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### Analysis: New Study Reveals AIPAC's Long Criminal History

Wednesday, September 12, 2007 - 03:23 PM, (612 Reads)

#### Foreign Agents

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee from the 1963 Fulbright Hearings to the 2005 Espionage Scandal  
By Grant F. Smith

Book Review by Terry Walz  
CNI Staff

Many citizens concerned by the undue influence of the Israel lobby are dismayed by the action of the US Congress that adopts resolution after resolution favoring Israel with nary of word about its failure to make peace with the Palestinians, whose land it inhabits, or with its neighbors, whose borders it abutts. Last year Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer, two professors from prestigious American universities, began a public debate on the power of the lobby - a cause long advocated by the Council for the National Interest - giving hope that a public airing of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), its work, financing, and political connections would help Americans understand the gross misdirection of Middle East foreign policy over the last forty years. Grant F. Smith's new book, *Foreign Agents*, decisively pushes this debate forward and shows just how brazen and criminal the lobby has acted since its beginnings. Smith traces the development of AIPAC from its early days under founder Si Kenen, who in 1947 registered with the US Department of Justice under the Foreign Agents Registration Act as an employee of the American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs. He was representing himself then as an agent working for Israel. He continued to register as a foreign agent during the late forties and fifties, working for various organizations funded by the Israel government, but in 1959, the name of the American Zionist Committee was changed to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) to better reflect, as Kenen said, that it "raised its funds from both Zionists and non-Zionists." Its focus of work never changed, which was to promote the cause of Israel in both the executive and legislation branches of government, yet the organization no longer filed as a foreign agent. AIPAC eventually developed an extensive grassroots national network of organizations that engaged in all manner of illegal activities, from transgressing federal elections laws, to economic and industrial espionage, to flouting congressional laws regarding the use of arms exported to foreign countries, and passing classified and secret information to the Israeli government via the Israeli embassy in Washington. In 2005, after a nine-year investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, two of AIPAC's top officials were arrested for espionage, and the role that AIPAC played over the years as a covert agent for Israel was given unusual light.

The book uses as a primary source the historic and remarkable hearings that Senator William Fulbright held in 1963 to investigate the "activities of agents of foreign principals in the United States." The Committee's aim was to look at the work of all organizations working on behalf of foreign countries, but in the process it discovered that the American Zionist Committee (AZC) was funded by the Jewish Agency, an arm of the Israeli government, and by the Israeli embassy, although its principals were not registered as foreign agents. The hearings disclosed the secret world of the AZC and the Jewish Agency, finding a pattern of money laundering that became a hallmark of AIPAC in the years to come. Both the Agency and the embassy typically hid the support that they provided by using private foundations and individuals as fronts so that it would appear the AZC was funded by American, not foreign, sources. Thus they bypassed the terms of the Foreign Agent Registration Act and sought to obscure their aim, which was to represent the interests of the Israeli government.

To measure the influence of the emerging lobby, Smith covers a wide spectrum of illegal and criminal activity. He begins by examining AIPAC's efforts to promote Israeli economic interests to the disadvantage of American workers. During the 1984 negotiations that preceded the creation of a "US-Israel Free Trade Agreement," AIPAC obtained a copy of the classified document spelling out the American negotiating strategy. Thus Israeli negotiators were aware of American positions well in advance of the meeting. AIPAC then managed to persuade the House Ways and Means Committee to provide special protections for Israeli imports of certain products should a free-trade zone be established. Even Congressional members, with long experience in Israeli lobby tactics, couldn't help but notice AIPAC's heavy hand in this instance.

The pressure exerted by AIPAC during congressional and presidential elections is well known, though consistently denied by the organization. Smith here focuses on the California Senate race of 1986 and the role played by Michael Goland, a real estate developer, who contributed \$1 million via various conduits to derail a potential dangerous opponent of Sen. Alan Cranston, who was seeking reelection that year and was an AIPAC favorite. Goland was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for election fraud. Goland had been a member of the board of AIPAC and had been highly visible in AIPAC's successful effort to unseat Sen. Charles Percy of Illinois in 1984.

AIPAC also had a hand in the defeat of Sen. Fulbright in 1968, and of Congressman Paul Findley in 1986. Findley's series of books about the lobby, especially his *Dare to Speak Out*, have been noted for the light they have thrown on the power of the lobby and its illegal activities.

AIPAC set up a series of political action committees (PACs), all with innocuous names, with the aim of influencing the election of congressional representatives all over the country. It made sure that internal firewalls, as Smith describes them, were set up so that no one could detect AIPAC's hand. But the line between them and the actions of the committees was hardly invisible. One "activist," a Chicago businessman, attempted to explain in a New York Times interview in 1987 how he and AIPAC operated independently, in the course of which it became apparent that the opposite was true, that there was

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tight coordination between AIPAC and dozens of pro-Israel committees. In 1988 the Washington Post published an internal AIPAC memo, reproduced in Foreign Agents, revealing now active AIPAC was in illegally coordinating PAC distributions to favored candidates.

- Thursday, July 19
- Thank You America (1)
- Overcoming the conspiracy against Palestine (0)
- Israel Strangles Palestine in Cold Blood (0)
- Monday, July 02
- Thousands of Palestinians stuck at Rafah - 31-year old mother of five died under the blazing sun (0)
- Wednesday, June 27
- Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) Kill 11 Palestinians including 4 unarmed Civilians and 2 Children in the Gaza Strip. (0)
- ISRAEL: Muhammed Salami, Israel, "They even took the kettle and the tea cups" (0)
- Saving President Abbas (0)
- Palestine's Double Occupation Burns for a Fight (0)
- Tuesday, June 19
- Hamas' Shock and Awe (0)
- Sunday, June 17
- Crocodile Tears (0)

The many instances of election fraud prompted a group of former US government officials to sue the Federal Election Commission for failure to require AIPAC to publish details of its income and expenditures, which political action committees are required to do. Among this group were George Ball, former secretary of state, Paul Findley, former congressman and founder of the Council for the National Interest, Andrew Kilgore, publisher of the Washington Report for Middle East Affairs and former ambassador to Qatar, and James Akin, former ambassador to Saudi Arabia. The FEC delivered a report on the complaint that cleared the PACs but professed a desire to further study the actions of AIPAC, but in fact the chief complaints were ignored. Appeals to the Supreme Court were turned aside on various points and the case remains in legal limbo to this day.

In the last twenty years, AIPAC has continued to develop its political networks. Steve Rosen, AIPAC Director of Policy, notoriously likened the lobby to "a night flower. It thrives in the dark and dies in the sun." It funds dozens of congressional "educational" trips to Israel every year through its affiliate the American Israel Education Foundation; it continues to publish Si Kenen's Near East Report, which serves as a propaganda arm of the Israel government; it established a "think tank," the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, which maintains a roster of "experts" providing cover for Israeli government positions (many of whose Board members have served as Board members of AIPAC); it maintains a large public relations office in Manhattan; and works in tandem with the new Saban Center for Middle East Policy, whose president, Martin Indyk, was deputy director of AIPAC and a former US ambassador to Israel. Thus Middle East policy at Brookings Institution, once a formidable independent think tank, has been usurped by pro-Israeli interests.

The growing arrogance of AIPAC, which in recent years acted with brazen impunity, was not unnoticed by the FBI counterintelligence which began probing the organization's activities as far back as 1999. In 2005, Col. Lawrence Franklin, who was working in the office of Douglas Feith, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, was arrested and charged with giving classified documents to two top officials at AIPAC who passed them on to the Israeli embassy. The information concerned US positions toward Iran. The AIPAC officials were also arrested and charged with espionage. Lawrence was found guilty and sentenced to 12 years and seven months in prison and fined \$10,000 for passing classified information to AIPAC and an Israeli diplomat. The trial against Steven Rosen and Keith Weissman has been delayed on several occasions and is now scheduled to begin in January 2008. The espionage charges have been dropped. A full analysis of the trial and its various permutations can be found in Smith's Chapter Five.

The case appropriately summarizes the extent of the illegalities that AIPAC has engaged in since its beginnings some fifty years ago. Senator Fulbright was on to something much bigger than even he could have imagined. Spawned by the Jewish Agency, it has abetted efforts that have encouraged "charitable" organizations in the US to contribute more than US \$50 billion to illegal settlements in Gaza and the West Bank while appropriating and developing lands that belong to Palestinians. The money laundering activities of the Agency and the US donors have been brought to the attention of the US Department of Justice, thanks to work by the Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy and the Council for the National Interest but as yet no action has taken place to stop the illegal operations. As Smith states, "This follows an established pattern of law enforcement failures since the Fulbright foreign agent hearings."

Foreign Agents shines light on the murky world of AIPAC and its efforts to divert policy and push Israel's rightwing interventionist agenda in Washington. It garnered support for a war and occupation of Iraq in Congress. Contrary to the assertions of many now claiming how AIPAC was not promoting war, Smith documents how it helped prompt the American invasion of Iraq and now threatens to coordinate an intervention by the US in Iran. The consequences for the American public have been huge, as the response to Hurricane Katrina made clear, and has rendered the US the least popular country in the world. The book also discusses in detail how tenuous are AIPAC's claims to even be a legally constituted nonprofit corporation. Most of all, it serves to remind us that the American Israel Public Affairs Committee does not serve US interests, but works as a foreign agent for the government of Israel and should be required to register as a foreign agent. Only then will be operations and financing be made transparent and public. In fact, this book makes a convincing case that America - and the world - would be better off without AIPAC.

#### Ordering Information

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