

Franklin Indictment: Bigger Than the Pollard Affair

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On June 13, a 20-page grand jury indictment—dated May 26—against Pentagon analyst Lawrence Franklin, was unsealed in Federal Court in Alexandria, Va., opening a new page in a several-year-long espionage probe that now promises to blow more circuits than the 1985 Jonathan Pollard arrest and espionage conviction.

Some clues as to the scope of the network being targeted in the Franklin probe were offered in the indictment itself, which pointed to two other Pentagon officials, two “former” senior AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) employees, a recently departed political officer at the Israeli Embassy, and at least one former senior Mossad official, as possible co-conspirators with Franklin in passing classified U.S. intelligence to Israel.

Although the indictment did not name the suspected co-conspirators, most of their identities have already come out. For example, the two ex-AIPAC officials are Steven Rosen and Keith Weissman. For 27 years, Rosen was AIPAC’s director of international affairs, and Weissman was, for years, AIPAC’s top Iran expert. In April, both men were fired by AIPAC, as part of a deal struck between the Justice Department and the Israeli lobbying group, brokered by Washington lawyer Nathan Lewin.

However, sources report that the deal negotiated by Lewin may have already been broken by AIPAC. The agreement was that: 1) the two men would be fired; 2) AIPAC would vow to “never do it again”; and 3) that AIPAC would not provide any financial compensation or support to the two ex-employees. However, AIPAC admits that it has paid over \$1 million in legal bills for Rosen and Weissman to date. It is expected that the two men, who are listed as “Co-Conspirators 1 and 2” in the grand jury indictment, will themselves be indicted before the end of June.

Associates of Rosen have reported that the former AIPAC chief political operative has been seen around Washington in

a state of near-shock. He muttered to one longtime friend, according to an eyewitness account, “We used to own this town, and now look at what’s happened.” Another U.S. intelligence source, intimately familiar with the case, simply observed: “Rosen *is* AIPAC.”

Ironically, Nathan Lewin’s role as the legal consultant to AIPAC may have had a certain blowback effect. Lewin is remembered by many FBI and Justice Department old hands as the lawyer who orchestrated the coverup of the espionage probe of Dr. Steven Bryen, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Lewin was hired as a legal “consultant” to AIPAC as soon as word leaked out in August 2004 of Franklin’s legal troubles. According to one source, however, that was “late in the game,” as the FBI had bugged AIPAC’s offices for over a year at the time. In September and December 2004, the FBI raided AIPAC’s offices and confiscated computer drives, documents, and other material. The second raid on the semi-official Israel lobby’s offices was no friendly affair. FBI agents came in with guns drawn.

Israelis Under Scrutiny

There are at least three Israelis under FBI and Justice Department scrutiny in the Franklin case. They are Naor Gilon, who recently departed from his post as political counsellor at the Israeli Embassy in Washington. According to the grand jury indictment, Gilon had 15 meetings with Pentagon Iran desk officer Franklin in 2003-04. In a number of those meetings, according to the indictment, Franklin passed along classified information. Israeli news accounts say that Gilon and Franklin have actually known each other since 1997, when Franklin, a colonel in the U.S. Air Force Reserve, was briefly assigned to the Air Attaché’s Office at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv. It was Franklin’s second tour of duty in Israel, according to one former Pentagon co-worker. However, the tour was cut short, after Franklin was repeatedly

caught having unauthorized and unreported meetings with Israeli military and intelligence officials.

In addition to Gilon, the FBI is also probing Uzi Arad and Eran Lerman. Arad is a “retired” senior Mossad officer who, at one time, served as the official liaison to U.S. intelligence for the Israeli espionage service. Arad is now the director of the Herzliya Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, a leading Israeli national security think-tank, which hosts a prestigious annual international security conference.

According to the indictment, on Feb. 13, 2004, Gilon telephoned Franklin at the Pentagon, and asked him to meet with Arad. A week later, Franklin and Arad had lunch at the Pentagon cafeteria.

Arad was interviewed a few months ago by the FBI about his ties to Franklin, and Arad later explained to Israeli media that he had met Franklin at the December 2003 Herzliya conference. He claimed he was merely visiting the Pentagon civilian analyst, and was exchanging non-classified academic papers with him.

Eran Lerman, the second “ex” Israeli intelligence official under scrutiny, was a top military intelligence analyst, who also attended the 2003 Herzliya gathering.

But there is much more to the Arad and Lerman angle to Franklin. Both men have been described by one Israeli source as protégés of Rafi Eytan, the legendary Mossad European station chief, who was in charge of the special intelligence unit, Lekem, that ran U.S. citizen Jonathan Pollard as an Israeli spy in the early-to-mid-1980s. Furthermore, according to one U.S. intelligence source, the probe into Arad and Lerman’s activities has opened up a “parallel Mossad” apparatus, that has been at the center of a much broader “soft” espionage program, targetting the United States, and this is an area that U.S. counterintelligence officials are exploring with great interest.

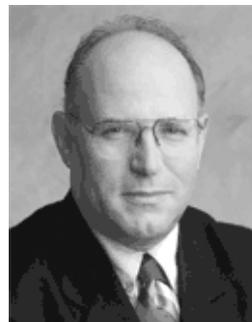
The ‘X Committee’ Revisited

The indictment also made mention of two other Pentagon officials. One unnamed official referred Rosen to Franklin, to discuss Iran. The other unnamed official attended the first face-to-face meeting between Franklin and the AIPAC men, at which classified information was provided by Franklin. While no public accounts have yet named the two other Pentagon officials, two names that have repeatedly been speculated on by experts familiar with the probe are: Doug Feith, Franklin’s boss and the outgoing Undersecretary of Defense for Policy; and Harold Rhode, a so-called “Islamic” expert, who was a close advisor to then-Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, and served in the Office of Net Assessments, headed by Andrew Marshall.

The indictment also noted that Franklin has solicited help



DoD/R.D. Ward



The trail of the Franklin indictment leads to an extensive network, including (left to right) Doug Feith, Franklin’s Pentagon boss; Dr. Uzi Arad, a former senior Israeli Mossad officer; and Eran Lerman, who was a top Israeli military intelligence analyst.

from Rosen to get a job at the National Security Council. This has led to speculation that Elliott Abrams, who headed the Mideast desk at the NSC during the first Administration of President George W. Bush, was also promoting Franklin.

While Pentagon officials like Feith and Wolfowitz tried to distance themselves from Franklin, claiming he was just a lowly desk officer, eyewitnesses have told this news service that Franklin was a frequent participant in “neo-cons only” brown-bag lunch sessions in Feith’s office. Those sessions were reportedly also attended by Franklin’s immediate boss at the Near East-South Asia policy office, William Luti. Luti, who came to the Pentagon in mid-2001 from Vice President Dick Cheney’s office, frequently boasted that he was really working for “Scooter,” a reference to I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, Cheney’s chief of staff and chief national security aide. Libby also was, for 16 years, the lawyer for fugitive swindler and Mossad money-man, Marc Rich.

Others who joined in the Feith sessions were identified as: Richard Perle, who formerly headed the Defense Policy Board, but was forced to resign; Abe Shulsky, advisor to Luti, who headed the Office of Special Plans, the hub of the Pentagon disinformation campaign to justify the Iraq invasion of March 2003; and Harold Rhode, the man suspected of being the other Pentagon participant in the original meeting with Rosen and Franklin.

Irangate Links

Rhode’s close ties to Franklin date back at least to December 2001, when the two Pentagon civilians travelled to Rome with Michael Ledeen, for three days of meetings with Iranian arms dealer Manucher Ghorbanifar. A pivotal figure in the 1980s Iran-Contra scandal, Ghorbanifar was denounced by the CIA as a pathological liar, and was declared off limits for CIA Middle East hands. But Ghorbanifar always remained a favorite of the neo-cons, and Ledeen organized the December 2001 session to reopen some of the old Irangate links, as part of his crusade for “regime change in Tehran.”

One former U.S. intelligence official assessed that Franklin was used, among other tasks, to conduit Ghorbanifar disin-

formation to Israel, so it could be credibly “shopped in” to U.S. intelligence in a re-run of the Ahmed Chalabi/Iraqi National Congress “stove pipe” of disinformation to “end users” like Cheney and other top hawkish policymakers.

But above all else, leading Pentagon officials, now under suspicion in the Franklin affair, go back to the original Pollard case as suspected members of the “X Committee,” the group of Reagan-era national security hawks, who were all under investigation as co-conspirators of Pollard, but were never caught or prosecuted. In Spring 1988, *EIR* published a list of suspected members of the “X Committee,” provided by a source working with the General Counsel to the Secretary of Defense (see *Documentation*). Among the names on the list: Wolfowitz, Feith, Perle, and Ledeen. All four men have now been directly linked to the Franklin affair.

There is growing speculation that this time, the “X Committee” is not going to get away with its perfidy. The national security institutions of the United States often work slowly, but on some occasions, they actually work. And that is making for some very sleepless nights for people like Dick Cheney, who have been covering the backs of the “X Committee” for decades.