

# WILL WE FINALLY SEE THE JOHN KERRY WHO INVESTIGATED BCCI AGAIN?

Thwarted in his dreams to be Secretary of State—or some cabinet position, any cabinet position—John Kerry is settling in and making some changes at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Kerry has hired Douglas Frantz, the former *Los Angeles Times* managing editor, to lead the committee's investigative wing. The committee won't specify what Frantz, who recently coauthored a book on Pakistani nuclear proliferator A.Q. Khan, plans to investigate. But sources note that he's currently in Vienna, the seat of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Sources tell *The Cable* that the pro-Israel lobby group the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) has encouraged Kerry and other members to probe Iran's alleged sanctions busting, and how the country might bypass international sanctions to supply its nuclear program.

"For sure folks are strongly supportive of congressional and U.S. efforts to go after trans-shipment issues, often through the UAE, but in other places as well, that the Iranians have been using to bring in dual use items and other things not allowed under the sanctions," a source following the Iran issue said on condition of anonymity. With the recent U.S.-UAE nuclear power deal, "there is increased expectation on the Hill that the UAE will do a better job of cracking down on their country being used by Iran to push their nuclear

programs forward and step up their effort to help ensure the economic sanctions aren't being violated under their noses."

In addition to Frantz' book on AQ Khan, Frantz wrote A Full Service Bank on an intimately related subject: the BCCI scandal (along with funding terrorism and CIA covert ops, BCCI served as the finance vehicle for AQ Khan's nuke program). At the same time Frantz was working on that book, a guy named John Kerry was investigating BCCI in the Senate. I've always believed that the BCCI investigation—particularly Kerry's decision not to press Democratic fixer Clark Clifford on his involvement with the bank—was the beginning of John Kerry's evolution away from the courageous stance he took opposing the Vietnam War and towards the more accommodating, cautious stance that might allow one to someday run for President. For some support in that view, here's Doug Frantz (with James Ring Adams) writing about his new boss' decision, in 1988, to go easy on Clifford even though his bank, First American, was really not revealing its role in BCCI.

The Senator did not challenge Clifford. Nor did he ask about Amjad Awan's claim that First American was owned by BCCI. Here was a man who deserved the benefit of the doubt. Instead, he assured the lawyer that he was happy that the bank was cooperating.

Why did John Kerry not confront Clark Clifford? After all, it was Kerry who was insisting on keeping the investigation of BCCI going. One explanation lies in Kerry's own character. He tends to operate in bursts, pushing relentlessly on a subject and then seeming to lose interest in it. Also, Kerry was learning the Washington game and beginning to think of himself as possible

presidential timber down the road. That meant that certain people were not attacked, at least not until all the evidence was in.

Here we are, with Kerry having tested his "presidential timber" and found it lacking, teaming up with the journalist who once suggested Kerry put aside his bulldog tendencies for political reasons twenty years ago. I find that rather curious.

I don't know whether Kerry's intent is to have Frantz investigate—just—Iran as Laura's sources would love to suggest, or whether he's going to invest the sordid mess that involves Israel itself in really dangerous proliferation of weapons. (Laura also notes that Kerry has hired Heidi Crebo-Rediker to lead a focus on international finance and foreign relations which, as Kerry knows from his earlier work, will quickly implicate both close allies and enemies of the United States.)

But I do wonder whether this suggests a post-Presidential Kerry will return to the more courageous stance of his youth.