

THE GHORBANIFAR MEETINGS TIMELINE

The SSCI report on the Rome meeting has a really funny footnote.

Mr. Franklin is currently awaiting direction from the Department of Justice to report to prison on matters unrelated to those discussed in this report. He was indicted in August 2005 along with two employees of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) for conspiring with each other to unlawfully disclose classified national defense information. Mr. Franklin subsequently pled guilty, and was sentenced in January 2006 on three felony counts: conspiracy to communicate national defense information to persons not entitled to receive it; conspiracy to communicate classified information to an agent of a foreign government; and the unlawful retention of national defense information.

The footnote is funny (in addition to the fact that it misstates when Franklin was first indicted) because Franklin pled guilty to dealing information about Iran to AIPAC. The reason Franklin did so was not because of money or blackmail, but because he disagreed with US policy on Iran, and was happy to work with AIPAC to pressure the government into a more hawkish policy on Iran. Which is pretty much what was happening with the Ghorbanifar information. As DOD's own Counterintelligence Field Activity (CIFA) report suggested,

Ghorbanifar or his associates are being used as agents of a foreign intelligence service to leverage his continuing contact with Michael Ledeen and others to reach into and influence the highest levels of the U.S. Government.

Along with a lot of other crappy "intelligence," Ghorbanifar was floating plans to overthrow the regime in Iran, so the end goal of both the AIPAC effort and Ledeen and Ghorbanifar's efforts was regime change in Iran.

The suggestion that Franklin's indictment is unrelated to the Ghorbanifar meetings is also funny because, while Franklin claimed he did not know Ledeen in 2001 when Ledeen selected him to attend the Rome meeting, by fall 2004, Ledeen was intervening to get Plato Cacheris to represent Franklin in the AIPAC scandal. Thus, while there's no reason to believe the Israelis were involved in the Rome meeting, the same group of Neocons were involved in parallel efforts to undercut US efforts to establish closer relations with Iran.

Now, as Laura Rozen revealed, it appears that this thing is not over—she reports that Harold Rhode has lawyered up. Rhode refused to cooperate with the SSCI's most recent efforts to investigate this meeting last fall, which suggests he has gotten much more reluctant to talk about what happened (and DOD says he has forgotten what he said in 2004, displaying the forgetfulness all Bush Administration criminals seem to share). But if you think about it, there are only two logical explanations for why—two and a half years after Larry Franklin pled guilty to sharing defense information—he is still "awaiting direction from DOJ to report to prison." Either someone high up in the Administration intervened to keep Franklin out of the pokey (OVP is named in the SSCI report, and we know Dick Cheney has prevented allies from going to prison before), or Franklin has been cooperating with investigators for two and a half years. (His docket just shows a "delayed reporting date.")

With all that said, I decided to look more closely at the timeline involved. What follows combines several timelines: the timeline of both the meetings and the investigations into those meetings from the SSCI report, key details from

Franklin's indictment, and details of attempts to foster closer relations with Iran detailed in this Flynt Leverett op-ed. I'll say more about what this timeline shows in follow-up posts.

September 9, 2001: Condi demands an investigation into a leak that ended up in NYT story; the leak would lead to AIPAC investigation

Before November 7, 2001: Ledeen calls Rodman; Rodman says no to Rome meeting

Before November 7, 2001: Ledeen calls Hadley, claims Iranians want to defect

November 7, 2001: Hadley calls Wolfowitz, who instructs Rodman to approve the meeting

November 15, 2001: Rodman checks with DOD General Counsel Haynes on whether DOD can accept defectors

December 9, 2001: Powell publicly mentions meetings with Iran

December 2001: US requests Iran prevent Gulbuddin Hekmatyar from returning to Afghanistan

December 10-13, 2001: First Rome meetings

December 12, 2001: Sembler and Ledeen meet

December 23, 2001: Sembler hosts Ledeen; Ledeen says US should support deal with Ghorbanifar's Iranians

January 2002: Franklin report on meeting

Early 2002: Franklin contacted by "official from the Office of the Vice President" regarding Ghorbanifar

January 7, 2002: Rodman drafts—but doesn't send—summary of meeting for Wolfowitz

January 14, 2002: Meeting with DCI reveals details of meetings

January 16, 2002: Ledeen meeting with Hadley

January 29, 2002: Bush names Iran in "axis of evil"

January 31, 2002: Handwritten note exchange between Rodman and Wolfowitz, with the latter stressing secrecy

February 1, 2002: Marc Grossman inquires about meeting after learning of Ledeen summary for Hadley; does not identify Rhode as one of the participants

February 2, 2002: Rodman meeting with DIA Director Wilson

February 5, 2002: Rodman prepares draft memo from Wolfie to Rummy

February 8, 2002: State Department cable on meetings

February 9, 2002: CIA and State oppose further meetings

February 2002: CIA's Deputy Director of Operations Pavitt establishes channel for Ledeen to contact agency about any further contacts

February 12, 2002: Rodman summary on meeting (mentioning oil contracts); drafted with Franklin assistance

Early 2002: Luti and another DOD official tell Rhode activity had been shut off

April 2002: "Executive referral" from OSD to Defense HUMINT to meet with Ledeen

May 10, 2002: Newt Gingrich faxes Ledeen memo to Rumsfeld

June 27, 2002: Rumsfeld documented as having read Ledeen memo (DOD claims the memo "passed through" Rumsfeld's office)

July 4, 2002: Ledeen contacts Sembler about further meetings with Ghobanifar in Italy

July 13, 2002: Wolfowitz assistant tells Rodman Tenet supported contacts; Charles Allen to

coordinate

July 15, 16, 2002: CIA cables on meeting

July 18, 2002: Sembler alerts Marc Grossman that Ledeen contacted him on July 4 regarding further meetings in Rome in August

July 19, 2002: Rodman action memo (citing multi-million dollar business deals) in response to Ledeen memo recommends ongoing contact with CIA coordination

July 25, 2002: Feith reviews Rodman action memo

July 25, 2002: CIA cable reflecting Powell's lack of approval for contacts

August 8, 2002: CIA cable reflecting NSC legal advisor stating Hadley had "chastised" Ledeen for ongoing efforts on this matter

August 15, 2002: Franklin returns Steve Rosen contact about discussing Iran

August 21, 2002: Franklin and Rosen postpone meeting

September 4, 2002: Sembler in DC told Ledeen's activities would not continue

December 2002: Rhode has "chance meeting" with Iranians while attending Iraqi opposition conference in London; Rhode informs his supervisor of meeting, but does not document it

January 2003: Pat Roberts becomes Chair of SSCI

February 12, 2003: Franklin and Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman discuss draft internal policy document regarding "Middle Eastern country"

March 13, 2003: Rosen discloses information on policy document to "senior fellow" at DC think tank (Ledeen?)

March 17, 2003: Franklin faxes Rosen contents of appendix from internal policy document

March 18, 2003: Rosen leaks details of policy document to WaPo's Michael Dobbs, saying "I'm not supposed to know this"

April 2003: Iran proposes re-establishing relations; US rejects proposal because Iranian government "on the verge of collapse"

May 3, 2003: US and Iran in negotiations in Geneva

May 7, 2003: Rhode apparently stages "find" of anti-Israel materials in Iraq (and uranium document) with Ahmed Chalabi; Judy Miller reports it

Late May, 2003: Ledeen sends new letter outlining Ghorbanifar plan to Feith, including promise of finding "Iraqi weapons of mass destruction that had been moved to Iran"

May 21, 2003: US cancels Geneva meeting with Iran, accusing Iran of harboring Al Qaeda leaders

May 25, 2003: Report (quoting Rummy elsewhere) that US considering using MEK to launch attack on Iran

June 2, 2003: Feith forwards Ledeen letter to Cambone; "let's discuss"

June 2003: While in Istanbul at conference on US/Turkish relations, two Middle East experts from OVP asks Rhode to meet with Iranian Professor, Palestinian, and others in Paris in lieu of them

June 15, 2003: WaPo publishes article based on policy document leaked on March 18; the article quotes both Ledeen and Leverett

June 26, 2003: Franklin meets with Rosen and Weissman, gives information about potential attacks in US troops in Iraq

June 28, 2003: Feith writes letter to Pat Roberts on "the cell set up in his office to review intelligence"

June 30 and July 1, 2003: While in Paris filling in for OVP employees, Rhode meets with Ghorbanifar (Ledeen arranges meeting)

July 14, 2003: Roberts informs Tenet that he met

with Ledeen "at the urging of Senators Santorum, Kyl and Brownback"; Roberts asks Tenet for comment

July 2003: FBI begins investigation of Larry Franklin

August 2003: DOD IG Rome review

August 2003: Rhode continues to receive contacts from Ghorbanifar

August 6, 2003: Ledeen meets with several DOD intelligence figures to "discuss a source who knew where enriched uranium was buried in Iraq"; Ghorbanifar was conduit to this source

August 8, 2003: Newsday reports on Paris meeting

August 9, 2003: WaPo reports on Rome and Paris meeting

August 9, 2003: Rhode recalled from Iraq, where he had been liaising with Ahmad Chalabi

August 9, 2003: According to Ledeen, Rhode and Franklin ordered to stop talking to Ledeen about Iran; Franklin and Rodman do not recall such an order

August 11, 2003: Rodman prepares chronology of Iran contacts for Rumsfeld, leaving out details of June 2003 Paris meeting because it "[took] place without the knowledge" of DOD International Security Affairs or Policy

Before 2003 (unspecified): Franklin's faxed correspondence with Ghorbanifar destroyed

September 11, 2003: Rumsfeld requests details from Wolfowitz, nothing Powell and Rice interested in response; Wolfowitz writes memo

September 2003: Wolfowitz instructs Rodman to make clear to Rhode to get "potentially sensitive contacts with foreigners approved by Policy."

September 19, 2003: At request of Wolfowitz and Feith, Cambone orders CIFA review of Ghorbanifar contacts

September 23, 2003: CIA response to Pat Roberts on Ledeen's information stating, "none of these leads has resulted in information of significant intelligence value."

September 25, 2003: CIFA interview of Rhode

Early October 2003: Possible Rhode meeting with Ghorbanifar in Rome

October 2003: SSCI reviews Rome meetings but does not yet add it into Iraq intelligence review

October 21, 2003: Cambone orders CIFA investigation halted; report notes:

Pursuant to direction from the offices of DoD General Counsel [Haynes] and USD(I) [Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence; Cambone] the inquiry has been limited in scope. The inquiry has been restricted to interviews of some of the principal DoD personalities identified in news articles as being associated with this matter and their supervisors, review of material voluntarily provided by interviewees, review of all records from DoD agencies, and open source information.

Analysis of the information obtained by this limited scope inquiry, suggests there are several interviews of people both internal to DoD and external to DoD that have not been completed and would likely corroborate and/or enhance the information obtained to date. Analysis also suggests there are records and information possessed by the CIA that would likely corroborate and/or enhance the information obtained to date. The offices of the USD(I) and DoD General Counsel have advised CIFA not to conduct the key interviews CIFA has recommended. The DoD Office of General Counsel has not forwarded CIFA's letter to the CIA, which was drafted by DoD General Counsel review and dissemination.

The report lists five unresolved issues:

- *A National Security Counsel staff report of a possible third meeting between Mr. Rhode and Mr. Ghorbanifar in early October 2003*
- *The lack of follow-up with the CIA*
- *The lack of understanding of the role of the Office of Vice President or the role of the National Security Counsel in the Rome and Paris meetings*
- *No independent corroboration of the information or timelines provided by DoD personnel involved in the two known meetings with Mr. Ghorbanifar*
- *The lack of information on the involvement of the foreign government in the Rome meeting*

October 24, 2003: Franklin tells a foreign official that work on the policy document had been stopped

October 29, 2003: SSCI staff meeting with DOD officials

October 29, 2003: State Department ready to

resume negotiations with Iran

February 2004: SSCI adds OUSD(P) activities into scope of Iraq intelligence review

February 2004: DOD puts together chronology of meeting including inaccurate description of June 2003 Ghorbanifar meeting (basically hiding the role of OVP personnel)

April 16, 2004: Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs letter backgrounding the meeting; the letter hides the role of OVP in the meeting

April 20, 2004: Harold Rhode interview with SSCI

April 21, 2004: Michael Ledeen interview with SSCI, claims he learned of Paris meeting by "read[ing] about it in the papers"

April 23, 2004: Larry Franklin interview with SSCI

May 2004: FBI catches Franklin leaking sensitive information and flips him

May 20, 2004: US raids Chalabi's Iraqi compound

June 2, 2004: NYT reports that Chalabi alerted Iran that US had SigInt code

June 8, 2004: SSCI staff interview with DIA employees

June 10, 2004: SSCI staff interviews former DIA Director Wilson

July 9, 2004: Franklin passes information on US intelligence about Middle Eastern country to Weissman

July 21, 2004: Franklin passes on information about foreign government's covert actions in Iraq to Weissman

August 3, 2004: FBI contacts Weissman and Rosen

August 24, 2004: State Department QFRs

Week of August 22, 2004: FBI interviews American not in government about Franklin

An American not in government who was interviewed by the FBI last week described the line of questioning as a "fishing expedition" that did not include any mention of Franklin or Iran.

The FBI appeared more concerned about people this person knows who were looking for access to intelligence or classified information.

"I was left startled that in a town of award-winning journalists, law enforcement officials were asking if anyone I knew might be interested in classified information," the person said. "It was a fishing expedition. It was an extremely odd conversation."

August 27, 2004: Rosen and Weissman interviewed by FBI; Rosen warns Israeli of investigation

August 27, 2004: News of AIPAC investigation leaked; Paul McNulty put in charge of case

August 29-20, 2004: Feith, Luti, Rodman interviewed about whether they had authorized Franklin's leaks to AIPAC

September-October 2004: Through Michael Ledeen's intercession, Plato Cacheris agrees to represent Franklin pro bono

May 3, 2005: Franklin charged with espionage in sealed complaint

August 2005: Feith leaves DOD

September 2005: Roberts requests DOD IG investigation into "unlawful" activities of OUSD(P)

September 2005: Levin requests DOD IG investigation into "improper" activities of OUSD(P)

November 1, 2005: Harry Reid shuts down Senate in effort to restart Phase II

November 2005: DOD OIG begins investigation into

Feith, stalling the SSCI investigation into Feith

January 2006: Jello Jay becomes Chair SSCI (Pat Roberts quits Committee, Kit Bond becomes Ranking Member)

January 2006: Franklin sentenced

July 13, 2006; Patton Boggs writes letter to DOD IG on behalf of Feith

February 2007: DOD OIG report on Feith's intelligence analysis

March 6, 2007: DOD OIG report on involvement with the Rendon group

July 2007: SSCI asks DOD for details on content of and response to CIFA investigation; receives nothing

September 2007: Jello Jay asks DOD for copies of CIFA materials; receives nothing

2007: Rhode refuses to interview with SSCI

September 27, 2007: SSCI interviews Rodman

October 3, 2007: SSCI interviews Franklin

October 22, 2007: CIA QFR on Iranians at the meeting

October 24, 2007: Ledeen interview, admits he may have arranged Paris Ghorbanifar meeting

November 28 , 2007: CIA QFR on Iranians at meeting

December 19, 2007: Staff interview of DIA Analyst (about whether Iranians identified were real)

March 10, 2008: Phone interview with Tenet

March 12, 2008: DOD QFR on Rhode, Ledeen