

THE INTELLIGENCE PROPAGANDA COMPLEX

Matt Apuzzo has a remarkable story about the efforts DOJ is making to protect the records of United Against Nuclear Iran, a purported NGO that shames entities potentially doing business with Iran.

Greek shipping magnate Victor Restis is suing the group for defamation, claiming they falsely accused him of being an Iranian front.

The group said it had uncovered a letter proving there was a plan to do business in Iran. It also accused Mr. Restis of using his ships in support of Iran's [oil industry](#).

Mr. Restis said the letter was fraudulent, the illicit Iranian deal never existed, and his ships made only authorized humanitarian shipments. He accused the group of shaking down companies for donations; the group in turn accused him of being a "master criminal."

The group said it based its accusations on "valid research, credible documents, distinguished relationships, and pre-eminent sourcing." In court, Mr. Restis demanded that the group disclose those documents and its relationships.

Soon after that demand, Mr. Restis said he was approached by an Israeli businessman, Rami Ungar, with no direct connection to United Against Nuclear Iran.

According to court documents filed by Mr. Restis's lawyers, Mr. Ungar knew details about the case and said he was "authorized to try to resolve the issues" on behalf of the group's supporters.

It was not clear who those supporters were. Like many nonprofit groups, its donor list is secret. Mr. Restis's lawyers said in a letter to the judge in April that they had uncovered information that United Against Nuclear Iran "is being funded by foreign interests."

DOJ suggested they might claim a law enforcement exception to protect the files, though it has not yet formally claimed such a privilege. That might suggest the files are Treasury files that may soon be used to impose sanctions on Restis. Or perhaps it means they have files that don't meet Treasury's standards for imposing sanctions, and UANI exists to shame people where sanctions are unavailable. In any case, Restis wants to know how Ungar got them; I'd like to know precisely what UANI is getting from whom.

Apuzzo lists some of the characters who are behind the group: former Mideast Peace Envoy Dennis Ross, Fran Townsend, and Joe Lieberman. Otto Reich, whose role in Iran-Contra (as opposed to his role in trying to overthrow Hugo Chavez in the 2002 coup) involved illegally funneling taxpayer dollars for the purposes of lobbying, is of particular note. Restis is particularly interested in interviewing UANI advisor Meir Dagan, the long-time head of Mossad; Restis believes Dagan provided the documents to Ungar. In addition, Richard Dearlove, who was in charge of sexing up the British case for war in 2003 when he was MI6, also advises the group.

in other words, it's a classic case of a quasi-governmental group, one that apparently plays an extra-legal purpose in the campaign to isolate Iran (to be fair, most, though not all, of its advisors have worked hard to stave off war). And Restis' efforts to get some kind of justice against it may be stymied by US claims they've got privileged interests in the case.

The entire episode raises some very good

questions about what goes into isolating our
adversaries.