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The Bush "was he or wasn't he in Paris?" story is a CIA-backed attempt to deflect real investigation into 1980 deed

The 1980 race for prez: Iranelect?

By Mark A. Bruzonsky
Special to The Arab American News

ANALYSIS FROM WASHINGTON

Washington, D.C. - Just a few days before George Bush's heart started fluttering, the President was pictured in the Oval Office vehemently challenging reporters. What was on Bush's mind? He wanted the press to print his total and unequivocal denial that he was ever in Paris before the 1980 presidential election arranging with the Iranians to delay

releasing the hostages.

It was an interesting, possibly a very telling, episode. There was the President forcefully initiating this issue with the press during a "photo opportunity" when there aren't supposed to be questions. Moreover, the President wasn't even being asked, rather he was "volunteering" this particular denial.

In addition Bush was challenging the press to fully report his complete and total denunciation of the Paris story and then to stop reporting rumors about any such 1980 hostage deal.

When reporters tried to follow up with questions of their own — not about Bush's alleged trip but about the heart of the matter, whether or not the Reagan campaign was in

touch with the Iranians and making a deal — Bush completely refused to say anything further.

Quite clearly in retrospect, what the President wanted to accomplish that day was to focus public attention on that limited part of the scandal that placed Bush personally in Paris.

More recently, popular columnists Evans & Novak have reported that confidants of the President reported to Chief of Staff Sununu in the days before Bush was hospitalized that he didn't look himself and might be ill.

Evans & Novak speculated that the probable reason for the presidential blues at that time were the increasingly hostile questions being raised about Sununu himself for misuse of the prerogatives of

his position — most especially half a million dollars worth of free air travel.

But there's another explanation — a more credible one actually — as to why George Bush has been so anxious lately.

And far more importantly, there's another explanation as to why President Bush has been so determined to focus attention on the speculations that he was in Paris in 1980 as opposed to the basic question of whether or not the Reagan/Bush campaign undermined the Carter Administration by promising the Iranians a better arms-for-hostages deal if and when they came to power. (Such would explain both the release of the embassy hostages after Reagan's inauguration and the

See IRANELECT page 3

DIA: Looking for Arab American angels

By M. Kay Siblani

DETROIT - Elsie Peck, Assistant Curator in the Detroit Institute of Arts Department of Ancient Art, is hoping the largest Arab American community in the United States is harboring some hidden angels of mercy with art in their heart. As the politicians debate "do we or don't we" fund culture, the elected officials are already cutting the budgets of what they consider non-essential

collection and quite a good rug collection, to mention just a few.

Arab Americans interested in assisting the DIA can begin by becoming members of the Founders Society. That costs just \$30 for individuals or \$50 for families and among other things entitles you to year-round free admission. Then you can join The Antiquaries to demonstrate a special commitment to our own ancient art and to keep abreast of developments in that field and



So far, U.S. Mideast policy is
part of problem not solution



WASHINGTON



Iranelect...

Continued from page 1

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For if this basic story proves to be true, regardless of whether Bush himself was involved, then it can be argued that the Reagan/Bush campaign went far beyond acceptable political limits, much as Nixon did during the Watergate debacle.

IF CONGRESS REALLY WANTED TO UNRAVEL WHAT HAPPENED IN 1980 IT WOULD FIND AND SUBPOENA OSWALD LeWINTER FROM HIS GERMAN HIDE-A-WAY.

The other explanation for Bush's anxieties is that the long-rumored political scandal of 1980 — one with the potential to bring down Bush's Presidency just as Watergate brought down Richard Nixon — had resurfaced in its most virulent form yet. It was in the couple of days before Bush's hospitalization that the above mentioned incident in the Oval Office occurred.

Bits and pieces about the 1980 scandal had been coming forward in various ways for a long time. But finally, after all these years, the New York Times published an op-ed by a former National Security Council personality from the Carter days, Gary Sick, saying what others had said for a long time. And suddenly there was talk of a Congressional investigation.

And following on the Sick revelations and accusations there came the former Iranian President's tale that seems to confirm at least parts of what Sick has charged.

The last time this story had surfaced was during the 1988 campaign. At that time European journalists, especially the Washington correspondent of the well-known Der Spiegel German magazine, were about to publish what they had found out about 1980 when — quite out of the blue — a major new angle turned up. This new angle came from Oswald LeWinter, a man claiming to have been a high-ranking C.I.A. operative who personally knew that the current Republican candidate for President, none other than George Bush himself, had secretly gone to Paris to conclude the deal with the Iranians in the months leading up to the election.

LeWinter is a very shady fellow but he can spin quite a tale. And what happened back during the 1988

LeWINTER MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE ORIGINAL 1980 PLOT. HE'S NOW IN SEMI-HIDING IN GERMANY, THOUGH ASSOCIATED WITH A SMALL JEWISH GERMAN MAGAZINE

chasing after the Bush angle was too tempting to pass up, especially with Bush about to become president. The LeWinter caper seems in retrospect to have been a classic infiltration and disinformation effort — i.e., find out what they know and lead them astray, apparently having been contracted — by his former employer the C.I.A. — to plant the false story about Bush personally negotiating with the Iranians in Paris in 1980.

LeWinter may also have been involved in the original 1980 plot. He's now in semi-hiding in Germany, though associated with a small Jewish German magazine published in a suburb of Frankfurt.

In a sense, the press has taken a very long time to recover from being taken for this ride by LeWinter. There was never enough evidence to go with the story about Bush's role. But in the process of searching for a smoking gun which LeWinter insisted was there, the rest of the story somehow got put on hold. If Congress had the guts to really unravel what happened in 1980 it would find and subpoena Oswald LeWinter from his German hideaway.

And there was another angle as well to the Bush-in-Paris disinformation effort. If the story about the 1980 Republican deal with the Iranians had gotten too hot back in 1988, Bush was prepared to prove that he wasn't in Paris when he was said to have been. By suddenly coming forward and discrediting a major element of the overall story, so those in the C.I.A. and probably elsewhere in the Reagan/Bush Administration were planning at the time, Bush would have been able to create such doubt in the public mind that the whole 1980 scandal might somehow have faded away without exploding.

Anyway, such was probably the Bush game plan back during the last election, so I am told. Bush didn't have to take this step back in 1988 — for the story never caught on at that time, partly because of LeWinter's disinformation efforts.

But when today confronted with a press finally focusing on the 1980 scandal, albeit some 11 years later, Bush is now implementing that older strategy trying to make the veracity of all the rumors hinge on whether or not he was in Paris.

That particular issue Bush knows he can win. And that's why the multi-year efforts to prepare the way for just such developments as we are witnessing today.

More about LeWinter and both 1980 and 1988 in a future column.

Mark A. Bruzonsky's weekly syndicated column "From Washington" appears in a number of newspapers in the Middle East and in The Arab American News in the United States. The author can be reached at (202) 362-6033, by fax to (202) 362-6965, or on MCI Mail at MAB.

campaign was that he succeeded in leading a number of investigative reporters down the false trail of Bush and away from the true basic story itself.

For in the end, did it really matter if it was Bill Casey or George Bush or some other major personality who clinched the deal in Paris?

Nevertheless, chasing after the Bush angle was too tempting to pass up, especially with Bush about to become president. The LeWinter caper seems in retrospect to have been a classic infiltration and disinformation effort — i.e., find out what they know and lead them astray, apparently having been contracted — by his former employer the C.I.A. — to plant the false story about Bush personally negotiating with the Iranians in Paris in 1980.

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