probe to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia, thus forestalling arrest warrants against Franklin and several AIPAC officials.

The move to counter Ashcroft's suppression of the probe through media leaks is but one feature of a much bigger policy brawl, now taking place behind the scenes in Washington.

At the center of the fight is the continuing role of the Dick Cheney-protected neo-con "mole hill" at the Pentagon, inside the National Security Council, and in the State Department. Leading administration neo-cons, including Cheney's Chief of Staff Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, Cheney staffer David Wurmser, and NSC Mideast chief Elliott Abrams, continue to push for wars in Southwest Asia, targeting Iran and Syria in the near term, even as the American occupation of Iraq continues to sink ever deeper into the quagmire.

As this news service has reported for years, the neo-con policy being peddled inside the Bush Administration is a clone of the policy first designed, in 1996, for Israel's right-wing Likud Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In July 1996, on the eve of a speech before a joint session of the U.S. Congress, newly installed Prime Minister Netanyahu was given a document titled "A Clean Break, A New Strategy for Securing the Realm." Authored by Richard Perle, until recently the chairman of the Bush Administration's Defense Policy Board; Feith; longtime Wolfowitz friend Charles Fairbanks; Wurmser; and his wife Meyrav Wurmser, "A Clean Break" spelled out an attack against the Oslo Accords, which focused on the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the demonizing of Yasser Arafat as the "godfather" of Palestinian terrorism, the reoccupation of the West Bank areas turned over to the Palestinian Authority, and the eventual overthrow of the governments of Egypt, Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon.

When "Clean Break" authors secured top posts in the "Bush 43" Administration, they set about implementing the Netanyahu foreign policy blueprint from the banks of the Potomac.

It is this larger issue that is at the heart of the policy brawl today. The real issue is not the passing of a draft Iran policy memo to Israel. The issue is the hijacking of U.S. national security policy by a group of neo-cons who, if left unchecked, will destroy both the United States and Israel, by blowing up the entire Southwest Asia region, through their utopian schemes.

When Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin took office in 1992, one of his first acts was to come to Washington, and meet with top officials of AIPAC. Rabin scolded the group, for having allowed themselves to become puppets of the various right-wing Likud factions dedicated to stopping a peaceful solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict at all costs. Three years later, after having signed the Oslo Accords, Rabin was assassinated by a fanatic who was encouraged by some of the very Likud radicals whom Rabin has assailed—including Netanyahu and Sharon, subsequently prime ministers.

Whether there is war or peace in Southwest Asia is another issue being fought out—in surrogate fashion—in the ongoing AIPAC spy scandal.