

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

The outrage 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.