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Washington Times
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The Iranian Bomb

By Frank J. Gaffney Jr.

One could be forgiven, in light of recent headlines and press accounts, for wondering precisely who the enemy is in this war on terror: For some people, it clearly seems the list should include — if not be headed by — a democratic ally that has been subjected, per capita, to considerably more sustained and deadly terrorist attacks than the United States: Israel.

This argument requires Israel to be seen not for what it is — namely, a longstanding U.S. partner in a strategically vital region of the world where few exist, one that shares America's values and is a bulwark against the rising tide of anti-Western Islamist extremism. Israel must, instead, be portrayed as perfidious, pursuing an international agenda divergent from (if not actually at odds with) that of the United States and a liability, rather than an asset.

Those who would portray Israel in such an unflattering light doubtless are gleeful over leaks claiming the Jewish State surreptitiously obtained state secrets from a U.S. government employee working for the Pentagon. At this writing, no evidence has been provided to support such charges. Nor has anyone been apprehended — although, for several days, the FBI has been described as poised to arrest someone employed by the Defense Department's policy organization. Only time will tell whether anyone actually is taken into custody, the type of charges and whether he is actually found guilty.

In the meantime, these leaks have already diverted attention from a nation that genuinely should head the list of America's foes: the terrorist-sponsoring, nuclear-arming and ballistic missile-wielding Islamist government of Iran. This effect has been all the more ironic insofar as, according to press accounts, the classified information the FBI thinks was improperly purveyed to Israel involved documents shedding light on America's evolving policy toward the Iranian mullahocracy.

Strategic analyst Steven Daskal recently offered a reminder of the peril posed by Iran: "While the Islamic Republic of Iran as a state is technically not at war with the U.S., Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwa calling for total war by all Shi'ites, regardless of citizenship, against the 'Great Satan America' remains in effect — it has never been rescinded, and in fact was expanded to include killing Americans as being a necessary part of a defensive jihad to make the world safe for Islam. Khomeini's pioneering pseudo-theology was later picked up by Sunni extremists, including Osama bin Laden."

In a thoughtful article in the Aug. 23 New York Post, Amir Taheri recounted how Khomeini and his successors have translated that fatwa into a 25-year-long war against the United States — waged asymmetrically, both directly (for example, in attacks against U.S. embassies and personnel) and indirectly (through terrorist proxies like Hezbollah in Lebanon, Sheik Muqtada al-Sadr in Iraq and Shi'ite warlords in Afghanistan). Mr. Taheri correctly observes "the Khomeinist revolution defines itself in opposition to a vision of the world that it regards as an American imposition. ... With or without nuclear weapons, the Islamic Republic, in its present shape, represents a clear and present threat to the kind of

Middle East that President Bush says he wants to shape."

Therefore, for the U.S., stopping Tehran's Islamist government before it obtains the means to carry out threats to attack Americans forces in Iraq and elsewhere should be an urgent priority. For Israel, however, denying the ruling Iranian mullahs nuclear arms is literally a matter of national life and death.

Israel's concern about the growing existential threat from Iran can only be heightened by overtures Sen. John Kerry and his running mate have been making lately to Tehran. In remarks Monday, vice presidential candidate John Edwards said a Kerry administration would offer the Iranians a "great bargain": They could keep their nuclear energy program and obtain for it Western supplies of enriched uranium fuel, provided the regime in Tehran promised to forswear nuclear weapons. According to Mr. Edwards, if Iran did not accept this "bargain," everyone — including our European allies — would recognize the true, military purpose of this program and would "stand with us" in levying on Iran "very heavy sanctions."

There is just one problem: Based on what is known about Iran's program and intentions — let alone its history of animus toward us — only the recklessly naive could still believe such a deal is necessary to divine the mullahs' true purposes.

While it may be inconvenient to say so, Iran is clearly putting into place a complete nuclear fuel cycle so as to obtain both weapons and power from its reactor and enrichment facilities. And a deal like that on offer from Messrs. Kerry and Edwards failed abysmally in North Korea.

If the United States is unwilling to take concrete steps to prevent the Iranian Bomb from coming to fruition, its Israeli ally will likely feel compelled to act unilaterally — just as it did with the 1981 raid that neutralized Saddam Hussein's nuclear infrastructure. At the time, the Reagan administration joined the world in sharply protesting Israel's attack.

A decade later, however, the value of the contribution thus made to American security was noted by then-Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, who said he thanked God every day during Operation Desert Storm that Israel had kept Iraq a nuclear-free zone. If such a counterproliferation strategy becomes necessary once again, it will be in all of our interests to have Israel succeed.

Frank J. Gaffney Jr. is president of the Center for Security Policy and a columnist for The Washington Times.

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August 31, 2004ALL FBI INFORMATION CONTAINED
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DATE 07-29-2010 BY 60324 uc baw/sab/lsg

Hand Rumsfeld His Walking Papers

By Helen Thomas, Hearst Newspapers

WASHINGTON --The time has come for Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to leave his Pentagon post, either by dismissal or resignation.

Two separate reports last week make it clear that Rumsfeld and other top Pentagon officials were ultimately responsible for the sadistic abuse of prisoners in Iraq's infamous Abu Ghraib.

A report by a four-member panel headed by former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger traced the mistreatment of prisoners in Iraq to failures that went all the way up the chain of command in the Pentagon.

Another military report Wednesday said 27 people attached to intelligence agencies as well as four private contractors participated in abuses, some tantamount to torture, of prisoners.

"We discovered serious misconduct and a loss of moral values," said Army Gen. Paul Kern, head of the investigation. This gives the lie to early Pentagon efforts to paint the prison abuses as the work of a handful of low-level MPs, acting out their frustrations.

The Kern report also noted that eight "ghost detainees" were concealed from the International Committee of the Red Cross. One of them died in custody.

The origin of the scandal traces back to Feb. 2, 2002, when President Bush abrogated the Geneva Conventions requiring humanitarian treatment of prisoners. Bush declared that those rules didn't apply to the U.S. war against terrorism. Bush has been scrapping our international agreements since he came into office, but for this one he has paid dearly in terms of just plain decency.

When he canceled the Geneva accords, the U.S. focus was in Afghanistan where American forces were rounding up al-Qaida and Taliban suspects.

Later that year, in December, Rumsfeld authorized ruthless interrogation practices against detainees rounded up in Afghanistan and held at the U.S. Navy base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Those approved practices included the use of dogs to terrify prisoners, forcing prisoners into prolonged painful stress positions, stripping them naked, solitary confinement, shaving them, hooding them.

The train then completely left the tracks after the U.S. invasion of Iraq where U.S. military personnel at the Abu Ghraib prison adopted the same interrogation tactics used in Afghanistan and at Guantanamo Bay.

The photos provided the shocking evidence earlier this year and the investigations, courts-martial and congressional hearings began.

Top military officials ignored the mistreatment of prisoners until the graphic photographs of naked prisoners piled in a pyramid at Abu Ghraib horrified the public.

Red Cross reports about prison abuses fell on deaf ears at the Pentagon until the administration was faced with exposure.

Several reviews of the military mistreatment of prisoners have been under way but the Schlesinger panel was the first to assign any responsibility to the highest levels of the Pentagon.

"There is both institutional and personal responsibility at higher levels," the Schlesinger report said.

Schlesinger said the prison problems were "well known" and corrective actions "could have been taken and should have been taken."

Despite all of this, the report concluded that Rumsfeld and other senior leaders, including Air Force Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, should not be forced to resign.

Since he is a Washington "establishment" figure who headed the Pentagon in the Nixon era, Schlesinger was not about to go any higher than a brigade commander to parcel out responsibility.

Schlesinger said Rumsfeld's resignation would be "a boon to all of America's enemies and consequently, I think that it would be a misfortune if it were to take place."

Wrong. It would show the world that Americans are not afraid to topple leaders when the country is dishonored on their watch. For those who have lived under totalitarian rule, a challenge to the leadership could have dire consequences. But that's not our system. In a democracy, public servants must be held accountable.

Rumsfeld should have thrown in the towel months ago for this scandal.

In the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, the Rumsfeld coterie bragged about the "shock and awe" of the planned U.S. invasion. The secretary has since lost some of his swagger and is no longer a TV rock star. As the gravity of the scandal gradually sunk in around the world, Rumsfeld has become virtually invisible to the public.

Rumsfeld stands indicted by the very panel that he appointed to assess responsibility. The fact that the Schlesinger panel veered sharply at the last curve and said Rumsfeld should keep his job can't bury the reality that they traced the footprints right to Rumsfeld's office.

It's time for him to take responsibility for this scandal. It's time for him to leave office.

Defense Intelligence Agency

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August 31, 2004ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 07-29-2010 BY 60324 uc baw/sab/lsg

Analyst At Center Of Spy Flap Called Naive, Ardently Pro-Israel

By Nathan Guttman

WASHINGTON - Larry Franklin, the Pentagon analyst suspected of passing classified material about Iran to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, has never hidden his unequivocal support of Israel. Colleagues from the Near East and South Asia desk at the Defense Department said yesterday that his sympathy for Israel was overt and public - he didn't refrain from praising Israel and he held aggressive views about several Arab governments, primarily the ayatollahs' regime in Iran and Saddam Hussein's dictatorship in Iraq.

"Everyone knew he was a friend of Israel, but he didn't go about it in any unusual way," a Pentagon coworker said. "He was always accessible to everyone."

Franklin's resume describes his current position, which he has held since 2001, as: "Office of the Secretary of Defense, Policy, Near East/South Asia, Iran desk analyst, Office of Special Plans Iraq. Focus Projects: Hizbollah, Islam, Saudi Arabia." But the official resume reveals only a few details about the man at the center of the affair.

Franklin, a religious Catholic in his late 50s, lives in Kearneysville, West Virginia, a 90-minute drive from the Pentagon. But living in the distant suburb assured a high quality of life for Franklin, his wife Patricia and their five children, some of whom are college-age. Franklin has a doctorate in East Asian studies from St. John's University, a Catholic university in New York City, and speaks Farsi, Arabic, French, Spanish, Russian and Chinese (in addition to English). On top of his work at the Pentagon, Franklin teaches history at Shepherd University in West Virginia.

In conversations about Franklin with his colleagues, one of the words that comes up again and again is "naive." He is described as an ideologue who believes wholeheartedly in the neo-conservative approach. "Everything by him is black and white," said someone who has worked with Franklin in the Pentagon. "He is a very nice person, very conservative, not at all arrogant," said the colleague, adding that one of the reasons he was brought into the Near East and South Asia desk was his political beliefs.

Franklin's political opinions are similar to those of his bosses - Douglas Feith, undersecretary of defense, and William Luti, the deputy undersecretary of defense responsible for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs. Like them, Franklin supports the policy of acting to bring democracy to Arab regimes and build up pro-American allies in the Middle East.

But those who have worked with Franklin also say he was a bit extreme in his work patterns, attitude and behavior. They occasionally referred to him as "Planet Larry" as a way of expressing the extent to which he "lives in a world of his own," colleagues said.

People who have worked with Franklin believe that it was his trademark naivete that got him in trouble, saying Franklin was not aware of the severity of his activities, and so did not try to hide or mask them.

Franklin visited Israel eight times while he served in the U.S. Air Force and worked at the Pentagon. Most of his visits appear to have been related to his reserve duty service as an officer dealing with international contacts. According to his resume, Franklin served as a reserve air force colonel between 1997 and 2004, working with the U.S. military attache in Tel Aviv. Beforehand he was involved in analyzing counter-intelligence in the air force.

Had the current accusations not come to light, Franklin's job at the Pentagon would have depended on the presidential elections, his coworkers said. If Democratic candidate John Kerry wins the next election, colleagues said, it's doubtful that Franklin will move up, due to his well-known political views.

"He was considered a little strange even for the neo-cons," a coworker said. "They're probably saying to themselves - oh, Larry again."

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[DIA Home](#) | [What's New](#) | [Products by Type](#) | [Products by Region](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Help](#)Jerusalem Post
August 31, 2004ALL FBI INFORMATION CONTAINED
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DATE 07-29-2010 BY 60324 uc baw/sab/lsgAnalysis:**Affair Won't Harm Strong US-Israel Ties**

By Gerald M. Steinberg, The Jerusalem Post

By their very nature, allegations of espionage and abuse of classified material get huge headlines, although the evidence – if any – usually remains murky and hidden from public scrutiny. This is particularly the case regarding the US and Israel, reflecting the wide security cooperation that has developed in response to terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and other mutual threats. Mixed with hints of conspiracy and dual loyalty, such cooperation presents a huge target for the relatively small number of American officials and journalists who want to see this relationship halted.

For many years, claims involving Israel and spying have been manipulated in the effort to drive a wedge between Washington and Jerusalem, particularly after the Pollard fiasco. The damage to relations in that case was extensive, and its echoes are still being felt today, making another "affair" the dream of all those who wish to disrupt US-Israel cooperation. But the lessons from Pollard appear to have been learned by both the Israeli government and the US. At the same time, the absence of real and juicy spy scandals has spurred the invention of fictitious ones.

A few years ago, false charges that Israel was stealing and selling the Pentagon's technical secrets to China were later revealed to have been part of a personal campaign of revenge involving two American officials working for different branches of the government. And headlines claiming that Israel was eavesdropping on the US were also exposed as nonsense. In another case, the head of the CIA – George Tenet – sent an apology to then Mossad head Danny Yatom apologizing for accusations linking Israel to espionage.

These periodic leaks and allegations, including the current case, reflect a wider agenda. The Arab lobby in Washington is gaining influence and access to the media, and peddling such stories is one means of moving the focus away from terrorism and the growing pressure from many Americans to end support for the corrupt regimes in the Middle East. In addition, fringe Republican Pat Buchanan and his adherents cling to the classical anti-Semitic myths in which Jews are portrayed as all powerful, and secretly manipulating US policy.

The post-war complications in Iraq and the charge that a neo-conservative kabal (code for Jews and Zionists, even though the top two neo-cons – Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and Vice President Cheney are neither) led America into this confrontation have revived these myths. This may explain the attempt to involve AIPAC – the "powerful" pro-Israel lobby – and the timing of this leak at the height of the US election campaign.

Yet despite these efforts and short-lived headlines, US-Israel security cooperation has become stronger, reflecting an understanding of the necessity of sharing resources and knowledge in order to counter the threats to both. In addition, the underlying shared values of democracy and freedom remain central, and

mark the difference between American and European attitudes towards Israel.

As a result, in the earlier alleged espionage cases, including the Pollard affair, after the dust cleared, this common core remained intact, and there is no reason to expect the outcome to be different this time. Indeed, investigations into the sources of the allegations and the embellishment added by CBS News may deter the next round of this game.

Prof. Gerald M. Steinberg directs the Program on Conflict Management at Bar-Ilan University.

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[DIA Home](#) | [What's New](#) | [Products by Type](#) | [Products by Region](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Help](#)

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August 31, 2004

ALL FBI INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 07-29-2010 BY 60324 uc baw/sab/lsg

Iran Intrigue

THE MOST instructive aspect of the FBI's interest in Larry Franklin, an Iran desk officer in the Defense Department, is the light it casts on the incoherence of policy-making in the Bush administration rather than any conspiracy to pilfer American secrets for Israel.

There is a crucial background to the FBI's investigation of Franklin, who has come under suspicion for supposedly passing a classified presidential policy directive about Iran to a leader of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee who allegedly passed the material on to an Israeli official.

A neoconservative colleague of Franklin in the Defense Department, Harold Rhode, and the neocon promoter Michael Ledeen had been involved in secret back-channel meetings in Paris starting as early as December 2001 with the shady Iranian arms dealer Manucher Ghorbanifar, a key figure in the Reagan-era folly remembered as the Iran-Contra affair.

The CIA had long since proscribed dealings with Ghorbanifar. The agency had him classified as a chronic liar. When a US ambassador in Italy got wind of the meetings, he and the CIA station chief in Rome notified superiors at the State Department and the CIA. George Tenet, the former CIA director, in turn persuaded the number two official on the National Security Council, Stephen Hadley, to prohibit further meetings with the Iranian arms merchant and the so-called Iranian dissidents he was presenting to neocons avid for regime change in Tehran.

This White House prohibition against the back-channel meetings arranged by Ghorbanifar was to no avail. There were at least two and possibly several more meetings. Ghorbanifar, living up to his reputation for indiscreet gabbiness, has boasted about further meetings to reporters for the Washington Monthly.

This is the outline of a policy quarrel that one faction has been waging surreptitiously. Not only the FBI but also the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence have been investigating the neocons' secret meetings in Paris to promote regime change in Tehran.

The regime in Tehran does pose a threat by virtue of its nuclear program, its sponsorship of the Lebanese Shi'ite militia Hezbollah, and its meddling in Iraq. The Bush administration, however, has been unable to settle on a coherent strategy to cope with the challenge from Tehran.

It is quite possible that no prosecution will result from the FBI's interest in Franklin's suspected disclosure of classified information about President Bush's Iran policy, as it is unlikely Israel would permit an intelligence operation that targeted the Bush administration. But if Bush does not take control of his own administration's policy-making process, the nation could be drawn into another Gulf war by one faction of the conservative constellation in his own administration.

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[DIA Home](#) | [What's New](#) | [Products by Type](#) | [Products by Region](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Help](#)Baltimore Sun
August 31, 2004ALL FBI INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 07-29-2010 BY 60324 uc baw/sab/lsg

Espionage Intrigue

THE DENIALS are loud and resounding. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee called allegations that the American Jewish lobby received secret information about U.S. policy on Iran from a Pentagon analyst, and passed it onto Israel, "baseless and false." The government of Israel was just as emphatic about the charge: "false and outrageous." The reported FBI investigation touched a nerve. It raised the specter of divided loyalties, Israel spying on its chief ally and benefactor, mudslinging at a pro-Israel president on the eve of his renomination.

There's plenty there to provoke alarming headlines, sharp rhetoric and legitimate cause for concern -- if the allegations prove true. Iran's nuclear program poses a threat to the United States and Israel, though for the Americans it's strategic and for the Israelis it's considerably more immediate. Tehran's insistence on producing nuclear material has pushed Israel to threaten a strike on an Iranian nuclear facility. In 1981, Israel took out Iraq's nuclear reactor to quell similar ambitions.

Yet an Iranian-Israeli face-off would have devastating consequences for the West and for the Islamic world.

The reports about Pentagon analyst Lawrence Franklin, who is at the center of the investigation, are contradictory. But the fact that he works in a policy office overseen by the ideological Douglas J. Feith clouds the issue. Mr. Feith is a controversial neo-conservative who trumpeted the fall of Saddam Hussein as an engine for democracy in the Mideast. He was an ardent champion of Ahmad Chalabi, the discredited Iraqi expatriate now thought to have had links to Iranian intelligence.

The contradictions also extend to Israel. President Bush is such an unabashed supporter of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that it's unfathomable that Israel couldn't get information on U.S.-Iranian policy if it asked. Would it risk an espionage scandal like the Pollard affair of 1985?

What's ironic is that if the espionage allegations are true, Israel will have likely confirmed that the United States in fact has no coherent or cogent policy on Iran. And the need for one is urgent, given Iran's nuclear ambitions and its less-than-candid dealings with international atomic energy inspectors. The campaign of Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry has unveiled its plan to persuade Iran to give up its nuclear weapons capability -- it would retain its nuclear energy plants in exchange for any nuclear bomb-making fuel.

Mr. Bush has painted himself into a corner with his harsh position on Iran and its inclusion in the "axis of evil." The International Atomic Energy Agency is expected in early September to release its report on Iran's nuclear program. Mr. Bush should be prepared to respond with a substantive plan to engage Iran instead of his usual, polarizing rhetoric.

Sunday, Sep. 05, 2004

A Web Of Intrigue

Inside the Israel espionage investigation

By BRIAN BENNETT, ELAINE SHANNON AND ADAM ZAGORIN

TIME MAGAZINE

It was a hot, late August afternoon when the Iraqi exile got a call on his cell phone. Over the crackling line, the Iraqi says, the caller identified himself as Larry Franklin, an analyst for the Defense Department in Washington. Franklin rattled off a series of questions. He wanted to know if the Iraqi, who had spent the past decade working with Ahmad Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress (I.N.C.), could recall whether anyone at the I.N.C. had discussed the U.S.'s ability to intercept and decode Iran's secret communications. The Iraqi, who knew Franklin's name but had never met him, was startled by the call. "How about discussing Iranian codes with a drunken American? Had anyone ever done that?" Franklin wanted to know. For nearly half an hour, Franklin quizzed him about Pentagon officials and Iranian spycraft. "That was really scary," recalls the Iraqi. "I told him, 'I don't remember anything.'"

That phone call, which the Iraqi described to TIME last week, seems to be an indication that two complicated spy cases have become linked. Several weeks ago, according to federal law-enforcement officials, Franklin, who had been under investigation by the FBI for giving classified information to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), agreed to cooperate in a probe into whether the pro-Israel group was passing sensitive U.S. secrets to Israel.

Franklin's call to the ex-I.N.C. man, who has provided TIME with credible information in the past, suggests that Franklin was also assisting the FBI in a separate inquiry into how highly classified details of America's ability to decode Iranian intelligence messages may have fallen into the hands of Chalabi's organization and been passed on to Iran in February. A U.S. law-enforcement official confirms that the Iraqi's account of the conversation is consistent with the types of calls Franklin was making on behalf of the FBI.

According to law-enforcement officials, Franklin began cooperating with the FBI after agents first confronted him with evidence that he had given classified material to AIPAC, one of Washington's most powerful lobbying organizations. Israel and AIPAC have denied the spy allegations; neither the Pentagon nor Franklin would comment. The law-enforcement officials say Franklin was persuaded in recent weeks to make "pretext calls"-scripted conversations monitored by FBI agents and designed to tease out incriminating evidence about other suspects. It was within this time frame that Franklin approached the ex-I.N.C. official who spoke to TIME.

The two investigations are among the most politically charged espionage cases in years. Israel and the I.N.C. are longtime allies of the U.S., though the CIA has for years warned that Chalabi was not to be trusted. Allegations of Israeli espionage have been a hot-button issue since American naval intelligence analyst Jonathan Pollard was imprisoned for life in 1987 for passing U.S. military secrets to Israel. Ever since the Pollard affair, Israel has publicly insisted it no

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longer spies on the U.S. "I can tell you here very authoritatively, very categorically, Israel does not spy on the United States," Israel's U.S. ambassador, Daniel Ayalon said last week. "We do not gather information on our best friend and ally."

Federal law-enforcement officials say they remain on the lookout for signs that Israelis still pursue U.S. secrets. A former congressional official told TIME that in the 1990s Israelis in Washington were known to routinely seek copies of classified documents such as secret portions of the annual Javits report, a U.S. compilation on arms sales.

National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and her deputy Stephen Hadley were informed of the FBI's probe into AIPAC at least two years ago, according to a U.S. official. But that did not hinder numerous contacts between AIPAC and top Administration officials as well as congressional leaders of both parties. The lobbying group derives its power from its backing among influential Jewish Americans. Just last May, President George W. Bush attended AIPAC's annual conference in Washington and thanked the organization for "serving the cause of America" and bringing to public attention the threat of Iran's development of nuclear weapons.

At that time, the FBI was already deep into its investigation of AIPAC. A former U.S. official interviewed by the FBI more than a year ago told TIME that the bureau sought information on key AIPAC personnel, their meetings with White House and other national-security officials in Washington and even details about their personal lives. At one point, the FBI was surveilling a meeting between an Israeli diplomat and an AIPAC official when the Pentagon's Franklin suddenly appeared, igniting concerns. Franklin, a former Air Force Reserve officer, served briefly in the U.S. military attache's office in Israel in the late 1990s. Since the summer of 2001, he has worked as an Iran expert for Douglas Feith, the Pentagon's third ranking official, a neoconservative long in favor of tougher measures against Iran. In 2001 Franklin and a Pentagon colleague were dispatched to Rome for a meeting with Manucher Ghorbanifar, an Iranian arms dealer who had been a key figure in the 1980s' Iran-contra scandal. They were seeking intelligence on Iran from him. But the CIA has long considered Ghorbanifar unreliable, and the Bush Administration later cut off the contacts.

According to a former U.S. government source, the material Franklin passed to AIPAC included a draft of a National Security Presidential Directive dealing with U.S. policy on Iran. The document, a source says, had gone through several versions without ever achieving the status of official U.S. policy because of deep disagreements within the Administration over how to cope with Iran. A source familiar with multiple drafts of the document said it was a "glorified Op-Ed looking at how engagement [with Iran] doesn't work and how the U.S. needs a more robust strategy." A former senior U.S. official who also saw the drafts told TIME the directive did not explicitly call for regime change in Tehran and left open the possibility of cooperation with the Iranians on matters of mutual interest.

Meanwhile, a former case officer at the Defense Intelligence Agency says that when he was questioned in the I.N.C. case, the FBI seemed frustrated in that investigation. That case officer, who worked alongside I.N.C. intelligence gatherers at the time of the alleged breach, says he was interrogated and polygraphed by the FBI. He contended to TIME that the allegations against the

September 6, 2004

Spy Case Renews Debate Over Pro-Israel Lobby's Ties to Pentagon

By JAMES RISEN and DAVID JOHNSTON

ASHINGTON, Sept. 5 - It began like most national security investigations, with a squad of Federal Bureau of Investigation agents surreptitiously tailing two men, noting where they went and whom they met. What was different about this case was that the surveillance subjects were lobbyists for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, and one of their contacts turned out to be a policy analyst at the Pentagon.

The ensuing criminal investigation into whether Aipac officials passed classified information from the Pentagon official to Israel has become one of the most byzantine counterintelligence stories in recent memory. So far, the Justice Department has not accused anyone of wrongdoing and no one has been arrested.

Aipac has dismissed the accusations as baseless, and Israel has denied conducting espionage operations in the United States.

Behind the scenes, however, the case has reignited a furious and long-running debate about the close relationship between Aipac, the pro-Israel lobbying organization, and a conservative group of Republican civilian officials at the defense department, who are in charge of the office that employs Lawrence A. Franklin, the Pentagon analyst.

Their hard-line policy views on Iraq, Iran and the rest of the Middle East have been controversial and influential within the Bush administration.

"They have no case," said Michael Ledeen, a conservative scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and a friend of Mr. Franklin. "If they have a case, why hasn't anybody been arrested or indicted?"

Nearly a dozen officials who have been briefed on the investigation said in interviews last week that the F.B.I. began the inquiry as a national security matter based on specific accusations that Aipac employees had been a conduit for secrets between Israel and the Pentagon. These officials said that the F.B.I., in consultation with the Justice Department, had established the necessary legal foundation required under the law before beginning the investigation.

A half dozen people sympathetic to Aipac and the civilian group at the defense department said they viewed the investigation in different terms, as a politically motivated attempt to discredit Aipac and the Pentagon group. Supporters of Aipac have said the organization is being dragged into an intelligence controversy largely because of its close ties to a Republican administration and the Israeli government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Friends and associates of the civilian group at the Pentagon believe they are under assault by adversaries from within the intelligence community who have opposed them since before the war in Iraq. The Pentagon civilians, led by Paul D. Wolfowitz, the deputy defense secretary, and

Douglas J. Feith, the undersecretary for policy, were among the first in the immediate aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks to urge military action to topple the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, an approach favored by Aipac and Israel.

Mr. Wolfowitz and Mr. Feith were part of a larger network of policy experts inside and out of the Bush administration who forcefully made the case that the war with Iraq was part of the larger fight against terrorism.

The Pentagon group circulated its own intelligence assessments, which have since been discredited by the Central Intelligence Agency and by the independent Sept. 11 commission, arguing that there was a terrorist alliance between the Hussein regime and Al Qaeda.

The group has also advocated that the Bush administration adopt a more aggressive policy toward Iran, and some of its members have quietly begun to argue for regime change in Tehran. The administration has not yet adopted that stance, however, and the Pentagon conservatives have been engaged in a debate with officials at the State Department and other agencies urging a more moderate approach to Iran.

To Israel, Iran represents a grave threat to its national security. Pushing the United States to adopt a tougher line on Tehran is one of its major foreign policy objectives, and Aipac has lobbied the Bush administration to support Israel's policies.

Mr. Franklin was an expert on Iran in the office of Mr. Feith and among the material he is suspected of turning over to Aipac is a draft presidential policy directive on Iran, which would have provided a glimpse at the Bush administration's early plans.

But skeptics of the case have said that the United States and Israel routinely share highly sensitive information on military and diplomatic matters under an officially sanctioned understanding. In addition, most of the contents of policy drafts affecting either country are well known to people outside the government who follow American-Israeli affairs.

As a result, some of Mr. Franklin's associates regard his efforts as an attempt to obtain Aipac's help to influence the Bush administration rather than an effort to provide Israel with information. They believe the case is the latest in a series of assaults by intelligence and law enforcement agencies, who they believe are determined to diminish the influence of conservative civilians at the Pentagon.

In their view, there have been other attempts to embarrass them. In May, American officials said that Ahmed Chalabi, the leader of the Iraqi National Congress and a longtime ally of the Pentagon conservatives, had told Iranian intelligence officials that the United States had broken Iran's communications codes.

The F.B.I. began a still-open investigation to determine who in the government had told Mr. Chalabi about the secret code-breaking operation. The investigation, which has included the use of polygraph examinations, has focused on Defense Department employees who both knew Mr.

Chalabi and knew of the highly classified code-breaking operation.

The F.B.I.'s inquiry of the Chalabi leak may overlap with the Franklin case because some of the same Defense Department officials had access to information that was believed to be compromised.

But officials who have briefed on the case say they remain two separate inquiries being conducted by separate teams of investigators, one with jurisdiction over Iranian matters and one with jurisdiction over Israel issues.

The focus and direction of the Franklin investigation, which was publicly disclosed Aug. 27, remains unclear. The officials said the inquiry first focused on Aipac, but later became more intense after F.B.I. agents gathered evidence indicating that Aipac officials had obtained classified information from Mr. Franklin, which was turned over to Israel.

But it is unclear who, if anyone, is likely to be charged with wrongdoing and whether the government is more interested in Aipac, Mr. Franklin or the Israelis who may have received the classified material. Officials say Mr. Franklin has been cooperating with the F.B.I. since being confronted by agents several weeks ago.

Two officials at Aipac, Steven Rosen and Keith Weissman, have also been interviewed by the bureau.

"I know that this is part of a campaign against us," said Michael Maloof, a former Pentagon analyst who worked in a special-intelligence unit created by Mr. Feith after Sept. 11. Mr. Maloof lost his security clearances because of an investigation that he believed was unfair.

He now believes that Mr. Franklin is being unfairly targeted as well. "They are picking us off, one by one," Mr. Maloof said.

But leading critics of the Pentagon hard-liners have repeatedly argued that Mr. Wolfowitz, Mr. Feith and others have used the Sept. 11 attacks as a pretext to pursue issues that in some ways mirror the interests of Israel's conservative Likud government.

One piece of evidence repeatedly cited by the critics is a 1996 paper issued by the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, an Israeli think tank, calling for the toppling of Saddam Hussein in order to enhance Israeli security. Entitled "A Clean Break," the 1996 paper was intended to offer a foreign policy agenda for the new Likud government of Benjamin Netanyahu.

The paper argued: "Israel can shape its strategic environment, in cooperation with Turkey and Jordan, by weakening, containing and even rolling back Syria. This effort can focus on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq - an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right - as a means of foiling Syria's regional ambitions."

Among those who signed the paper were Mr. Feith; David Wurmser, who later worked for Mr.

Feith at the Pentagon and now works for Vice President Dick Cheney; and Richard Perle, a leading conservative who previously served as chairman of the Defense Policy Board, a group of outside consultants to Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld.

In the Reagan administration, Mr. Feith served as Mr. Perle's deputy at the Pentagon.



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BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Used to working behind the scenes,
AIPAC suddenly thrust into limelight

By Matthew E. Berger

NEW YORK, Aug. 30 (JTA) — In its outreach to potential supporters and to the media, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee touts its access to the highest levels of government.

Now it's that very access that has thrust the pro-Israel lobby, accustomed to working behind the scenes; into the limelight.

Accusations that AIPAC officials received classified information from a Pentagon staffer and forwarded it on to Israel broke on the eve of this week's Republican National Convention in New York, where AIPAC is hosting several policy forums for Republican contributors.

According to media accounts, a non-Jewish officer on the Iranian desk at the Pentagon, Larry Franklin, is being investigated for passing at least one classified document to AIPAC officials, which may then have been forwarded to Israeli officials in Washington.

Reports have suggested that Franklin could face charges ranging from espionage to the mishandling of classified information.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the AIPAC officials involved were Steven Rosen and Keith Weissman, and that they have spoken to federal investigators:

Rosen is AIPAC's director of research and considered one of the most influential people in the organization. He has been with AIPAC since 1982, and mentored both Howard Kohr, AIPAC's current executive director, and Martin Indyk, the former U.S. ambassador to Israel.

Weissman is deputy director of foreign policy issues and specializes in relations with Iran, Syria and Turkey.

AIPAC would not confirm or deny the reports.

New reports also suggested that Naor Gilon, minister of political affairs of the Israeli embassy in Washington, was the subject of an FBI investigation on suspicion of espionage for Israel when Franklin came to the investigators' attention more than a year ago.

Both Israel and AIPAC deny any impropriety in the case. Many U.S. Jews believe, or hope, that no charges will be filed and that the issue will fade from the headlines in coming days.

But the charges, and their prominent play in the media, have reopened questions about the way AIPAC does business with the U.S. and Israeli governments.

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AIPAC's grassroots advocacy and political lobbying departments get most of the attention, but the organization also has a thriving think tank that works to influence Middle East policy at the highest levels of government.

To those who work with AIPAC in Washington, or have worked for the organization itself, the idea of information being passed from government officials to AIPAC staffers to Israelis seems almost commonplace.

After all, these people see each other on almost a daily basis, at think-tank lunches and policy meetings throughout the capital. Information is exchanged and each participant tries to show his importance by touting what he knows and whom he has access to.

"The easiest thing to learn in Washington is that no one likes to be surprised," said Jon Alterman, a former State Department official. "AIPAC doesn't like to be surprised and nobody wants to surprise AIPAC."

In that sense, AIPAC is like any other policy organization in Washington.

"Information is the currency in Washington," said Morris Amitay, AIPAC's executive director from 1974 to 1980. "AIPAC meets regularly with officials at the State Department and Defense Department, trying to find out what's going on."

It's unclear how much of the information AIPAC receives is forwarded to Israeli officials, but the coordination between the Jewish state and its advocates in Washington is considerable.

Most Israeli officials who travel to Washington meet with AIPAC and exchange information. But Israeli officials also have strong ties to the Bush administration, and receive much information directly from American governmental sources, without need of intermediaries.

One congressional staffer said it was understood in Washington that AIPAC had access to the highest sources in both the U.S. and Israeli governments, and could get most information it wanted.

"They are very astute at knowing who will know what they would like to find out," said the staffer, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the FBI investigation is ongoing. "It's simply understood, based on the success they've had."

But because of the issues AIPAC deals with, policy discussions can easily cross into areas of national security, increasing the chances that classified information will be passed.

"There's always a real possibility that in giving a briefing, certain information that is classified could come out by the government briefers," said Neal Sher, who served as AIPAC's executive director from 1994 to 1996 and formerly worked in the U.S. Justice Department. "The lines are real blurry."

But Sher said the briefer would be the one committing the illegal act, not the one who gets the information.

"Anyone with half a brain, if someone is giving you a classified document, would say, 'I don't want to look at it,'" Amitay said. "Because it could be a sting."

According to Newsweek, that's what occurred in the current case. Franklin reportedly tried to give documents to an AIPAC staffer, who wouldn't take them but asked for the information to be summarized orally.

When it comes to documents, federal officials with security clearances are given little leniency. Most desks have two computers; one for classified material and one for unclassified. The e-mail systems are separate and diskettes are not allowed to be inserted into the classified system.

But there's a lot more leeway when government officials brief outsiders.

"How far you go in telling people what's going on in a classified environment is a decision you have to make every day," Alterman said. "There is a perception that you can trust the people you're talking to."

The congressional staffer added that much of what is classified already has been reported by the media.

The recent focus on AIPAC's business practices is counter to the way the organization likes to work. AIPAC likes to shift focus away from its own professionals and onto the lay leaders and lawmakers publicly expressing support for the Jewish state.

But that hasn't always been easy. Because Israel is such a heated topic in Washington and around the world, and because AIPAC has been successful in its mission, the group often is at the center of questions regarding U.S. support for Israel.

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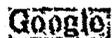
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Today's Papers

Israel won't ask U.S. to clarify why official was being tailed

By Nathan Guttman

WASHINGTON - Larry Franklin, the Pentagon data analyst suspected of funneling classified documents to Israel through the Jewish lobby AIPAC, had been helping with the investigation for several weeks before the story broke in the media, the New York Times reported yesterday citing sources familiar with the case.

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(See IHT for further details)

So far, the details available point to Naor Gilon, political adviser at the Israeli embassy in Washington, as the FBI surveillance target that led investigators to Franklin.

Israeli sources could not say yesterday why Gilon had been under surveillance, but Israel does not intend to seek clarifications or protest in the matter. "It's neither the first nor the last time diplomats have been tailed in this town," an Israeli official said yesterday.

Another source said there is nothing unusual in the FBI monitoring meetings of diplomats, but said it's unlikely this was mundane surveillance, so it's possible there was suspicion of some kind about information reaching the Israeli embassy. Gilon knew Franklin and kept an ordinary working relationship with him as part of his job.

The Israeli embassy declined comment on the affair yesterday and banned Gilon from talking to the media. An embassy official yesterday repeated the line that these are "groundless and vicious allegations."

Embassy sources were worried reports on the affair could hamper Gilon's duties as the main official in charge of political ties to U.S. administration officials by making them wary of meeting him.

Gilon's meetings with Franklin and other administration representatives have been described by the embassy as the daily routine of diplomats in that post. "It's exactly what all diplomats in Washington do, it's their job," an Israeli source said.

A communique released by embassy officials said "as representatives of the state, we conduct an intensive dialogue on an array of topics with our colleagues in all branches of the administration. This dialogue takes



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Westward, ho

This week, the voice of architect Moshe Safdie was heard for the first time in the stormy debate over the West Jerusalem plan that he conceived and that bears his name.

By Esther Zandberg

An expiration date

In a few months, when American magazines list the great movie hits of 2004, not only "Spiderman 2" and "Shrek 2" will star at the top of the list. So will one documentary.

By Uri Klein

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place in a responsible, credible, professional, and completely transparent manner, as befits the nature of relations between Israel and the United States."

Still, the question remains as to why Gilon was being watched. One possibility mentioned is that the FBI obtained information that administration documents were being leaked to Israel and wanted to track route of the leak.

Another possibility is that elements opposed to Israeli policy tried to set up Gilon and Israel on false accusations. Gilon, who was on vacation for a family event in Israel, has returned to Washington and is back at work.

Israeli sources said the embassy staff, Gilon included, will continue meeting as usual with administration and congressional representatives and with Jewish community leaders.

The FBI has applied to neither Israel nor its U.S.-based representatives for any information on the affair and it has not come up in meetings with U.S. officials.

Meanwhile, the America Israel Public Affairs Committee is also presenting a business as usual face. The powerful Jewish lobby noted with pride that all its events scheduled for the current Republican National Convention in New York are attracting capacity crowds.

Shalom: Mole story has been exaggerated out of proportion

A Foreign Ministry investigation of the Larry Franklin affair indicates that Israel's embassy in Washington acted completely according to procedure.

"It never violated the rules of diplomacy and good dialogue that we maintain with the United States," Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said yesterday.

Referring to Naor Gilon, the embassy's political attache, Shalom said: "He meets senior administration officials in the course of his work, and there's nothing unusual about that. The fact [the FBI] is following him shows this matter has been blown completely out of proportion." (Aluf Benn)

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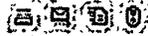
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Aug. 31, 2004 0:55

Diplomat tied to alleged mole returns to US

By HERB KEINON AND JANINE ZACHARIA



Naor Gilon, the diplomat at Israel's embassy in Washington who reportedly had contact with alleged Pentagon "mole" Larry Franklin, returned to the US on Sunday after spending a vacation in Israel.

Foreign Ministry officials said Gilon, the political affairs minister and number three at the embassy, returned to Washington because he "did nothing wrong," and "had nothing to hide."

Newsweek reported on Sunday that FBI agents monitoring a lunchtime conversation between an Israeli embassy official, believed to be Gilon, and a lobbyist for AIPAC (the American Israel Public Affairs Committee), discovered Franklin when he "walked in" to the lunch out of the blue. Franklin, according to Newsweek, soon became a subject of the FBI investigation as well.

Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom responded publicly on Monday to the allegations for the first time, calling them "media nonsense" that has been blown way out of proportion.

"Israel would not do anything that could harm our best friend, the US," Shalom said at a joint press conference with German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer.

"The government of Israel categorically rejects the accusations that it spied or is spying on its best friend, the US," he said.

Shalom said that meetings between embassy and US Administration officials are routine, ordinary, and part of the regular diplomatic work in Washington. He said that similar meetings and exchanges of information take place in Israel among US Embassy and Israeli government officials.

Shalom said Gilon is a "dedicated worker who – as part of his job – met with administration officials, there is nothing unique or extraordinary about this. I think this has been blown out of proportion."

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Shalom said the Foreign Ministry has been dealing with this case since Friday afternoon, before the allegations were aired on CBS. Israel, Shalom said, has a firm policy that it has not strayed from of not conducting any espionage activities in the US.

Shalom said he believes there are reasons for the timing of the leak about the investigation of Franklin, but refused to say what he thinks those reasons are.

However, other Israeli officials over the last two days have said the allegations, coming on the eve of the Republican National Convention, are meant to embarrass US President George W. Bush, and are part of an ongoing policy battle in Washington being waged among officials in the State Department, CIA, and Pentagon who are at odds over US policy in Iraq.

Asked whether Israel was concerned that one of its senior diplomats was being trailed by FBI agents, Shalom replied "you don't know if he was being followed." Other minister officials in the Foreign Ministry said that the "tail" on Gilon should not come as any surprise, and that the operative assumption of most diplomats abroad is that they are under a certain degree of surveillance.

In New York on Monday, Sen. Gordon Smith (R-Oregon) told the Anti-Defamation League's New York regional board that the allegation of espionage made little sense.

"It doesn't add up to me because I know how closely we share with the State of Israel now," said Smith, "and there is no reason for there to be any espionage operations either way. I'm very skeptical and I've got a lot of questions to ask when we get to the appropriate hearings."

One House Democratic staffer said: "My impression is that the Justice Department is backing off."

While CBS news originally reported on Friday that the Justice Department was poised to "roll up" some agents as early as this week, the *New York Times* reported on Monday that no arrest appears imminent since authorities are unsure if Franklin even broke the law.

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1 | 2 | [Next >](#)

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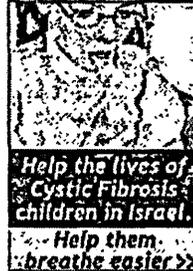
Headline Newsbox

Analysis / Damage done - true or not

By Amir Oren

Acting Foreign Ministry Director-General Ron Prushauer called two senior intelligence officials Friday night: Mossad chief Meir Dagan and Yehiel Horev, the defense establishment's chief of security. Both gave him the same answer: No, we are not involved in the Larry Franklin affair.

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Prushauer gave half a sigh of relief: If Dagan and Horev are to be believed, and there is currently no reason not to, then neither the Mossad nor Horev's Malmab unit - which, in its previous incarnation, was responsible for running Jonathan Pollard - is involved in the affair, which threatens to reawaken all the old demons.

But it was only half a sigh of relief, because the Foreign Ministry's own internal investigation has not yet ended. Thus documents could yet be uncovered for which Franklin served as a source, whether directly or indirectly. Moreover, as the investigation progresses, suspects' confessions or polygraph tests could implicate Israel. In that case, Israel would appear to be a liar, even if its denials now are genuinely based on the best currently available information. And should Israel eventually hand over evidence against Franklin, it would appear to be a double traitor - first against its benefactor, the U.S., and then against its agent.

Finally, even if official Israel proves innocent, the pro-Israel lobby in Washington, AIPAC, has already been hurt.

The importance of the Franklin affair goes far beyond the importance of the information that he allegedly gave to two AIPAC members, who in turn allegedly transmitted it to Israel. The documents, which included a draft decision by President George Bush, were all the type of staff work that is routinely discussed by Israel's diplomatic attaches and U.S. officials. Indeed, getting information from U.S. officials is one of the diplomatic attaches' main jobs.

Mossad representatives and military attaches also maintain ties with American officials. The Military Intelligence representative is responsible for ties with the Defense Intelligence Agency, which is the Defense Department's intelligence arm and Franklin's former employer.

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Chutzpah: Class 101

Sarah Augerbraun knew she wasn't in Florida anymore when standing in line at her local supermarket, a man tried to cut in front of her. "I realized I had two options," recalls the former Hebrew teacher. "I could have either yelled at him or just ignored it."

By Daphna Berman

An expiration date
In a few months, when American magazines list the great movie hits of 2004, not only "Spiderman 2" and "Shrek 2" will star at the top of the list. So will one documentary.

By Uri Klein

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Under certain circumstances, any of the above embassy officials could have had reason to speak with someone working, as Franklin most recently did, for Douglas Feith, the undersecretary of defense for policy.

Feith was one of the leading administration advocates of a tough line on Iran, the war in Iraq and strong support for Israel. Others include Undersecretary of State John Bolton, Vice President Richard Cheney, Cheney's chief of staff, Scooter Libby, and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. This group is opposed on all three issues by the CIA, Secretary of State Colin Powell and other State Department officials.

Thus Israel has been caught in the crossfire of a policy war within the U.S. administration - one unlikely to end even if Bush is reelected in November. Wolfowitz, whom Bush likes, would probably have trouble getting Senate confirmation for a promotion; Feith was considered a leading candidate for ouster even before the Franklin affair; Bolton's status has been undermined; and the entire group viewed Bush's nomination of Porter Goss for CIA director as a blow, as Goss has close ties with the agency and its outgoing head, George Tenet, the group's long-time rival.

Another agency whose battle for survival is liable to hurt Israel, albeit unintentionally, is the FBI, whose signal failure to prevent the September 11, 2001 attacks led both to the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and to calls for removing counterterrorism from the FBI's aegis and transferring it to a new agency, similar to Britain's MI5. The FBI is thus determined to prove to be outstanding at the top two items on its new agenda: preventing terrorism and preventing espionage.

The man who is heading the FBI's investigation against Franklin, Dave Szady, has repeatedly said that he views no person, agency or country as above suspicion. In his view, Israel, along with Taiwan, France, Japan, India and others, is on the list of friendly countries that "nevertheless try to steal our secrets." He once stated in an interview that only the prevention of mass-casualty terror attacks is more important than counterespionage. He added that today, it is not only America's enemies, but also its allies that try to steal its secrets - and while embassies and consulates remain the bases for such activity, he continued, foreign governments today also employ students, scientists and "front" companies.

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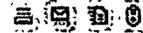
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Aug. 29, 2004 22:08 | Updated Aug. 30, 2004 19:00

Background: Not AIPAC's first controversy

By CALEV BEN-DAVID



"A lobby is like a night flower; it thrives in the dark and dies in the sun."

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So wrote Steven Rosen, AIPAC director of foreign policy issues, in an internal organizational memo several years ago.

Unfortunately for the influential pro-Israel lobbying group, this new affair is turning far too much of the media spotlight on an organization that prefers to work behind the scenes on Capitol Hill. But it is hardly the first time AIPAC has found itself at the center of public controversy, although never in such a serious matter as receiving classified security material.

In 1988, the investigative show 60 Minutes ran a critical piece on AIPAC using information supplied by its former communications director (and ex-Jerusalem Post reporter) Barbara Amouyal. Among the material supplied by Amouyal was an internal memo suggesting that the media be fed stories regarding Jesse Jackson's private life.

Also included in the 60 Minutes report was another internal memo which seemed to direct how political action committees should donate money to specific pro-Israel candidates, a possible violation of federal law forbidding lobby groups such as AIPAC from directly involving themselves in elections. A subsequent investigation by the Federal Elections Commission cleared AIPAC of any violations.

Nonetheless, AIPAC continues to face accusations that it unduly interferes in the electoral process, especially from politicians who credit their defeats at the polls to the organization's efforts. The most notable example in recent years was the 2002 congressional race, in which two Georgia Democrats, incumbents Cynthia McKinney and Earl Hilliard, were defeated in party primaries by contenders perceived as more pro-Israel. McKinney subsequently commented: "Despite the fact that I easily won the Democratic vote, 40,000 Republicans maliciously crossed over and overtook the Democratic Primary. And because AIPAC had telegraphed in newspaper articles that they were going to target both Earl

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Hilliard and me, the Democratic Party was paralyzed."

AIPAC has sometimes even found itself on the receiving end of criticism from the Israeli governments whose positions it is charged to support. This was especially so during the early years of the Oslo Accords, when an organization viewed by many on the Jewish left as traditionally more right-leaning, seemed slow to adjust itself to Israel's sudden political shift.

In 1992, newly elected prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, in a closed-door meeting with AIPAC leaders in Washington, reportedly told them in harsh terms they had gone too far in antagonizing the Bush administration in the battle to gain loan guarantees sought by the previous Shamir government. The next year AIPAC vice-president Harvey Friedman referred to deputy foreign minister Yossi Beilin in the presence of a reporter as a "little slimeball," after Beilin had complained that Friedman had spoken approvingly of transferring the Palestinians. Friedman subsequently left AIPAC as the organization sought to improve ties with the Rabin government.

AIPAC's efforts to keep a low media-profile have also led to accusations that it has put undue pressure on journalists, especially from the Jewish press, who cover it critically. Among them is Washington Jewish Week reporter Larry Cohler, who earlier this year told an Internet site: "Their mission statement doesn't say anything about them mucking around in Jewish newspapers.

AIPAC tried to get me fired, [and editor] Andy [Silow-Carroll] fired [from The Washington Jewish Week in 1992]." (AIPAC has denied those charges.)

Given its task, it is inevitable that AIPAC will serve as a perennial whipping-boy for anti-Semitic Jewish conspiracy theorists, and as the phantom spoiler by disgruntled anti-Israeli politicians who fall short at the ballot box. But its reported involvement in the Pentagon-leak story will force it to handle mainstream-media damage control of the like the organization has not yet known.

SECURITY-DIPLOMACY

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Making a mountain into a molehill

By Akiva Eldar

It now looks by all accounts like Larry Franklin will, at worst, be tried for mishandling sensitive material. In other words, he'll be charged with leaking information to the pro-Israel lobby AIPAC. "Sensitive" data of this sort, or of an even more sensitive nature, is routinely conveyed during meetings between American officials and Israeli diplomats under the bright lights of upscale restaurants in the heart of Washington, D.C.

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The real problem threatening Israel-U.S. relations and the Jewish community does not reside in this small-fry from the Pentagon and the classification grade of the leaked document, but rather in the suspicion of something fishy at the top. The murky waters of this affair will provide ample fishing grounds for political rivals and conspiracy buffs. First they'll land Franklin's

boss, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, and then they'll hook the entire group of neoconservatives of which he is one of the leaders. That is the group of Israel's friends, including many Jews, that pushed President Bush to go to war in Iraq.

The best form of defense being offense, spokespeople for the Israeli government insinuated that anti-Israel elements are behind the affair. Republican representatives point to "Democratic agents" among senior FBI officials who want to spoil things for Bush on the eve of his party's convention.

They may be right. But you don't need Franklin and the classified Iranian document to draw fire at the conspiracy to take over Iraq. As members of think tanks several years ago, Feith and his friends volunteered an open document in which they laid bare their Israeli-American plot to change the face of the entire Middle East. In 1996, a conservative Israeli-American research institute invited Feith and others, including Richard Perle who headed an advisory panel to the Pentagon known as the Defense Policy Board, to put together a strategic manual for the incoming prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Feith is responsible for the following paragraph from that document: "Israel can shape its strategic environment, in cooperation with Turkey and Jordan, by weakening, containing, and even rolling back Syria. This effort can focus on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq - an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right - as a means of foiling Syria's regional ambitions."



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Top Articles

Chutzpah: Class 101

Sarah Augerbraun knew she wasn't in Florida anymore when standing in line at her local supermarket, a man tried to cut in front of her. "I realized I had two options," recalls the former Hebrew teacher. "I could have either yelled at him or just ignored it."

By Daphna Berman

An expiration date

In a few months, when American magazines list the great movie hits of 2004, not only "Spiderman 2" and "Shrek 2" will star at the top of the list. So will one documentary.

By Uri Klein

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The document goes on to state that "Jordan has challenged Syria's regional ambitions recently by suggesting the restoration of the Hashemites in Iraq ... Since Iraq's future could affect the strategic balance in the Middle East profoundly, it would be understandable that Israel has an interest in supporting the Hashemites in their efforts to redefine Iraq."

Six years later, members of that same group supported the half-baked idea to crown Jordan's Prince Hassan as Iraq's ruler.

If anyone was looking to use Franklin to sock Feith in the weak spot of dual loyalty, in order to hurt Bush, they could have located its sources in that very same open document. Its authors provided the head of a foreign government tips on manipulating U.S. members of Congress. They suggested that he take advantage of the period remaining before the November '96 presidential and congressional elections to obtain "a benign American reaction" for his/their policy. In exchange for the free advice, they asked for Netanyahu's help in recruiting members of Congress who "care very much about missile defense" to counter an agreement with Russia on reining in proliferation of long-range missiles.

Feith and his friends promised in that document that Israeli support for the missile plan would assist efforts to relocate the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. That initiative, sponsored by the Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole, was the brainchild of the neoconservatives and their friends at AIPAC. It utterly contravened the view held by president Bill Clinton and prime minister Yitzhak Rabin that initiatives of that sort do not help build trust between Israel and the Palestinians. Perhaps that is the strongest proof of all that the neoconservatives and Jewish lobbyists do not serve two masters. They serve themselves, and that's the trouble.


Top

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Respond to this Article

September 2004

Iran-Contra II?

Fresh scrutiny on a rogue Pentagon operation.

By Joshua Micah Marshall, Laura Rozen, and Paul Glastris

On Friday evening, CBS News reported that the FBI is investigating a suspected mole in the Department of Defense who allegedly passed to Israel, via a pro-Israeli lobbying organization, classified American intelligence about Iran. The focus of the investigation, according to U.S. government officials, is Larry Franklin, a veteran Defense Intelligence Agency Iran analyst now working in the office of the Pentagon's number three civilian official, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith.

The investigation of Franklin is now shining a bright light on a shadowy struggle within the Bush administration over the direction of U.S. policy toward Iran. In particular, the FBI is looking with renewed interest at an unauthorized back-channel between Iranian dissidents and advisers in Feith's office, which more senior administration officials first tried in vain to shut down and then later attempted to cover up.

Franklin, along with another colleague from Feith's office, a polyglot Middle East expert named Harold Rhode, were the two officials involved in the back-channel, which involved on-going meetings and contacts with Iranian arms dealer Manucher Ghorbanifar and other Iranian exiles, dissidents and government officials. Ghorbanifar is a storied figure who played a key role in embroiling the Reagan administration in the Iran-Contra affair. The meetings were both a conduit for intelligence about Iran and Iraq and part of a bitter administration power-struggle pitting officials at DoD who have been pushing for a hard-line policy of "regime changes" in Iran, against other officials at the State Department and the CIA who have been counseling a more cautious approach.

Reports of two of these meetings first surfaced a year ago in *Newsday*, and have since been the subject of an ongoing investigation by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. Whether or how the meetings are connected to the alleged espionage remains unknown. But the FBI is now closely scrutinizing them.

While the FBI is looking at the meetings as part of its criminal investigation, to congressional investigators the Ghorbanifar back-channel typifies the out-of-control bureaucratic turf wars which have characterized and often hobbled Bush

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administration policy-making. And an investigation by *The Washington Monthly* — including a rare interview with Ghorbanifar — adds weight to those concerns. The meetings turn out to have been far more extensive and much less under White House control than originally reported. One of the meetings, which Pentagon officials have long characterized as merely a "chance encounter" seems in fact to have been planned long in advance by Rhode and Ghorbanifar. Another has never been reported in the American press. The administration's reluctance to disclose these details seems clear: the DoD-Ghorbanifar meetings suggest the possibility that a rogue faction at the Pentagon was trying to work outside normal US foreign policy channels to advance a "regime change" agenda not approved by the president's foreign policy principals or even the president himself.

The Italian Job

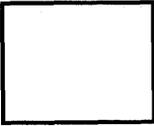
The first meeting occurred in Rome in December, 2001. It included Franklin, Rhode, and another American, the neoconservative writer and operative Michael Ledeen, who organized the meeting. (According to UPI, Ledeen was then working for Feith as a consultant.) Also in attendance was Ghorbanifar and a number of other Iranians. One of the Iranians, according to two sources familiar with the meeting, was a former senior member of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard who claimed to have information about dissident ranks within the Iranian security services. *The Washington Monthly* has also learned from U.S. government sources that Nicolo Pollari, the head of Italy's military intelligence agency, SISMI, attended the meetings, as did the Italian Minister of Defense Antonio Martino, who is well-known in neoconservative circles in Washington.

Alarm bells about the December 2001 meeting began going off in U.S. government channels only days after it occurred. On Dec. 12, 2001, at the U.S. embassy in Rome, America's newly-installed ambassador, Mel Sembler, sat down for a private dinner with Ledeen, an old friend of his from Republican Party politics, and Martino, the Italian defense minister. The conversation quickly turned to the meeting. The problem was that this was the first that Amb. Sembler had heard about it.

According to U.S. government sources, Sembler immediately set about trying to determine what he could about the meeting and how it had happened. Since U.S. government contact with foreign government intelligence agencies is supposed to be overseen by the CIA, Sembler first spoke to the CIA station chief in Rome to find out what if anything he knew about the meeting with the Iranians. But that only raised more questions because the station chief had been left in the dark as well. Soon both Sembler and the Rome station chief were sending anxious queries back to the State Department and CIA headquarters in Langley, Va., respectively, raising alarms on both sides of the Potomac.

The meeting was a source of concern for a series of overlapping reasons. Since the late 1980s, Ghorbanifar has been the subject of two CIA "burn notices." The agency believes Ghorbanifar is a serial "fabricator" and forbids its officers from having anything to do with him. Moreover, why were mid-level Pentagon officials organizing meetings with a foreign intelligence agency behind the back of the CIA — a clear breach of U.S. government protocol? There was also a matter of personal chagrin for Sembler; At State Department direction, he had just been cautioning the Italians to restrain their contacts with bad-acting states like Iran (with which Italy has extensive trade ties).

According to U.S. government sources, both the State Department and the CIA eventually brought the matter to the attention of the White House -- specifically, to Condoleezza Rice's chief deputy on the National Security Council, Stephen J. Hadley. Later, Italian spy chief Pollari raised the matter privately with Tenet, who himself went to Hadley in early February 2002. Goaded by Tenet, Hadley sent word to the officials in Feith's office and to Ledeén to cease all such activities. Hadley then contacted Sembler, assuring him it wouldn't happen again and to report back if it did.

 The orders, however, seem to have had little effect, for a second meeting was soon underway. According to a story published this summer in *Corriere della Sera*, a leading Italian daily, this second meeting took place in Rome in June 2002. Ghorbanifar tells *The Washington Monthly* that he arranged that meeting after a flurry of faxes between himself and DoD official Harold Rhode. Though he did not attend it himself, Ghorbanifar says the meeting consisted of an Egyptian, an Iraqi, and a high-level U.S. government official, whose name he declined to reveal. The first two briefed the American official about the general situation in Iraq and the Middle East, and what would happen in Iraq. "And it's happened word for word since," says Ghorbanifar. A spokesman for the NSC declined to comment on this and other meetings and referred *The Washington Monthly* to the Defense Department, which did not respond to repeated inquiries. Ledeén also refused to comment.

No one at the U.S. embassy in Rome seems to have known about this second Rome meeting. But the back-channel's continuing existence became apparent the following month -- July 2002 -- when Ledeén again contacted Sembler and told him that he'd be back in Rome in September to continue "his work" with the Iranians (This time Ledeén made no mention of any involvement by Pentagon officials; later, he told Sembler it would be in August rather than September.) An exasperated Sembler again sent word back to Washington, and Hadley again went into motion telling Ledeén, in no uncertain terms, to back off.

Once again, however, Hadley's orders seem to have gone unheeded. Almost a year later in June 2003, there were still further meetings in Paris involving Rhode and Ghorbanifar. Ghorbanifar says the purpose of the meeting was for Rhode to get more information on the situation in Iraq and the Middle East. "In those meetings we met, we gave him the scenario, what would happen in the coming days in Iraq. And everything has happened word for word as we told him," Ghorbanifar repeats. "We met in several different places in Paris," he says. "Rhode met several other people -- he didn't only meet me."

Not a "chance encounter"

By the summer of 2003, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence had begun to get wind of the Ghorbanifar-Ledeén-DoD back-channel and made inquiries at the CIA. A month later, *Newsday* broke the original story about the secret Ghorbanifar channel. Faced with the disclosure, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld acknowledged the December 2001 meeting but dismissed it as routine and unimportant.

"The information has moved around the interagency process to all the departments and agencies," he told reporters in Crawford, Texas, after a meeting with Bush. "As I understand it, there wasn't anything there that was of substance or of value that needed to be pursued further." Later that day, another senior Defense official

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acknowledged the second meeting in Paris in June 2003, but insisted that it was the result of a "chance encounter" between Ghorbanifar and a Pentagon official. The administration has kept to the "chance encounter" story to this day.

Ghorbanifar, however, laughs off that idea. "Run into each other? We had a prior arrangement," he told *The Washington Monthly*: "It involved a lot of discussion and a lot of people."

Over the last year, the Senate Intelligence Committee has conducted limited inquiry into the meetings, including interviews with Feith and Ledeen. But under terms of a compromise agreed to by both parties, a full investigation into the matter was put off until after the November election. Republicans on the committee, many of whom sympathize with the "regime change" agenda at DoD, have been resistant to such investigations, calling them an election-year fishing expedition. Democrats, by contrast, see such investigations as vital to understanding the central role Feith's office may have played in a range of a dubious intelligence enterprises, from pushing claims about a supposed Saddam-al Qaeda partnership and overblown estimates of alleged Iraqi stocks of WMD to what the committee's ranking minority member Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) calls "the Chalabi factor" (Rhode and others in Feith's office have been major sponsors of the Iraqi exile leader, who is now under investigation for passing U.S. intelligence to Iran). With the FBI adding potential espionage charges to the mix the long-simmering questions about the activities of Feith's operation now seem certain to come under renewed scrutiny.

Research assistance provided by Claudio Lavanga.

Image in web link is a photo of Ghorbanifar from the mid-1980s, around the time of Iran-Contra.

Joshua Micah Marshall is a *Washington Monthly* contributing writer and the editor of *Talking Points Memo*. Laura Rozen reports on national security issues from Washington DC and for her weblog *War and Piece*. She can be reached at lkrozen@yahoo.com. Paul Glasstis is editor in chief of *The Washington Monthly*.

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Israel Has Long Spied on U.S., Say Officials

BYLINE: Bob Drogin and Greg Miller, Times Staff Writers

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

Despite its fervent denials, Israel secretly maintains a large and active intelligence-gathering operation in the United States that has long attempted to recruit U.S. officials as spies and to procure classified documents, U.S. government officials said. ⓧ
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FBI and other counterespionage agents, in turn, have covertly followed, bugged and videotaped Israeli diplomats, intelligence officers and others in Washington, New York and elsewhere, the officials said. The FBI routinely watches many diplomats assigned to America.

Officials said FBI surveillance of a senior Israeli diplomat, who was the subject of an FBI inquiry in 1997-98, played a role in the latest probe into possible Israeli spying. The bureau now is investigating whether a Pentagon analyst or pro-Israel lobbyists provided Israel with a highly classified draft policy document. The document advocated support for Iranian dissidents, radio broadcasts into Iran and other efforts aimed at destabilizing the regime in Tehran, officials said this week.

The case is unresolved, but it has highlighted Israel's unique status as an extremely close U.S. ally that presents a dilemma for U.S. counterintelligence officials.

"There is a huge, aggressive, ongoing set of Israeli activities directed against the United States," said a former intelligence official who was familiar with the latest FBI probe and who recently left government. "Anybody who worked in counterintelligence in a professional capacity will tell you the Israelis are among the most aggressive and active countries targeting the United States." -39

The former official discounted repeated Israeli denials that the country exceeded acceptable limits to obtain information.

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"They undertake a wide range of technical operations and human operations," the former official said. "People here as liaison ... aggressively pursue classified intelligence from people. The denials are laughable."

Current and former officials involved with Israel at the White House, CIA, State Department and in Congress had similar appraisals, although not all were as harsh in their assessments. A Bush administration official confirmed that Israel ran intelligence operations against the United States. "I don't know of any foreign government that doesn't do collection in Washington," he said.

Another U.S. official familiar with Israeli intelligence said that Israeli espionage efforts were more subtle than aggressive, and typically involved the use of intermediaries.

But a former senior intelligence official, who focused on Middle East issues, said Israel tried to recruit him as a spy in 1991.

"I had an Israeli intelligence officer pitch me in Washington at the time of the first Gulf War," he said. "I said, 'No, go away,' and reported it to counterintelligence."

The U.S. officials all insisted on anonymity because classified material was involved and because of the political sensitivity of Israeli relations with Washington. Congress has shown little appetite for vigorous investigations of alleged Israeli spying.

In his first public comments on the case, Israel's ambassador, Daniel Ayalon, repeated his government's denials this week. "I can tell you here, very authoritatively, very categorically, Israel does not spy on the United States," Ayalon told CNN. "We do not gather information on our best friend and ally." Ayalon said his government had been "very assured that this thing will just fizzle out. There's nothing there."

In public, Israel contends it halted all spying operations against the United States after 1986, when Jonathan Jay Pollard, a former Navy analyst, was convicted in U.S. federal court and sentenced to life in prison for selling secret military documents to Israel.

U.S. officials say the case was never fully resolved because a damage-assessment team concluded that Israel had at least one more high-level spy at the time, apparently inside the Pentagon, who had provided serial numbers of classified documents for Pollard to retrieve.

The FBI has investigated several incidents of suspected intelligence breaches involving Israel since the Pollard case, including a 1997 case in which the National Security Agency bugged two Israeli intelligence officials in Washington discussing efforts to obtain a sensitive U.S. diplomatic document. Israel denied wrongdoing in that case and all others, and no one has been prosecuted.

But U.S. diplomats, military officers and other officials are routinely warned before going to Israel that local agents are known to slip into homes and hotel rooms of visiting delegations to go through briefcases and to copy computer files.

"Any official American in the intelligence community or in the foreign service gets all these briefings on all the things the Israelis are going to try to do to you," said one U.S. official.

At the same time, experts said relations between the CIA and Israel's chief intelligence agency, the Mossad, were so close that analysts sometimes shared highly classified "code-word" intelligence on sensitive subjects. Tel Aviv routinely informs Washington of the identities of the Mossad station chief and the military intelligence liaison at its embassy in America.

"They probably get 98% of everything they want handed to them on a weekly basis," said the former senior U.S. intelligence officer who has worked closely with Israeli intelligence. "They're very active allies. They're treated the way the British are."

Another former intelligence operative who has worked with Israeli intelligence agreed. "The relationship with Israeli intelligence is as intimate as it gets," he said.

Officials said Israel was acutely interested in U.S. policies and intelligence on the Middle East, especially toward Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia.

"They are sophisticated enough to want to know where the levers are they can influence, which people in our government are taking which positions they can try to influence," said a former high-ranking CIA official.

But the official said the relationship between the U.S. and Israel, at least in intelligence circles, "is not one of complete trust at all."

The latest counterintelligence investigation began more than two years ago, and initially focused on whether officials from a powerful Washington lobbying group, the American Israel Political Action Committee, passed classified information to Israel, officials said.

Several months later, the FBI conducted surveillance of Naor Gilon, chief of political affairs at the Israeli Embassy, meeting with two AIPAC officials. The arrival of a veteran Iran analyst at the Pentagon, Larry Franklin, sparked a new line of FBI inquiry.

In 1997 and 1998, the FBI had monitored Gilon as part of an investigation into whether Scott Ritter, then a U.S. intelligence official working with U.N. weapons inspectors in Iraq, was improperly delivering U.S. spy-plane film and other secret material to Israeli intelligence. Gilon was posted in New York at the time and operated as liaison between Israel's Anan, or military, intelligence service, and the U.N. teams, several officials said.

"Naor was the focus of FBI surveillance into allegations that I was a mole," said Ritter, who was never charged in the case. "They suspected Naor was working me to gain access to U.S. intelligence, which was absurd."

In an e-mail message this week, Gilon said he was under orders not to talk to the media about the current case. He has denied any wrongdoing in interviews with Israeli newspapers.

Franklin has not responded to requests for comment, and officials said he was cooperating with authorities. The FBI interviewed several AIPAC officials last Friday and copied the contents of a computer hard drive. AIPAC has denied any wrongdoing and said it was cooperating fully with investigators.

In a statement released Thursday, AIPAC said the group's continued access to the White House, senior administration officials and ranking members of Congress during the two-year probe would have been "inconceivable ... if any shred of evidence of disloyalty or even negligence on AIPAC's part" had been discovered.

AIPAC, has especially close ties to the Bush administration. Addressing the group's policy conference on May 18, President Bush praised AIPAC for "serving the cause of America" and for highlighting the

nuclear threat from Iran.

Washington and Tel Aviv differ on their assessments of Iran's nuclear weapons development. Israel considers Iran's nuclear ambitions its No. 1 security threat, and the issue is the top priority for AIPAC. The Bush administration takes the Iran nuclear threat seriously, but its intelligence estimates classify the danger as less imminent than do the Israeli assessments.

What mystifies those who know AIPAC is how one of the savviest, best-connected lobbying organizations in Washington has found itself enmeshed in a spy investigation.

Although never previously implicated in a potential espionage case, AIPAC has frequently been a subject of controversy. Its close ties to Israel and its aggressive advocacy of Israeli government positions has drawn criticism that it should be registered as an agent of a foreign country. Others, noting its ability to organize significant backing for or against candidates running for national office, have demanded that it be classified as a political action committee.

So far the group has avoided both classifications, either of which would impose major restrictions on its activities.

Three years ago, Fortune magazine ranked AIPAC fourth on its list of Washington's 25 most powerful lobbying groups -- ahead of such organizations as the AFL-CIO and the American Medical Assn.

Times staff writers Mark Mazzetti and Tyler Marshall in Washington contributed to this report.

CORRECTION-DATE: September 05, 2004

CORRECTION:

Lobbying group -- An article in Friday's Section A about allegations of Israeli spying in the United States misidentified the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a pro-Israel lobbying group, as the American Israel Political Action Committee.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO: DENIAL: Daniel Ayalon, Israeli ambassador to the U.S., says his nation doesn't spy here. **PHOTOGRAPHER:** Neal Hamberg Associated Press

LOAD-DATE: September 5, 2004
