

DO YOU GET THE FEELING WE'RE THE ADVERSARIES DEPUTY DEFENSE SECRETARY LYNN IS TALKING ABOUT?

After having managed the Wikileaks dump as an opportunity to dial up another NYT A1 fearmongering Michael Gordon article against Iran, DOD has turned to complaining about Wikileaks again. But given the vagueness described in this complaint, I can't help but wonder whether William Lynn is using the term "adversary" rather loosely.

U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary William J. Lynn called the documents "stolen material" and said they give adversaries key insight on how the U.S. military operates. He did not say which groups, or how the Pentagon knew they were researching the documents.

"There are groups out there that have said they are indeed mining this data to turn around and use against us," Lynn told a small group of reporters during a brief visit to Baghdad. "We think this is problematic."

Of course groups are mining documents—and it's no mystery how DOD has learned of it. The UN has mined the documents and subsequently raised questions about America's obligations to prevent torture in Iraq. I would imagine that Lynn finds it "problematic" that the UN might challenge its policy of ignoring torture.

I imagine, too, that Lynn believes Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg's demand that the US investigate its support for torture

“problematic.”

“Anything that suggests basic rules of war, conflict and engagement have been broken or that torture has been in any way condoned are extremely serious and need to be looked at.

“People will want to hear what the answer is to what are very, very serious allegations of a nature which I think everybody will find shocking.”

It would be “problematic,” too, if the Danes were forced to admit that its own records, neglecting all mention of turning over 62 Iraqis to be tortured, were inaccurate.

I’d be flattered, frankly, if DOD considers us mere American citizens—their paymasters—among that group of “adversaries.” It’d be nice if our military had some fear that citizen disgust with its actions might exercise some kind of check over their power. It’d be nice if the exposure of our government’s complicity with torture proved somehow problematic to the bureaucracy that institutionalized that complicity.

Sadly, I suspect that if Lynn is including us mere citizens in that group of “adversaries,” he’s only doing so because he finds the notion of citizen oversight and accountability so “problematic.”

**“WE’VE NEVER LOST
COMPLETE COMMAND
AND CONTROL AND
FUNCTIONALITY OF 50**

ICBMS”

✖ Only, as of this weekend, we *have* completely lost command and control of a whole bunch of ICBMs.

President Obama was briefed this morning on a power failure at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming that took 50 nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), one-ninth of the U.S. missile stockpile, temporarily offline on Saturday.

[snip]

On Saturday morning, according to people briefed on what happened, a squadron of ICBMs suddenly dropped down into what’s known as “LF Down” status, meaning that the missileers in their bunkers could no longer communicate with the missiles themselves. LF Down status also means that various security protocols built into the missile delivery system, like intrusion alarms and warhead separation alarms, were offline.

[snip]

“We’ve never had something as big as this happen,” a military officer who was briefed on the incident said.

Occasionally, one or two might blink out, the officer said, and several warheads are routinely out of service for maintenance. At an extreme, “[w]e can deal with maybe 5, 6, or 7 at a time, but we’ve never lost complete command and control and functionality of 50 ICBMs.”

Now, Ambinder quotes a number of sources effectively saying “nothing to see here, there was never a risk.”

But the fact that they appear to have no fucking clue how they lost control of one ninth of our

nuclear arsenal leaves me a little skeptical of their reassurances.

The cause of the failure remains unknown, although it is suspected to be a breach of underground cables deep beneath the base, according to a senior military official.

It is next to impossible for these systems to be hacked, so the military does not believe the incident was caused by malicious actors. A half dozen individual silos were affected by Saturday's failure.

After StuxNet, are we so sure the hackers to pull this off aren't out there? And the failure of a bunch of cables ... well, that reminds me of the failure of a bunch of other cables.

Alternately, given the accelerating speed with which we're turning into a banana republic, maybe it's just possible that we can't keep our critical infrastructure safe from our own increasing incompetence anymore.

I can sympathize. For about a year I've been debating getting a chest freezer, but thus far have not, because I suspect I would lose power so often so as to make the freezer a collection of inedible meat. Perhaps now the government is considering whether it has the infrastructure to keep 450 ICBMs lying around?

Update: Danger Room has more.

THE SAME DAY US GETS GUILTY PLEA FROM

CHILD SOLDIER, IT EXEMPTS YEMEN AND OTHERS FROM RESTRICTIONS ON USING CHILD SOLDIERS

The asshole in charge of shredding our Constitution has a really sick sense of humor. Yesterday, the same day the government got Omar Khadr to plead guilty to crimes that aren't crimes that occurred when he was a child, Obama issued this memorandum.

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, pursuant to section 404(c) of the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008 (CSPA), title IV of the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 (Public Law 110 457), I hereby determine that it is in the national interest of the United States to waive the application to Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and Yemen of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA.

This memo appears to waive the following restriction, thereby allowing the US to fund operations with or make weapons sales to Chad, DRC, Sudan, and Yemen, even though the State Department has reason to believe they use child soldiers.

(a) In General- Subject to subsections (c), (d), and (e), none of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available for international military education and training, foreign military financing, or the transfer of excess defense articles under section 116 or 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C.

2151n(f) and 2304(h)), the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2751), the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2008 (division J of Public Law 110-161) or under any other Act making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs may be obligated or otherwise made available, and no licenses for direct commercial sales of military equipment may be issued to the government of a country that is clearly identified, in the Department of State's Country Report on Human Rights Practices for the most recent year preceding the fiscal year in which the appropriated funds, transfer, or license, would have been used or issued in the absence of a violation of this title, as having governmental armed forces or government-supported armed groups, including paramilitaries, militias, or civil defense forces, that recruit and use child soldiers.

So, one of the side benefits of Yemen's cooperation with us on the war on terror is that it can conscript those under 18 and accept as volunteers those under 16 in its military.

This hopey changey thing is really beginning to overwhelm me.

Update: the State Department Report on Yemen last year described this use of child soldiers:

Reports of child soldiers increased in a number of armed conflicts across the country. According to the NGO Small Arms Survey, direct involvement in combat killed or injured hundreds of children annually.

The intermittent conflict in Saada, which began again in August, reportedly drew underage soldiers fighting for the government and the rebel Houthis (see

section 1.g.). The Houthis reportedly used children as runners in between groups of fighters as well as to carry supplies and explosives, according to local children's rights NGO Seyaj. Tribes the government armed and financed to fight alongside the regular army used children younger than 18 in combat, according to reports by international NGOs such as Save the Children.

Married boys, ages 12 to 15 years, were reportedly involved in armed conflict beginning in November 2008 in Amran governorate between the Harf Sufian and al-Osaimat tribes. According to tribal custom, boys who married were considered adults who owed allegiance to the tribe. As a result, half of the tribal fighters in such conflicts were children who had volunteered to demonstrate their tribal allegiance.

It also described the sex trafficking in girls.

There were reports of underage internal sex trafficking during the year. According to a local human rights NGO, an unknown number of women were trafficked from their homes to other regions within the country for the purposes of prostitution.

Though the report says most sex slaves worked in hotels, casinos, and nightclubs, if any of them were used by the armed forces, they would also count as child soldiers.

Update: See this exchange between harpie and powwow, who were discussing this earlier this month.

ONE REASON WE DON'T HEAR ABOUT INCOME INEQUALITY: MEDIA EXECS AMONG THE RICHEST

David Cay Johnston has a must-read piece on what the most recent payroll tax data shows about growing income inequality. He shows that total wages have fallen 5% since 2007, largely because so many fewer people are making any income.

Every 34th wage earner in America in 2008 went all of 2009 without earning a single dollar, new data from the Social Security Administration show. Total wages, median wages, and average wages all declined, but at the very top, salaries grew more than fivefold.

[snip]

Measured in 2009 dollars, total wages fell to just above \$5.9 trillion, down \$215 billion from the previous year. Compared with 2007, when the economy peaked, total wages were down \$313 billion or 5 percent in real terms.

The number of Americans with any wages in 2009 fell by more than 4.5 million compared with the previous year. Because the population grew by about 1 percent, the number of idle hands and minds grew by 6 million.

He also notes how the very rich are getting very richer.

The number of Americans making \$50 million or more, the top income category in the data, fell from 131 in 2008 to 74 last year. But that's only part of the story.

The average wage in this top category increased from \$91.2 million in 2008 to an astonishing \$518.8 million in 2009. That's nearly \$10 million in weekly pay!

[snip]

In the Great Recession year of 2009 (officially just the first half of the year), the average pay of the very highest-income Americans was more than five times their average wages and bonuses in 2008. And even though their numbers shrank by 43 percent, this group's total compensation was 3.2 times larger in 2009 than in 2008, accounting for 0.6 percent of all pay. These 74 people made as much as the 19 million lowest-paid people in America, who constitute one in every eight workers.

At the same time, he notes that this story—which should have been told after the numbers were released on October 15—went unmentioned.

Not a single news organization reported this data when it was released October 15, searches of Google and the Nexis databases show. Nor did any blog, so the citizen journalists and professional economists did no better than the newsroom pros in reporting this basic information about our economy.

Now, Johnston doesn't provide a list of who those 74 people are that make as much as the 19 million lowest paid Americans. But for shits and giggles, I wanted to see who Fortune—which loves to idolize these people—lists. Mind you, they're clearly measuring different things, because Fortune's numbers are smaller than the payroll tax numbers (presumably, this excludes a bunch of executives of privately held companies). But take a look at what industries are dominating Fortune's best-paid men, plus the two women whose salaries match those of the men in the top

1. Greg Maffei, Liberty Media, \$87.5 million
2. Lawrence Ellison, Oracle, \$70.1 million
3. Fred Hassan, Merck, \$49.7 million
4. Carol Bartz, Yahoo, \$47.2 million
5. Mario Gabelli, GAMCO Investors, 43.6 million
6. Mel Karmazin, Sirius, \$43.5 million
7. Leslie Moonves, CBS, \$43 million
8. Safra Catz, Oracle, \$36.4 million
9. Michael Jeffries, Abercrombie & Fitch, \$36.3 million
10. Robert Bertolini, Merck, \$35.1, million
11. Marc Casper, Thermo Fisher Scientific, 34.1 million
12. Philippe Dauman, Viacom, \$34.0 million
13. John Hammergren, McKesson, \$33.9 million
14. J. Raymond Elliott, Boston Scientific, \$33.4 million
15. Ray Irani, Occidental Petroleum, \$31.4 million
16. Stephen Burke, Comcast,

\$31 million

17. Charles Phillip Jr.,
Oracle, \$30.1 million
18. Glen Senk, Urban
Outfitters, \$29.9
million
19. Thomas Montag, Bank of
America, \$29.9 million
20. Dennis Strigl, Verizon,
\$29.0
21. Thomas Kurian, Oracle,
\$28.5 million
22. Ralph Lauren, Polo
Ralph Lauren, \$27.7
million
23. Thomas E. Dooley,
Viacom, \$27.0 million
24. Thomas M. Rutledge,
Cablevision, \$26.0
million
25. Raymond Plank, Apache,
\$25.8 million
26. Daniel H. Mudd,
Fortress Investment
Group, \$25.7 million
27. Timothy Armstrong, AOL,
\$25.6 million

Now, obviously, this is not an apples to apples comparison to the 74 richest people Johnston is talking about. Indeed, it's not even clear how many of these, calculated using payroll tax data, would be in Johnston's group; perhaps only Maffei and Ellison would be (Fortune's list of top CEO compensation is another list, though only 8 of them make more than Johnston's \$50 million threshold; that list is dominated much more by energy and medical companies). So these are really a snapshot of the paupers among the

richest of the rich.

But it provides a list of who the top paid executives in public companies were in 2009.

And 10 of the 27 top paid executives, according to Fortune, were in media.

There's a reason why no one is telling the story of America's increasing income inequality. That's because the people telling the story work for some of the people most benefiting from it.

KHADR'S CONFESSION AND THE LIES WE TELL

Omar Khadr's confession makes me sad. Sad that we insisted on prosecuting a child soldier for defending himself. But also sad for the lies we included in his plea deal to prop up the government's dubious stories about Khadr and detainees generally.

For example, can anyone explain to me how Khadr could be an alien unprivileged enemy belligerent under the Military Commissions Act in 2000 (the first action of Khadr's referenced in the document) when the MCA was first signed in 2006 and we've changed even the category since that time?

Omar Khadr is an alien unprivileged enemy belligerent, as defined by the Military Commissions Act of 2009 (MCA). Omar Khadr is, and has been at all times relevant to these proceedings, a person subject to trial by military commission under Section 948c of the MCA.

Then there's the Afghan deaths the government included in this confession to add to the conspiracy charges, which Daphne Eviatar has written about [here](#).

But the one that bugs me the most is this claim, which includes the assertion that Derunta and Khaldan were al Qaeda camps.

While in Afghanistan, Ahmed Khadr and members of his family, including Omar Khadr, visited many al Qaeda training camps, to include the al Farook camp (where al Qaeda trained in small-arms, map-reading, orientation, explosives, and other training), the Derunta camp (where al Qaeda trained members in explosives and poisons), and the Khaldan camp (where al Qaeda trained members in light weapons, explosives, poisons, sabotage, target selection, urban warfare, and assassination tactics). Omar Khadr knew that these camps were operated by and associated with al Qaeda. Khadr provided U.S. officials with significant details regarding the operation of the training camps, including the fact that his father was responsible for providing financing for these camps, other al Qaeda sponsored camps, and other sponsored activities.

Now, presumably the government did this because the training it is suggested that Khadr got at Farooq—small arms and map reading—is the kind of thing you get at a boy scout camp. They had to tie Derunta and Khaldan to al Qaeda to make Khadr's training seem more militaristic, perhaps. But I can't help but wonder whether they've also crafted this to serve as one piece of "evidence"—confirmation from the son of the financier—to use against other detainees who trained as mujahadeen, but not al Qaeda mujahadeen.

The government is just writing its own novel about Gitmo detainees and the war on terror now. But hey! At least they won't have to go through the motions of trying a child soldier in a war court.

For more on this confession, see Michelle

Shephard, who notes,

Khadr has made history as the first child soldier to be convicted for war crimes and the only captive the Pentagon has prosecuted for murder in the battlefield death of a U.S. service member in either Iraq or Afghanistan.

DEBBIE STABENOW V. BEN NELSON; CHERRY ORCHARDS V. CON AGRA

✖ This could be an interesting, beneficial outcome of this year's election: Debbie Stabenow ascending to Chair the Agriculture Committee.

As of his last calculation, Nate Silver gives the Democrats an 84% chance of keeping the Senate. But they'll keep it without Blanche Lincoln, whom Nate gives a 100% chance of losing to John Boozman. And that'll open up the Chairmanship on Ag.

The Politico reports that, in spite of the fact that four people have more seniority on the committee, Stabenow stands a decent chance of getting the post, though Ben Nelson might demand it as his reward for staying in the caucus.

Michigan's Debbie Stabenow is seen as the front-runner to replace Lincoln, but that's not a given. Nebraska moderate Ben Nelson might win the post as a consolation prize for staying in the Democratic Party, or Kent Conrad of North Dakota could abandon his budget chairmanship to take the helm.

[snip]

“Everybody in town seems to think that she is most likely going to be the next chairman,” said one lobbyist who tracks the committee.

Sources close to the panel say the Michigan Democrat is well-liked by her colleagues and earned their respect during the last round of farm bill negotiations by bridging the interests of states with commodity crops and those with specialty fruit and vegetables.

But because Michigan isn’t your typical Big Ag state, some observers say Stabenow might face opposition from powerful industry lobbies. “There would probably be fear among some of the industry leaders of the cotton people and the wheat people and the barley people if they saw Stabenow take the helm,” said an industry source close to the committee.

Now, Stabenow isn’t always the most hardnosed leader. And on occasions (notably, the bankruptcy bill) she has put corporate interests ahead of her constituents.

But as the Politico article suggests, she would make a very interesting Ag Chair because of the nature of our Ag industry in MI. That’s because MI’s Ag industry has a diversity second only to CA, but (because of the scale) much less dominated by big players. Here’s a snapshot:

- Michigan is the national leader in the production of tart cherries, having grown 196 million pounds or 77% of the U.S. total in 2007.
- Michigan also ranks first nationally for the production of pickling cucumbers, geraniums,

petunias, squash and vegetable-type bedding plants.

- Michigan ranks 3rd in the nation in apple production with over 770 million bushels produced in 2007. The estimated farm-level value was \$97.1 million.
- Michigan is 2nd nationally for beans, carrots, celery, plums and 3rd in asparagus production.
- Over 887,560 tons of fresh market and processing vegetables were grown in Michigan in 2007. The state ranks 8th in fresh market and 5th in processed vegetable production nationally.
- Michigan ranks 3rd nationally in value of wholesale sales of floriculture products.
- In 2007, Michigan led the nation in the value of sales for 13 crops, including: Potted Easter Lilies, Potted Spring Flowering Bulbs, Potted Geraniums (seed), Potted Petunias, Potted New Guinea Impatiens, New Guinea Impatiens Hanging Baskets, Geraniums, Impatiens, Begonia and Petunia Hanging Baskets, Impatiens and New

Guinea Impatiens (flats) and
Potted Geraniums (cuttings).

- About 335,000 dairy cows produced 7,598 million pounds of milk in 2007. Michigan ranks 7th nationally for milk production
- Michigan's hog production totaled 556 million pounds in 2007. Michigan ranks fourteenth in the nation in terms of inventory.
- There were over 1 million head of cattle in the state in 2007 with an estimated value of \$1.42 billion.

(Somehow, that list neglected to mention blueberries, where we also lead the nation). MI farms are, on average, smaller than the national average, though they are more profitable per acre. There's a very healthy farmers market culture here, and also some proactive efforts to develop locally-branded processed food from our harvest, such as the soy processing plant 10 miles from here that offers a non-GMO soy oil. Our local big grocery chains do a pretty good job of promoting locally produced products.

And then there's Tony the Tiger, which is about as Big Ag culture as we get.

In other words, if Stabenow gets the Chair it'll put someone who is not beholden to Big Ag the way the Ag Chairmen typically are. At a time when the local Ag movement is picking up steam, we might have someone whose constituency would support such an effort.

Compare that with the most likely alternative: Ben Nelson. Who represents, among other corporations, Con Agra. As big as Big Ag gets.

Mind you, the decision may be made by the margin with which the Democrats keep the Senate. If we keep it by just two votes, I imagine we'll see Con Agra continue to rule. But if we can eke out a few more seats, it'll give Bad Nelson much less leverage to demand this Chairmanship.

(Cherry Orchard image by jsorbieus)

THE INVESTIGATIVE PROCESS

Adam Levitin, one of the first people to tell investors how the foreclosure crisis may just point to much larger problems introduced by securitization, has this to say about what we need to do to get out of this mess.

I was glad to hear Ben Bernanke announce this morning that federal regulators would be looking into the faulty foreclosure process. But how is this inspection going to work? **The only way to actually answer whether we have a systemic faulty foreclosure problem is to have legally trained personnel examine a healthy sample of actual loan files on both the servicer and trustee level.** Is that what the federal bank regulators are going to do? Do they even have the personnel? I don't think bank examiners have the training to know what sort of legal documentation and procedures are required to properly consummate a foreclosure; it's just not part of what they do. And are they going to look at the actual loan files or just talk to the servicers and get reassurances?

The credibility of the federal response rests on the investigative process;

unless there are sufficiently trained personnel looking at the actual files, we won't know the real scope of the problem, and any clean bill of health will be a white wash. [my emphasis]

This gets at something I've been trying to get to in my continued rants about warranting titles. The legally trained people who would normally review titles on this kind of individualized basis are title insurer employees (I grant that they probably don't have experience in tracking the trustee data, though my suspicion is that the easily identified problems, like robo-signed documents, would be a good initial trigger point for further investigation into the securitization of the loan).

By having the banks warrant these loans, it makes it far less likely that the title insurers will do that kind of review (and remember, Fidelity National by itself looks at almost 40% of the titles that pass hands).

Now maybe there is someone besides the title company prepared to do this work, but I'm not hearing anyone besides Levitin talk about who that might be.

HOW DOES FRAGO 242 RELATE TO OUR COLLABORATION WITH THE WOLF BRIGADE?

The biggest headline from Friday's Wikileaks dump (everywhere but the NYT, anyway) is that the "US ignored torture." But the way in which an official policy ignoring torture was followed by collaboration with one of Iraq's torture

squads raises the question whether the US involvement in Iraqi torture was more direct.

Did the US “ignore” torture, or “encourage” it?

The basis for the claim that the US ignored torture comes from references to Frago 242, which officially instituted a policy of looking the other way in cases of Iraqi on Iraqi abuse.

This is the impact of Frago 242. A frago is a “fragmentary order” which summarises a complex requirement. This one, issued in June 2004, about a year after the invasion of Iraq, orders coalition troops not to investigate any breach of the laws of armed conflict, such as the abuse of detainees, unless it directly involves members of the coalition. Where the alleged abuse is committed by Iraqi on Iraqi, “only an initial report will be made ... No further investigation will be required unless directed by HQ”.

While the Guardian ascribes the timing of this order—which they date to June 2004—to Iraqi sovereignty and the effort to get Iraqis to take over more of their own security, it also coincides with the time when Abu Ghraib made it politically difficult for the US to remain in the torture business.

By the end of 2004, according to the Wikileaks dump, the US was handing over detainees to a US trained group known to torture.

In Samarra, the series of log entries in 2004 and 2005 describe repeated raids by US infantry, who then handed their captives over to the Wolf Brigade for “further questioning”. Typical entries read: “All 5 detainees were turned over to Ministry of Interior for further questioning” (from 29 November 2004) and “The detainee was then turned over to the 2nd Ministry of Interior Commando Battalion for further questioning” (30

November 2004).

The field reports chime with allegations made by New York Times writer Peter Maass, who was in Samarra at the time. He told Guardian Films : "US soldiers, US advisers, were standing aside and doing nothing," while members of the Wolf Brigade beat and tortured prisoners. The interior ministry commandos took over the public library in Samarra, and turned it into a detention centre, he said.

[snip]

The Wolf Brigade was created and supported by the US in an attempt to re-employ elements of Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard, this time to terrorise insurgents. Members typically wore red berets, sunglasses and balaclavas, and drove out on raids in convoys of Toyota Landcruisers. They were accused by Iraqis of beating prisoners, torturing them with electric drills and sometimes executing suspects. The then interior minister in charge of them was alleged to have been a former member of the Shia Badr militia.

Now, the timing of the two events—the formal policy of doing nothing about Iraqi on Iraqi torture and the collaboration with the Wolf Brigade—is not exact. Wolf Brigade was founded in October 2004, some time after Frago 242 was issued.

But given how adamant Rummy was in late 2005 that US soldiers were not required to physically stop any abuse they found,

Q And General Pace, what guidance do you have for your military commanders over there as to what to do if – like when General Horst found this Interior Ministry jail?

GEN. PACE: It is absolutely the responsibility of every U.S. service member, if they see inhumane treatment being conducted, to intervene to stop it. As an example of how to do it if you don't see it happening but you're told about it is exactly what happened a couple weeks ago. There's a report from an Iraqi to a U.S. commander that there was possibility of inhumane treatment in a particular facility. That U.S. commander got together with his Iraqi counterparts. They went together to the facility, found what they found, reported it to the Iraqi government, and the Iraqi government has taken ownership of that problem and is investigating it. So they did exactly what they should have done.

SEC. RUMSFELD: But I don't think you mean they have an obligation to physically stop it; it's to report it.

GEN. PACE: If they are physically present when inhumane treatment is taking place, sir, they have an obligation to try to stop it.

It sure seems that the relationship between Frago 242 and the torture committed by the Wolf Brigade constitutes even more than just "ignoring" torture.

WELLSTONE ACCUSED OF VOTER FRAUD, THREATENED WITH

DEATH, DAY BEFORE HIS PLANE CRASH

✖ There's absolutely no reason to think that the barely literate postcard sent to Paul Wellstone's office the day before his plane crash had anything to do with his death.

The FBI files [released in FOIA to Minnesota Public Radio] reveal, for the first time, the specific criminal leads pursued by investigators.

FBI agents investigated the claims of a caller from Jacksonville, Florida, who said that members of the American Trucking Association had planned to disconnect the plane's de-icers. The man said that Wellstone had been trying to schedule Senate hearings to expose organized crime in the trucking industry. In response to the call, a Wellstone staff member asked a Labor Committee member and a legislative director "who both indicated that they were not aware of any Senate hearing being scheduled to discuss this topic." The rest of the document has been redacted.

Agents also obtained a threatening postcard sent to Wellstone's St. Paul office the day before the plane crash. The handwritten postcard said, in part, "We need to gut (sic) the word out for the sniper (sic) to go after people like you, not real Americans ... This voter fraud you propose will get you dead."

After all, the FBI investigated the threat.

But I think it worth calling attention to the postcard because it's the of the kind of violence Republican myths about voter fraud elicit. ~~I can't make out the whole postcard,~~

[updated w/isis' and scribe's suggestions] It reads at least in part, [see PDF 6]

We know your system for voters. It won't work. You have been targeted. We need to gut [sic] the word out for the sniper [sic] to go after people like you, not real Americans. This card is for you pimps [perps?] to read "Dead Man Walking!" I have cousin at UMN Inside info this voter fraud you propose will get you dead. MC2

The GOP's sustained effort to accuse those who mobilize Democratic constituencies – as Wellstone did better than anyone – of vote fraud is designed not just to delegitimize both big-D and small-D democracy, but also to elicit this kind of tribalistic hatred.

ARE IRAN'S BAGS OF EUROS FOR DAUDZAI BIGGER THAN CIA'S BAGS OF DOLLARS FOR KARZAI'S BROTHER?

The outage of the day is the report that Hamid Karzai's chief of staff, Umar Daudzai, receives a steady stream of bags of Euros from Iran.

One evening last August, as President Hamid Karzai wrapped up an official visit to Iran, his personal plane sat on the airport tarmac, waiting for a late-running passenger: Iran's ambassador to Afghanistan.

The ambassador, Feda Hussein Maliki, finally appeared, taking a seat next to

Umar Daudzai, Mr. Karzai's chief of staff and his most trusted confidant. According to an Afghan official on the plane, Mr. Maliki handed Mr. Daudzai a large plastic bag bulging with packets of euro bills. A second Afghan official confirmed that Mr. Daudzai carried home a large bag of cash.

"This is the Iranian money," said an Afghan official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "Many of us noticed this."

The bag of money is part of a secret, steady stream of Iranian cash intended to buy the loyalty of Mr. Daudzai and promote Iran's interests in the presidential palace, according to Afghan and Western officials here. Iran uses its influence to help drive a wedge between the Afghans and their American and NATO benefactors, they say.

Mind you, Karzai claims he has told the US about his Iranian gravy train.

But I think the real question to ask is whether the bags of Euros Daudzai gets from Iran are bigger than the bags of dollars Ahmed Wali Karzai—Hamid's brother—receive from the CIA?

Ahmed Wali Karzai, the brother of the Afghan president and a suspected player in the country's booming illegal opium trade, gets regular payments from the Central Intelligence Agency, and has for much of the past eight years, according to current and former American officials.

The agency pays Mr. Karzai for a variety of services, including helping to recruit an Afghan paramilitary force that operates at the C.I.A.'s direction in and around the southern city of Kandahar, Mr. Karzai's home.

And whether the money all ends up in the same place: in the Karzai clique's private bank accounts in Dubai?

While we're clutching pearls about monetary influence, we probably ought to ask how all the bags of money flowing to Karzai compare to the truck-loads of foreign money being spent to influence our elections. Granted, the \$885,000 we know about is probably smaller than the total directly benefiting Karzai. But after Citizens United, we're just getting started.