

From



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Washington

Solarz, Seigel, Pakistan connection

MORE efforts to further consolidate the American grip over Pakistan, which today means helping Benazir Bhutto consolidate her still tenuous hold over political power in that sprawling country so strategically located, are underway here in the seat of the American empire.

Because of my own exposure earlier this year of the pro-Israeli links that exist to Bhutto through her personal friend and newly appointed Congressional lobbyist in Washington, Mark Siegel, information continues to be passed on to me about these efforts. The word here is "leaked".

Next month, for instance, Siegel and influential Congressman Stephen Solarz—one of Israel's staunchest friends and benefactors in the Congress—are orchestrating the next step in this complicated process of using the American connection to Pakistan for Israel's gain as well.

Already, it has now been learned, various groups organised by pro-Israeli American Jewish organisations in touch with Siegel—groups probably including Israelis as well—have been touring Pakistan in recent months.

And Congressman Solarz is getting ready to put forward a Congressional law that will tie American military and economic aid to the well-being of Benazir Bhutto herself.

Of course the phrasing will be far more general than that. There will be a lot of talk about "democratic processes," references to the great progress Pakistan has made in "restoring democracy", and hints at the importance of the growing US-Pakistan friendship.

But in the end the purpose of Solarz's amendment—which according to a Solarz adviser Bob Hathaway has been discussed with Mark Siegel in an ongoing way and "he thinks this would be very constructive"—is to put the Pakistani military and opposition on notice that any attempts to unseat Bhutto might result in an American aid cut-off.

Bhutto denies

Moreover, of course, the full capacity of the CIA and other arms of the American government—probably in co-ordination with the Israelis though hard information on this is very difficult to come by—is being enlisted to try to assure a long reign for Benazir Bhutto.

Though Bhutto has denied the importance of

Siegel in her political entourage, more facts are coming to light. Recently journalist Ahmad Hassan in a cover story in the publication *The Message International* published a personal memorandum from Mark Siegel to members of the Congress from the crucial days after the Pakistan election.

The November 23 memo is on Mark A. Siegel Associates stationary—the very public relations firm Bhutto has denied hiring—and urges members of the Congress to intervene on Bhutto's behalf.

"Telephone calls from Islamabad, Pakistan, during the night have given me great cause for concern," Siegel wrote. "As the acting President fails to fulfil his constitutional responsibility and calls upon Benazir Bhutto to form a government, the image of Pakistan is grossly damaged in the world community and the internal situation is totally destabilised...I urge you to contact Pakistani Ambassador Marker in Washington at 939-6200, the US State Department, and the US Ambassador Oakley in Islamabad to express your concern about the delay of the transfer. Much is at stake."

Now, less than a year later, Congressman Solarz is working ever more closely with Mark Siegel and looking to the so-called "Pressler Amendment" as the model for using Congress to pressure Pakistan. A few years back Congressman Pressler managed to get enacted into law a provision that the President must certify yearly that Pakistan does not have nuclear weapons.

Solarz amendment

Without such a certification, a unique procedure enacted specifically for Pakistan and not applicable to other American allies—Israel for instance—the law requires that American aid to Pakistan be halted.

Now Solarz, encouraged it seems by many of his pro-Israeli friends, and with the unwritten endorsement of Benazir Bhutto herself it appears, is preparing this new legislation. Maybe it will be called "the Solarz amendment".

Having already cornered Pakistan into substantially retrenching on its long-standing programme to develop nuclear weapons—at least a nuclear weapons capability to partially offset India's possession of these weapons—the next step seems to be to threaten any forces in

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Solarz, during his visit to Pakistan In January

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Pakistan who might be thinking of toppling Bhutto that American aid probably would not survive such a coup and furthermore that she will be supported with the full weight of the US.

The first step in this grand design has to do with the F-16s sale that the Bush administration announced on July 11. Solarz's goal is to attach language conditioning the sale on Bhutto's remaining in power. In short, no Bhutto, no F-16s.

According to Solarz, passage of such legislation will strengthen Bhutto's hand against any possible military coup. And he continues to maintain that position even though State Department officials believe the result of such legislation would be totally the opposite sending a loud message that the US is quite worried about Bhutto's ability to retain power.

No confidence

"It would be interpreted as a vote of no confidence in Pakistan in the viability of the current government" Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Teresita Schaffer testified in early August when asked her views, of such legislation. "You're basically telling the Pakistani government they're not going to make it," Mrs Schaffer specifically told Congressman Solarz.

The F-16s, if approved by Congress, would be delivered to Pakistan during the 1992 to 1996 time-period. So Solarz and his friends are

clearly making plans with a long time-frame in mind.

According to Solarz aide Bob Hathaway, "the amendment that the Congressman contemplates covers several eventualities, most importantly if there were a coup or if Pakistan were unable to get a Pressler certification" (i.e. to develop nuclear weapons).

"The Congressman, as Chairman of the Asia Sub-committee, believes that the Pressler amendment should be fully enforced," Hathaway insisted.

And that's precisely who Solarz has asked the Bush Administration whether in its view the Pressler amendment also applies to the sale of the F-16s; for if not then he wants to make sure his new amendment does.

Congress is in recess now for the rest of August.

But when September comes and Congress reconvenes, the Solarz-Siegel-Bhutto connection will go into high-gear as the new Pakistani Prime Minister continues to follow the advice of her American friends and allows the American Congress, with Israel's indirect help it seems, to further humble Pakistan in an effort to consolidate her own power.

Whether these people are real friends of Benazir Bhutto or have some other agendas of their own that may be connected to other longer-standing commitments, remains to be seen at this point.



Benazir with Bush during her visit to Washington