

GEITHNER'S DUPLICITOUS EFFORTS TO REINFORCE THE OLIGARCHY

Bloomberg's blockbuster story—showing that the Fed was dumping \$7.77 trillion into the same banks that Treasury was claiming were solvent to qualify them for TARP—shows a number of different things. It focuses on the \$13 billion in profits the banks made off of massive secret loans from the Fed.

The 190 firms for which data were available would have produced income of \$13 billion, assuming all of the bailout funds were invested at the margins reported, the data show.

More importantly, IMO, the Bloomberg piece also shows how Ben Bernanke, TurboTax Timmeh Geithner, and Hank Paulson used secrecy to get DC's bureaucracy—both Congress and Executive Branch officials—to push through his preferred plan to prop up the TBTF banks.

They did this in two ways: first, by keeping details of the Fed's massive lending secret from the people implementing TARP.

The Fed initially released lending data in aggregate form only. Information on which banks borrowed, when, how much and at what interest rate was kept from public view.

The secrecy extended even to members of President George W. Bush's administration who managed TARP. Top aides to Paulson weren't privy to Fed lending details during the creation of the program that provided crisis funding to more than 700 banks, say two former senior Treasury officials who requested

anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak.

This meant the Fed could hide the fact that the six biggest banks were basically insolvent, and should have been wound down rather than propped up with a strings-free TARP.

The Treasury Department relied on the recommendations of the Fed to decide which banks were healthy enough to get TARP money and how much, the former officials say. The six biggest U.S. banks, which received \$160 billion of TARP funds, borrowed as much as \$460 billion from the Fed, measured by peak daily debt calculated by Bloomberg using data obtained from the central bank. Paulson didn't respond to a request for comment.

The article makes it pretty clear that both Citi and Morgan Stanley would be non-existent right not but for the secret Fed lending. Yet as both Judd Gregg and Barney Frank make clear, neither of them were told that the banks were insolvent.

Judd Gregg, a former New Hampshire senator who was a lead Republican negotiator on TARP, and Barney Frank, a Massachusetts Democrat who chaired the House Financial Services Committee, both say they were kept in the dark.

"We didn't know the specifics," says Gregg, who's now an adviser to Goldman Sachs.

"We were aware emergency efforts were going on," Frank says. "We didn't know the specifics."

The effort to prevent Congress from learning the truth extended though the passage of Dodd-Frank. Glass Steagall advocates Ted Kaufman and Byron Dorgan both claim (though I'm not convinced)

that had Congress been informed how much these big banks relied on Fed lending to stay afloat, it would have been easier to persuade colleagues to break up the banks.

Instead, TurboTax Timmeh—one of the few people who appears to have been privy to the extent of the lending—told Congress imposing size restrictions on banks was too much for democratically elected representatives to handle; instead, hand-picked bank regulators—the people who are today imposing austerity in an effort to prevent banksters from taking their share of losses—should do the job.

On May 4, 2010, Geithner visited Kaufman in his Capitol Hill office. As president of the New York Fed in 2007 and 2008, Geithner helped design and run the central bank's lending programs. The New York Fed supervised four of the six biggest U.S. banks and, during the credit crunch, put together a daily confidential report on Wall Street's financial condition. Geithner was copied on these reports, based on a sampling of e-mails released by the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission.

At the meeting with Kaufman, Geithner argued that the issue of limiting bank size was too complex for Congress and that people who know the markets should handle these decisions, Kaufman says. According to Kaufman, Geithner said he preferred that bank supervisors from around the world, meeting in Basel, Switzerland, make rules increasing the amount of money banks need to hold in reserve. Passing laws in the U.S. would undercut his efforts in Basel, Geithner said, according to Kaufman.

As the article's punch line makes clear, TurboTax Timmeh got his way. And the "limits" the bank regulators put in place don't go into effect for another 7 years.

The story as a whole is mind-boggling. But behind all the stunning numbers, the important takeaway seems to show how TurboTax Timmeh and a few of other oligarch's other captive servants managed to bypass both Executive Branch bureaucracy and democratic oversight or input to bail out banks while making the banking system still more fragile.

THE LESSONS OF IRAN-CONTRA 2.0

In "honor" of the 25th Anniversary of the press conference admitting to Iran-Contra on Friday, National Security Archive liberated memos an aide to Special Prosecutor Lawrence Walsh, Christian Mixter, wrote assessing the criminal liability of Reagan and Poppy Bush. The report found that a loophole Ed Meese suggested—basically using National Security Act to trump the Arms Control Export Control Act—would make it difficult to prosecute Reagan for hiding transfers of money.

On Reagan, Mixter reported that the President was "briefed in advance" on each of the illicit sales of missiles to Iran. The criminality of the arms sales to Iran "involves a number of close legal calls," Mixter wrote. He found that it would be difficult to prosecute Reagan for violating the Arms Export Control Act (AECA) which mandates advising Congress about arms transfers through a third country—the U.S. missiles were transferred to Iran from Israel during the first phase of the operation in 1985—because Attorney General Meese had told the president the 1947 National Security Act could be invoked to supersede the AECA.

As the Iran operations went forward, some of Reagan's own top officials certainly believed that the violation of the AECA as well as the failure to notify Congress of these covert operations were illegal-and prosecutable. In a dramatic meeting on December 7, 1985, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger told the President that "washing [the] transaction thru Israel wouldn't make it legal." When Reagan responded that "he could answer charges of illegality but he couldn't answer charge that 'big strong President Reagan passed up a chance to free hostages," Weinberger suggested they might all end up in jail. "Visiting hours are on Thursdays," Weinberger stated. As the scandal unfolded a year later, Reagan and his top aides gathered in the White House Situation Room the day before the November 25 press conference to work out a way to protect the president from impeachment proceedings.

And you couldn't prosecute Reagan for lying to the American people because doing that is not a crime.

Mixter also found that Reagan's public misrepresentations of his role in Iran-Contra operations could not be prosecuted because deceiving the press and the American public was not a crime.

As to Poppy, he was intimately involved in all the same close calls decisions Reagan was, but since he was junior to Reagan, you couldn't prosecute him either. (The memo was written before it became clear Poppy had been hiding his diaries from the investigation.)

The NSA report on the documents--particularly this detail...

The memorandum on criminal liability noted that Bush had a long involvement in the Contra war, chairing the secret "Special Situation Group" in 1983 which "recommended specific covert operations" including "the mining of Nicaragua's rivers and harbors." Mixer also cited no less than a dozen meetings that Bush attended between 1984 and 1986 in which illicit aid to the Contras was discussed.

... Reminded me of Sy Hersh's description of a meeting at which the Iran-Contra dead-enders in the W Administration plotted how to improve on Iran-Contra.

They set about and talking about how to sabotage oversight. And what is the model for sabotaging oversight? The model turned out to be the Bill Casey model. The Congress' hold, in the Constitution, over the executive is about money. Everything that's being spent must be approved by the Congress—even the most secret operation, there are secret committees in Congress that review it. And so the answer was, "let's run operations off the books. Let's find money elsewhere and the hell with Congress." And it was talked about as "this is the way to finally put those creeps in place." The contempt for Congress in the Bush-Cheney White House was extraordinary, just extraordinary. And it came out of Iran-Contra.

[snip]

So what makes Bush-Cheney so interesting is that at some point, they had a meeting after 9/11 of the people who were in, in the White House, who worked in Iran-Contra—that would be Abrams and Cheney, and there were others involved who were also in the White House and they had a meeting of lessons learned,

I'm telling you literally took place. They had a meeting with a small group of people who worked for Reagan and for George Bush when he was Vice President, his father, George Herbert Walker Bush, anyway.

And at the meeting, here were some of the conclusions: that the Iran-Contra thing, despite the disasters, proved you could do it, you could run operations without Congressional money and get away with it.

The reason they got exposed, and this is what was said in the White House, there were too many people that knew too much—too many people in the military knew in '85 and '86, and too many people in the CIA knew, and Oliver North who you might remember what a great witness he was, was the wrong person to be running that. So what you do is you tell nobody. One of things Cheney wrote in his dissent to the Iran-Contra committee, Cheney said, "my god, Reagan was telling too many people too much, don't tell Congress anything. You don't tell the CIA much, you don't tell the military much, and YOU, Mr. Vice President, you're the Ollie North for this. We're going to run operations off the books and you're going to honcho them." And this is what they did. And this is what is still left to be reported, this kind of stuff, this kind of extraordinarily contemptuous attitude towards the Constitution. [my emphasis]

Turns out Cheney's former boss, Poppy, was involved intimately in the original, as Cheney likely knew from his role in covering up Iran-Contra on the Congressional investigation of it. Though interestingly, his bio focuses on his role in briefings as member of Republican House leadership. Cheney happened to be briefed in John Poindexter's first alert to Congress of the

scandal on November 12 because “apparently [he] was the only member of the House Republican leadership still in Washington during the postelection period.” Cheney also claims that at two meetings with just the Republican House leadership in December, Reagan lied about his knowledge of the events.

One more thing stuck out at me as I review the NSA report. Check out the documents recording efforts in the White House to cover up illegal money transfers (these were previously declassified, though NSA posted them as the most important declassified documents associated with their Iran-Contra work). Several of them (though not Ollie North’s memo laying out the plan to divert money from arms sales to the Contras) are classified just “Secret.” In this day and age, there’s no way such discussions at the White House would be classified just Secret.

Another thing the Executive has learned since Iran-Contra: to overclassify all evidence of such plots from the start.

FAST TRASH

Um, okay, couple of MAJOR problems here. First is the issue of the illegitimate Trash appearing on this blog. and the musical selection for the same? Holy crap, I just do not know how I can work under such conditions. So, it turns out that Detroit had Nickleback, while The Cheese that is Green Bay had an actual quarterback. Like a Honey Badger, Aaron Rodgers don’t care, he just carve you up like Thanksgiving turkey.

Today there are already great games on. I was just talking to Marcy and, during the phone call, there were claims of both good and bad touchdowns in the Big Blue/Ohio game. Yeah, the Buckfucks do not even rate being referred to as Ohio State any more. Michigan gonna do the Hokey

Pokey on dem Buckeyes.

Soon the JoePas will be taking on Russell Wilson and the somewhat inconsistent Badgers. There is a side of me that would not mind the young kids who are the Penn State team winning this game and shoving it in the face of a lot of hyperventilated crap. But the football side of me thinks Wilson and the Badgers are a lot better team. I will go with that.

Also, this weekend is the final ring in The Circus. Yes, it is the Brazilian Grand Prix. Sebastian Vettel has now broken the impossible record, and claimed his 15th pole for the season. the previous record was taken by a ground effects car that simply had an unfair advantage on the other teams in the field; Vettel's record is straight up. It is something special, along the lines of a Triple Crown winner, except for being the top one ever. Truly special. Hats off to young Vettel. Yes, his equipment has been superior, but still so was that of his teammate, Mark Webber, and Vettel has wiped the floor not only with competitors, but Webber as well. I will not say "unparalleled" in the history of motorsport, but is there are parallels, there are damn few of them. It is really something special. There was Fangio, Clark (even if cut short), Senna and then Schumacher. For Vettel to come on the heels so quickly after an all time legend like Schumi is unreal. Again, hats off.

I am apoplectic on a couple of stories, and one of them involves newly appointed Penn State "investigator" Louis Freeh. As to the other, has anybody else noticed the similarity between Dominique Strauss-Kahn and Emilio Largo (also "Eric the Red" for It Takes a Thief fans)? I am, disappointingly, but predictably, off in the tall grass trying to figure out what in the world is going on in both. So this is a placeholder for all the Lugnuts that are the Wheelhouse to lay down some shameful Trash in the meantime. Do not disappoint people!

Trash it up, and further analysis will likely

follow later! Also, to cleanse the palate of that fucking Nickleback crap, please enjoy some early Bob Seger System.

NATO HELICOPTER ATTACK KILLS UP TO 28 AT PAKISTANI BORDER POST, SUPPLY CROSSINGS CLOSED

In September of 2010, the US and Pakistan faced a crisis in relations after the killing of two Pakistani soldiers at a border outpost.

Pakistan closed the Torkham supply crossing through the Khyber Pass as a result of the incident. Today, Pakistan has closed both the Torkham and the Chaman crossings, indicating a very strong response to an incident in which up to 28 have been killed at a Pakistani border post.

The Washington Post describes the situation in this way:

The Pakistani army on Saturday accused NATO helicopters of firing on two Pakistani border checkpoints and killing 24 soldiers, and officials quickly closed a key border crossing used by convoys carrying supplies to Afghanistan.

The attack, which took place early Saturday in the Mohmand region of Pakistan's tribal belt along the Afghan border, seemed certain to mark a new downturn in the ever-rocky U.S.-Pakistan alliance. NATO troops battling militants in Afghanistan coordinate border operations with the Pakistani military,

but Pakistan does not allow coalition forces to enter or fire inside its territory without permission. Various Islamist militant factions are based in Pakistan's remote tribal areas, from where they can easily slip across the border to attack inside Afghanistan.

Pakistani officials issued swift condemnations. The powerful army chief, Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, said in a statement that the firing was an unprovoked act of "aggression" that prompted Pakistani troops to fire in self-defense. Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said the matter would be "taken up by the foreign ministry, in the strongest terms, with NATO and the U.S."

We learn from the Express Tribune that the order to close at least the Torkham crossing was not a local decision:

Official sources confirmed the suspension of supplies, adding that all containers were stopped at the Takhta Baig check post in Jamrud tehsil of Khyber Agency.

"We have suspended the supply and will not let even a single container move ahead," the official added.

"We have stopped NATO supplies after receiving orders from the federal government," Mutahir Hussain, a senior administration official in Khyber tribal region, on the Afghan border, told AFP. "Supply trucks are being sent back to Peshawar."

The Reuters description of the incident tells us the Chaman crossing also is closed:

NATO supply trucks and fuel tankers bound for Afghanistan were stopped at Jamrud town in the Khyber tribal region

near the city of Peshawar hours after the raid, officials said.

“We have halted the supplies and some 40 tankers and trucks have been returned from the check post in Jamrud,” Mutahir Zeb, a senior government official, told Reuters.

/snip/

The border crossing at Chaman in Baluchistan was also closed, Frontier Corps officials said.

It would appear that the US knows it has made a huge mistake. The Washington Post article carries this apology from ISAF Commander John Allen:

“This incident has my highest personal attention and my commitment to thoroughly investigate it to determine the facts,” said General John R. Allen, commander of the International Security Assistance Force. “My most sincere and personal heartfelt condolences go out to the families and loved ones of any members of Pakistan Security Forces who may have been killed or injured.”

The Post also cites Pakistani media as reporting that there may also have been civilian casualties, which, if true, would fan anti-US feelings in Pakistan even more.

Furthermore, NATO also is not even engaging in its usual dance of first denying responsibility and then admitting it later. From Reuters via Dawn:

A spokesman for Nato-led troops in Afghanistan confirmed that Nato aircraft had been called in to support troops during an incident near the border with Pakistan, and its forces were “highly likely” responsible for deaths of Pakistani soldiers.

“Close air support was called in, in the development of the tactical situation, and it is what highly likely caused the Pakistan casualties,” said Brigadier General Carsten Jacobson, spokesman for the Nato-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

The closing of Torkham for 10 days last year did not harm the US supply lines significantly, even though there was the huge accumulation of trucks seen in the photo above and a number of fuel tankers were attacked and burned in various locations throughout Pakistan in what appeared to be an intentional lowering of security along the usual transport routes through the country.

Closing both major crossings poses a larger threat to supplies, however, as about half of NATO’s supplies come into Afghanistan over the ground through Pakistan. The key developments to watch in this closing are how long it lasts and whether convoys are attacked throughout the country again, indicating security has been lowered once again.

THE TWO SCARY IRAN PLOT COMPLAINTS: A COMPARISON

As I wrote on Wednesday, earlier this month, the government released Manssor Arbabsiar’s original complaint in the Scary Iran Plot. As I showed, comparing the original with the amended complaint reveals that the government tried to hide the roles of Arbabsiar’s brother and several western banks (possibly including Chase) in transferring the money for the plot.

A comparison of the two complaint shows a number of interesting things, which I’ll detail below.

But the two most striking details are the complete absence of any mention of Gholam Shakuri in the original complaint and the complaint's silence on the opium deal that formed part of Arbabsiar and Narc's discussions.

Remember what I've observed before: four of the five charges against Arbabsiar are conspiracy charges which couldn't be charged without evidence of another conspirator. Now, I expected to see a lot more implicating Shakuri in the second complaint. After all, along with getting a confession during the period when Arbabsiar purportedly waived his Miranda rights, they also got him to make 3 calls to Shakuri that, while they were inconclusive about whether Shakuri knew of an assassination, make it clear he did know about the transfer of \$100,000. But the original complaint doesn't even include the information at ¶33(d) in the amended complaint showing Shakuri delivering more funds to Arbabsiar (and therefore, not surprisingly, the earlier complaint does not include ¶3(c) claiming the earlier funding was one of the overt acts in this conspiracy). In fact, the only co-conspirator alleged in the first complaint is Arbabsiar's cousin, Abdul Reza Shahlai, described as CC-1. Now, I assume the government has a ton of intelligence-derived evidence in this case they don't want to show us. But in their original complaint, they show very little real evidence of a conspiracy. Which makes Arbabsiar's "cooperation" all the more striking, given that that cooperation forms the key evidence (at least that we've seen) for most of the charges against him.

The complaint's silence on the drug deal is just as interesting. I had speculated that they might have charged Arbabsiar on trafficking charges and used the threat of hard time to convince him to waive Miranda and flesh out the assassination plot. But obviously that's wrong; they didn't include the drug charges in the earlier complaint. So why would the government not charge the Quds Force on efforts to set up drug deals with Los Zetas? Two possibilities are,

first, that longer term drug deals are the basis for Arbabsiar's relationship with Narc; revealing that would damage the story line that Arbabsiar just found Narc by accident. A closely related possibility is that the FBI and DEA had recruited Arbabsiar to set up these deals as a way to infiltrate Quds Force, in which case Arbabsiar would be granted immunity for such things. Or maybe they just wanted to keep the focus tightly on the flashy part of the plot?

In any case, here are the other differences, laid out by paragraph (unless specified, the numbering comes from the amended complaint, which has more paragraphs).

Intro and ¶14. Two different agents wrote these complaints. James F. Walsh Jr, who has been a Special Agent since just September 2004, wrote the original complaint (this article refers to an FBI Special Agent who was probably Houston-based in 2005). O. Robert Woloszyn, who has been a Special Agent since March 1999, wrote the second complaint. In spite of having two different ostensible authors, though, the language is almost exactly the same; for the most part Woloszyn just copied over Walsh's language. That's one thing that makes amendments so interesting.

¶1, •. The amended complaint describes the start date of the conspiracy "spring 2011," as compared to the "May 2011" date in the original complaint. That may reflect earlier conversations Arbabsiar had with Quds Force figures revealed in his confession.

¶3(a-c). As noted, the amended complaint replaces the origin of the money—probably a European bank—with "a foreign entity." And the amended complaint adds language about Arbabsiar's spending money being part of the over conspiracy.

¶4, ¶6. In the original complaint, this paragraph says the \$100,000 money transfer was "as consideration" or "in exchange for an agreement to" commit the murder. In the amended

complaint, it describes it as “partial consideration” for doing so. Though both use the phrase “down-payment” in ¶16. Note, too, that the amended complaint makes it clear the Ambassador in question was from Saudi Arabia; in the original complaint, the Ambassador was described to come from “a particular Middle Eastern country.” Just a thought: given how vague the reference to the target is and given that Israel, the other target country, was also referred to as a “Middle Eastern country,” is it possible the target was at one point the Israeli Ambassador, Dr. Michael Oren?

¶16. In the original complaint, Arbabsiar is described as “a citizen of the United States born in Iran.” In the amended complaint, he is described as “a naturalized citizen of the United States who holds both a United States and an Iranian passport.” Perhaps they changed this because the latter formulation might suggest dual loyalties. Perhaps his citizenship has been treated as some negotiating chip (which would almost certainly be the case if Arbabsiar had been an informant at some time).

¶17. The amended complaint includes a paragraph on the Quds Force. I guess that’s for our benefit?

¶18 [note, this is where the numbering for the two complaints diverges]. In the original complaint, Narc’s response to Arbabsiar’s question about Narc’s knowledge of explosives, is that “he indeed knowledgeable with respect to C-4 explosives.” In the amended complaint, they take out the word “indeed.” Now, maybe this change is nothing. But remember, this conversation was purportedly not taped—at least not by Narc. The “indeed” makes it sound like a direct quote. Furthermore, it would seem to suggest a prior basis for Arbabsiar to know that he had C-4 experience—perhaps just what Narc’s purported aunt had told Arbabsiar, perhaps from some other representation Narc had already made to Arbabsiar, or perhaps previous knowledge. Who knows?

¶18 footnote 1. In the original complaint, the footnote doesn't specify that Narc's prior charge was in a US state.

¶22(c) adds both the description of which particular country Arbabsiar's country "had taken certain unspecified actions relating to a bombing in," naming Iraq. And adds the reference back to ¶17, which (as I've noted, is a new paragraph). Given that the way Arbabsiar seems to have been speaking from a contested Treasury Department script here, I find the emphasis notable. Also, as noted, the reference in the original complaint is to CC-1, not "Arbarbsiar's cousin, showing that the FBI believed they had implicated Shahlai more directly in this plot than they appear to have in the amended complaint.

¶23 footnote 7. There are two differences in the bracketed comments here. In the original complaint, the bracket describing that the government that Shahlai worked for was "presumably of Iran," whereas the amended complaint removes the "presumably." And in the amended complaint, the bracket describing what intelligence service Shahlai was working "like" specified it was a non-Iranian service. This change is, IMO, one of the most significant. As I have noted, the FBI interpretation of a related passage from the same meeting—which reads "[ARBABSIAR's co-conspirators in Iran] they pay this government"—seems to misread the passage, stating that it proves Shahlai was being paid by Iran rather than paying it or another government. Now we learn that another reference presented as a clear tie between Shahlai and Iran is not so clear as the amended complaint suggests. Now, I have suggested that the earlier misreading might reflect this was a rogue plot, backed by some other government (maybe Iraq, for example). While ESL issues are likely one of the factors here, what does seem clear is the tie between Shahlai's ties to Iran with regards to this plot are weaker than claimed.

¶23(d). As noted, this entire paragraph—describing Shakuri’s involvement in Arbabsiar’s funding—is new to the amended complaint. Presumably, the government either didn’t need to present Arbabsiar’s early funding as part of the conspiracy, or just needed to add it to shore up the evidence against Shakuri, which is of course, their necessary tie to Quds Force.

Original ¶32. As is obvious, everything from amended ¶33—describing Arbabsiar’s arrest in JFK—is new. The original complaint leaves off with the description of Arbabsiar boarding “a plane in a foreign country, bound for Mexico.” So this complaint was seemingly written as he was in transit between Iran and Mexico (or possible en route to the US).

IN THANKS FOR MICHIGAN’S BOUNTY



Two years ago, I made a concerted effort to cook

our entire Thanksgiving Dinner, save for spices and olive oil, with products from MI.

I’ve moved twice since then, but found this year that I almost pulled it off without trying (I didn’t use MI flour and butter).

Here are some of the great farmers and producers we’ll be thanking tonight for their bounty:

Crane Dance Farm: We’ve come to rely on this Animal Welfare Certified farm for most of our

meat and had the opportunity to tour the farm back in September, when we met the turkey (above) and bacon (right) we'll be eating tonight, as well as the hens who laid the eggs in our pumpkin pie. This is one of those farms that cycle their stock (pigs follow chickens follow cows) to optimize the use of the land. Did you know chickens like to wallow around in the dirt if they're able?



Hilhof Dairy: I've never been to this farm, but I'd like to, because their milk and cream tastes amazing, with a real depth of creamy flavor.

Blueberry Heritage Farms: When we moved to west MI, we moved to blueberry country. This particular farm, which does some organic berries, also sells cranberries in big 2 pound boxes. So in addition to the cranberry-apple chutney we'll be eating tonight, we'll be eating lots of cranberry goodies for the next several weeks.

Ham Family Farm: Since we didn't do a CSA this year, we got the veggies for tonight's feast from a range of farmers at the Fulton Street Farmer's Market. One we buy from a lot—Charlie Ham—talked me into brussel sprout leaves this year, rather than brussel sprouts themselves. The leaves look like collard greens and have the bitterness of the brussel sprouts to set off the sweet and rich food, but also has a hint of sweetness to it. Plus, I figure it'll cut down on work to just saute the greens.

Brys Estate Wines: Between a great wine dinner we had at Salt of the Earth restaurant and some trips up to Sleeping Bear Dunes, we've been trying more Brys Estate wines. I've got some

wines I mistakenly didn't get sent waiting for us at the winery. So tonight, we'll just have some Riesling (along with an unoaked chardonnay from Bowers Harbor and some Old School Red from Peninsula Cellars).

Founders Brewing Company: And of course, we now live in beer mecca, just over a mile from Founders. There might be some Reds Rye PA in my future, particularly if the Kitties don't win this afternoon. Also likely if they win.

May your bounty be as wonderful as ours today!
Happy Thanksgiving.

Update: I've had a request to explain how I use bacon on my turkey. As I've explained, I think the bacon serves the same purpose as brining (slow application of salt), without the meat losing it's "bite" as I think can happen with brining. Plus, it protects the breast from over-browning. And best of all, you can pick it off at that point of the afternoon where you start to get really hungry but don't want to ruin your appetite. And once you've cleaned the bacon off, it'll brown nicely.

As you put the bird in the oven, cover it with bacon. I will use a full pound for a big bird, which is what we have this year (14 pounds).

I'll tent my turkey for about an hour, then let the bacon brown for about 1.5 hours, and by then I'll be ready for snacking. Which, after a couple of trips back to the oven to strip the bacon, should leave about an hour for the bird to brown.

IS THE GOVERNMENT HIDING CHASE'S

COOPERATION IN THE SCARY IRAN PLOT?

As I noted in this post, earlier this month, the government unsealed the redacted first complaint in the Scary Iran Plot. I will do a post summarizing the differences between the original and amended complaint later (short version: in a number of ways seeing both complaints weakens their case slightly against Quds Force).

But in this post, I want to suggest—and this is speculation—that the secrecy about the complaint may serve, in part, to protect JP Morgan Chase.

The redactions in the original complaint are minimal, most of which hide the details by which Arbabsiar transferred money from what appears to be a European bank to the FBI account. These redactions are:

¶3a: An 8-character word modifying “country” describing the bank from which the first installment of money was sent. I believe the redacted word is “European.”

¶3b: An 8-character word modifying “country” describing the bank from which the first installment of money was sent. I believe the redacted word is “European.”

Footnote 5: A 14-character word modifying “country” that we know to be “Latin American” (a reference to the planned attacks in Argentina). A 14-character word modifying “country” that is probably “Middle-Eastern” (the reference to planned attacks on Israeli targets), followed by a longer redaction that may describe the location of the intended Israeli targets.

¶22c: A 5-character word modifying “bank” that—the amended complaint makes clear—is a US bank.

¶25: An 8-character word modifying “country” that is likely “European” and a 9-character word naming the bank in question.

¶27: An 8-character word naming a bank from which the second chunk of money was transferred. Since the Amended Complaint makes it clear the money came from two different foreign entities (and since the lengths of the redaction appear to be different), this must be a different bank.

In other words, the only things redacted from the original complaint are the other intended targets—which have already been made public—and the details surrounding the transfer of money from Arbabsiar (or his brother) to the FBI Account.

Now, generally, the redactions may just be an attempt to hide the fact that the FBI used SWIFT to track the money from Arbabsiar to the FBI or that one or more European partners helped them make build this case. But if the government's allegations are correct and this plot was orchestrated by the Quds Force and Abdul Reza Shahlai specifically (both of whom were and are designated terrorists) then all of the banks involved in the transfer would presumably be party to the transfer of money that ultimately derived from sanctioned entities (though by laundering through Arbabsiar and his brother that may not have been apparent to them).

And I can't help but note that one of the big international banks in Manhattan with a 5-character name is Chase. And I can't help but note something I already pointed out: roughly two weeks after the transfers were completed but before Arbabsiar's arrest, JP Morgan Chase agreed to pay \$88.3 million to settle charges it had violated sanctions against Sudan, Cuba, Liberia and ... Iran. Now, the sanction violations JPMC admitted to with respect to Iran were in 2009. It also admitted to failing to stop wire transfers from sanctioned entities in 2006-2008. But I do wonder whether the coincidence between these transfers—allegedly supporting the assassination of the Saudi Ambassador—and JPMC's sanction suggest either that the government got Chase to cooperate in this investigation as part of their settlement, or that Treasury forced

JPMC to settle based on their role in accepting wired money for such an alleged crime.

In any case, the big thing that the government seems most intent on hiding are which European and American banks are still accepting wire transfers that ultimately (allegedly) tie back to the Quds Force. Because as we know, the government's job is to hide evidence of the banksters' crimes, not prosecute them.

DID THE US COERCE A MIRANDA WAIVER (AGAIN) BY THREATENING FAMILY MEMBERS?

The NYT reveals that the lawyer for Manssor Arbabsiar has suggested she will challenge the voluntary nature of Arbabsiar's 12 days of waiving his Miranda rights.

Mr. Arbabsiar's lawyer, Sabrina Shroff, said in a recent interview that she intended to seek a hearing on whether the "consent was freely given, or whether it was unlawfully extracted," given the gap in time between her client's arrest and his initial court appearance on Oct. 11."There has to be a deep concern about the voluntariness of consent to that long a period of detention," she said.

Her comments provide an early look at the defense's legal strategy in a case that has gained widespread attention because of questions over Iran's alleged role, and because of the wealth of information that prosecutors said they

obtained from Mr. Arbabsiar after he waived his Miranda rights.

[snip]

The interrogation of Mr. Arbabsiar was cited in a sealed, four-page letter that the office of Preet Bharara, the United States attorney in Manhattan, sent to the court on Oct. 6, while questioning was under way. The letter said Mr. Arbabsiar had “without counsel, knowingly and voluntarily waived his Miranda rights and his right to a speedy presentment” each day, and had signed waivers to that effect.

The letter, now public, described how agents were “vigorously and expeditiously pursuing leads relating to the defendant’s statements,” and said “regular access” to Mr. Arbabsiar had allowed them “to promptly verify with him the accuracy of information developed in the investigation.”

The story led me to check the docket, only to discover they’ve unsealed Arbabsiar’s first complaint. I’ll have much more to say about the unsealed complaint (including the weaknesses it shows in the US case that this was an attack primarily directed against the US).

But for now, the complaint suggests one means they used to coerce a man who had insisted on legal representation in at least four prior brushes with the law to waive his Miranda rights in a case that risks putting him away for life: by threatening to take action against his brother.

As I have long noted, the fact that the person described as “Individual 1” in Arbabsiar’s amended complaint was not charged is a puzzle. After all, that person allegedly served as a middleman in a conspiracy to kill the Saudi Ambassador. So why wasn’t he charged or sanctioned by the Treasury?

Well, this original complaint may provide a hint why the person wasn't charged and also why Arbabsiar waived his right to a lawyer even though he had never done so in the past.

CS-1 and ARBABSIIAR then discussed how ARBABSIIAR would pay CS-1. ARBABSIIAR asked CS-1 what bank he planned to use, and CS-1 stated that he would give ARBABSIIAR "an account number." At a later time during the same conversation, ARBABSIIAR stated that the "money is [in] Iran," and that he [ARBABSIIAR] had received a call indicating that the money would be at his brother's house. When ARBABSIIAR called his brother, "he [ARBABSIIAR's brother] said he [ARBABSIIAR's brother] had received "the money at nine in the morning."

As I've speculated might be one possibility, in other words, the FBI had evidence that put Arbabsiar's brother squarely in the middle of the alleged conspiracy. And that fact is one of the things the government tried to hide with its unusual sealing. {Update: as I'll explain later, I think Arbabsiar's brother wired the money through Europe, which would seem to implicate him to a greater degree.]

While we don't know for sure that Arbabsiar "cooperated" to protect his brother, we do know that is the government's favored tactic for making people cooperate. To get Najibullah Zazi to cooperate, they charged his father. To get the UndieBomber to cooperate, they got his family involved (using who knows what kind of coercion over Abdulmutallab's father, the banker). To get Faisal Shahzad to cooperate, the Pakistanis rounded up first Shahzad's father-in-law, and then his father and (presumably) his wife and child.

And frankly, this is just a continuation of the tactics the government used when they discovered waterboarding Khalid Sheikh Mohammed 183 times wouldn't coerce cooperation, but kidnapping his

sons and threatening to kill them would.

Now, we will only see whether the civilian legal system believes coercing someone to testify by threatening their family members amounts to a Miranda waiver if this case goes to trial: with everyone else, Zazi, Abdulmutallab, and Shahzad, the government got plea deals before any evidence about why the accused person “waived” his Miranda rights.

But we do seem to have more and more evidence that this is a favored tactic of our own government.

MICHELLE BACHMANN'S NUCLEAR THEFT

When Michelle Bachmann announced at the GOP National Security debate last night that there were 15 Pakistani nuclear sites that might be accessible to terrorists...

BLITZER: All right. You're a member of the Intelligence Committee. Do you think, as Governor Perry has said, that Pakistan should no longer receive U.S. aid because they've shown they're not a good friend, ally of the United States?

BACHMANN: Pakistan has been the epicenter of dealing with terrorism. They are, as Governor Huntsman said, there are al-Qaeda training grounds there. There's also the Haqqani network that can be trained there as well. And they also are one of the most violent, unstable nations that there is. We have to recognize that 15 of the sites, nuclear sites are available or are potentially penetrable by jihadists. Six attempts have already been made on nuclear sites. This is more than an

existential threat. We have to take this very seriously. [my emphasis]

... I thought that she might make a really good source for journalists. After all, she is a member of the House Intelligence Committee, so she would be in briefings on the subject. And she often doesn't seem able to control what she says, so it's possible she would just leak information like this without realizing she had leaked.

That said, unless she was the source for the Jeffrey Goldberg/Marc Ambinder blockbuster article on "The Ally from Hell," she wasn't the first person to leak such information. Indeed, Bachman's comment parroted the language Goldberg and Ambinder used exactly.

Pakistan is an unstable and violent country located at the epicenter of global jihadism,

[snip]

At least six facilities widely believed to be associated with Pakistan's nuclear program have already been targeted by militants. In November 2007, a suicide bomber attacked a bus carrying workers to the Sargodha air base, which is believed to house nuclear weapons; the following month, a school bus was attacked outside Kamra air base, which may also serve as a nuclear storage site; in August 2008, Pakistani Taliban suicide bombers attacked what experts believe to be the country's main nuclear-weapons-assembly depot in Wah cantonment. If jihadists are looking to raid a nuclear facility, they have a wide selection of targets: Pakistan is very secretive about the locations of its nuclear facilities, but satellite imagery and other sources suggest that there are at least 15 sites across Pakistan at which jihadists could find

warheads or other nuclear materials. [my emphasis]

So the most logical explanation is that her staffers prepped her for the debate using language taken directly from the Goldberg/Ambinder article, whether or not she had been briefed on the threat to Pakistan's nukes originally.

All that said, such an obvious explanation begs the question of why Ambinder's colleague, Yochi Dreazen, had this to say in a fact check of Bachmann's comment.

During the CNN debate, Bachmann said that 15 Pakistani nuclear sites were vulnerable to jihadist attacks, and that six of the sites had previously come under some form of Islamist attack. U.S. intelligence and military officials believe that Pakistan has 15 nuclear sites, but no U.S. official has publicly said that all of the sites were vulnerable to militant attack or confirmed that any of them had previously come under any form of jihadist attack.

Sure, no US official has publicly said that all the sites are vulnerable or that 6 had come under attack. But the National Journal (in partnership with the Atlantic) has said it, presumably based on the anonymous leaking of at least one US official. And why suggest Bachmann's statement was inaccurate when NJ itself had first published the information?

Taking the NJ's comments together, we ought to assume Bachmann's comment was, generally, accurate, but the NJ doesn't want to take responsibility for having published what Bachmann has now magnified by using it as a debate zinger.

TRICKSY TURKEY DAY TRASH WITH NICKELBACK!

[youtube]Lj4NVYtzlQA[/youtube]

I'm officially launching a pre-emptive sneak attack on Turkey Day Trash because tomorrow, the undefeated Green Bay Packers come to the Lion's Den to be feasted. And to neutralize Packers loyalists in these parts—yeah, I mean you, bmaz and Phred—I'm rolling out the Detroit Kitties' secret weapon.

Nickelback!

I know you've all been bitching and petitioning and whatnot for the last month to try to get a real band for halftime.

But none of you seem to understand the point. The point is not to entertain you with music!! The point is to neutralize Aaron Rodgers with banality! If all goes well, Rodgers will get all woozy-headed like he used to get with his near weekly concussions, only this time there won't be any risk of physical injury to Rodgers.

Oh sure, we've got things planned to slow down Rodgers before halftime, too. You think we hired Ndomukong Suh for nothing? (Mostly, though, his job is to draw double teams so Cliff Avril can sack Rodgers.) But the way I figure it, Matt Stafford's injured finger will lead to a pick or hopefully no more than two (Charles Woodson, remember you were a Michigander before you were a Packer, okay?), so the Kitties' D is going to have to return the favor.

Thus, Nickelback. Sorry about that, folks. But I hope you understand this is a Division game against an undefeated team. We gotta use any advantage we can get.

In any case, I think the game will come down to three runners: James Starks, Randall Cobb, and Kevin Smith. Starks, because a knee injury might keep him out. Randall Cobb, because Detroit has been sucking it up on return coverage of late. And Kevin Smith because he went from inactive to NFC Offensive Player of the week in the last 2 weeks.

Anyway, on to dinner, which is what we'll all be doing while the 'Boys host the Fins.

Because even if the Packers-Kitties game doesn't live up to billing, the HarBowl is sure to be a cracker. (Well, it will be a cracker for those of us who get NFL Network; for the rest of you, I hope your pumpkin pie is worthy substitute.) It features John Harbaugh and his Ravens hosting baby brother Jim's Niners for Thanksgiving dinner. If this were a normal game in a normal week, I'd definitely take the Niners in this game. They are playing that well this year even on the road. But this is a short week and Niners have to travel east.

Then again, Ray Lewis may be out again with his ouchy toe. And the Ravens have looked as inconsistent this year as every other team in the AFC (aside from perhaps the Texans pre-Schaub loss).

Ultimately, I gotta go with the NFC and the Wolverine coach over his bro.

Go Kitties!