

THE CHECKERED NEOCON HISTORY OF MANSOOR IJAZ, INSTIGATOR OF PAKISTAN'S "MEMOGATE"

[youtube]http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFoUCUE6-U0[/youtube]

As I noted yesterday, Josh Rogin has been doing outstanding work on the issue now rocking Pakistan, a memo purportedly sent from the highest levels of the Pakistani civilian government seeking US support for shutting down the branch of Pakistan's ISI that deals with the Taliban and the Haqqani Network and weakening Pakistan's military. Now that Rogin has confirmed existence of the memo (and today has even provided a copy of it), I'd like to return to the figure who got this whole scandal started, Mansoor Ijaz. Here is information Rogin dug up regarding Mansoor Ijaz back on November 8, when Michael Mullen was still denying existence of the memo:

This is only the latest time that Ijaz has raised controversy concerning his alleged role as a secret international diplomat. In 1996, he was accused of trying to extort money from the Pakistani government in exchange for delivering votes in the U.S. House of Representatives on a Pakistan-related trade provision.

Ijaz, who runs the firm Crescent Investment Management LLC in New York, has been an interlocutor between U.S. officials and foreign government for years, amid constant accusations of financial conflicts of interest. He reportedly arranged meetings between

U.S. officials and former Pakistani Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif.

He also reportedly gave over \$1 million to Democratic politicians in the 1990s and attended Christmas events at former President Bill Clinton's White House. Ijaz has ties to former CIA Director James Woolsey and his investment firm partner is Reagan administration official James Alan Abrahamson.

In the mid-1990s, Ijaz traveled to Sudan several times and claimed to be relaying messages from the Sudanese regime to the Clinton administration regarding intelligence on bin Laden, who was living there at the time. Ijaz has claimed that his work gave the United States a chance to kill the al Qaeda leader but that the Clinton administration dropped the ball. National Security Advisor Sandy Berger, who served under Clinton, has called Ijaz's allegations "ludicrous and irresponsible."

Those are some pretty damning allegations.

Before moving to the detail from the source Rogin linked on Ijaz's attempt to get \$15 million from Pakistan in return for securing a positive vote in the House of Representatives for the Brown Amendment back in 1995, it's worth getting the context for this bill. From the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation:

*1985- Congress adopts the Pressler Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. This amendment bans most economic and military assistance to Pakistan unless the President can certify on an annual basis that Pakistan does not possess a nuclear device and that U.S. aid would reduce the risk of Pakistan possessing such a device.

Although Pakistan disclosed in 1984 that it could enrich uranium for nuclear weapons, and revealed in 1987 that it could assemble a nuclear device, the U.S. would continue to certify Pakistan's non-nuclear status until 1990.

*1990- Pressler Amendment sanctions are finally imposed against Pakistan, which lost strategic significance following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

*1995- Congress passes the Brown Amendment, which provides for the delivery of \$368 million of military equipment purchased but not received by Pakistan before the imposition of Pressler amendment sanctions in 1990. The amendment also exempts several forms of assistance from the embargo against Pakistan, including for counter-narcotics purposes; for military-to-military contact, training, humanitarian, and civic assistance projects; for peacekeeping and other multilateral obligations; and for anti-terrorism assistance. The amendment passes despite evidence of Chinese transfers of nuclear and missile components and technologies to Pakistan.

Here is the information Rogin found in an archive of old articles from Dawn:

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the Pakistan Embassy in Washington told "Dawn" on Wednesday night that Mr Ijaz, who is chairman of the New York-based Crescent Investment Management, is vilifying and damaging Pakistan, because the embassy denied him 15 million dollars he had demanded to deliver votes in the United States House of Representatives for the passage of the Brown Amendment.

The spokesman said that in 1995, after

the Brown Amendment had made it through the US senate and then had to be voted on by the House, Mr. Ijaz came to the embassy along with his lawyers with a proposal which smacked of a “sting operation”.

Elaborating on Mr Ijaz’s proposal, the spokesman said “Mr Ijaz wanted us to release fifteen million dollars for a satellite communications company R.D.D.A. which had done some work for Pakistan in 1979 for which they were not paid and they would sue the government to recover the monies”.

“Ijaz told us that in this way you will kill two birds with one stone, one we will ensure votes in the US House for the Brown Amendment and the other the company R.D.D.A. will not sue you”, the spokesman added.

The spokesman said that when Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi was given this proposal she saw it as a trap wherein Pakistan Government could land in bigger trouble; so she turned down Mr Mansoor Ijaz’s proposal saying that “it was illegal”.

Where do you suppose that Ijaz could have gotten the idea that he could buy votes in the House during Newt Gingrich’s time as Speaker in 1995? Perhaps it had something to do with this:

In 1995, Boehner handed out campaign checks from the tobacco industry to members on the House floor at a time when lawmakers were considering eliminating a tobacco subsidy.

As noted above, former CIA Chief James Woolsey is part of Ijaz’s Crescent Investment Management firm. Note that although Woolsey served from early 1993 to early 1995 under Clinton, he later was one of the original signatories to the neocon PNAC letter of 1998. It should also be

noted that Sourcewatch states that a significant portion of the investment funds managed by Crescent comes from OPEC nations and another arm of Crescent is heavily invested in “national security” technologies.

Moving on to the SourceWatch entry for Ijaz himself, we learn even more. It turns out that his father was “an early pioneer in developing the intellectual infrastructure of Pakistan’s nuclear program”. Ijaz also figured prominently in the efforts at National Review Online to associate Saddam Hussain with al Qaeda and was in a Citizens United film that was put forward in response to Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11*.

It should be no surprise then, that he also gets facetime on Fox News, as seen in the old clip above. Despite these strong neocon associations and right-wing leanings, Ijaz appears to contribute only to Democratic political candidates.

It is very interesting that the Pakistani government regarded Ijaz’s overture in 1995 as a sting intended to get them into trouble. That would be a very interesting explanation for his current “project”, as well. Considering his neocon associations and his attempts to support false intelligence in favor of the Iraq war, there seems to be a strong basis for coming to the conclusion that his actions are aimed at creating conditions that destabilize the situation in Pakistan even further and strengthen the military and ISI at the expense of the civilian government. After all, under those conditions his investments in “national security” technologies will be more likely to pay off.