

From



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What really happened in 1980?

Ask Oswald LeWinter



George Bush

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 at that time? He wanted the press to print his total and unequivocal denial that he was ever in Paris before the 1980 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 rumours 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.

Quiet clearly in retrospect, what the President wanted to accomplish that day was to focus public attention on that limited part of the scandal that place 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 hospitalised that he didn't look himself and might be ill.

Evans & Novak have speculated that the probable reason for the Presidential blues at that time were the increasing 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 had 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.

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 had done during the Watergate debacle.

The other explanation for Bush's anxieties is that the long-rumoured 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 hospitalisation 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,

an old friend of mine) 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 is now the former Iranian President's tale that seems to confirm at least parts of what Sick has charged.

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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 CIA operative who personally knew that the current Republican candidate for President, non 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 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 at the time with Bush about to become President.

Nevertheless, 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.

In the 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 someone got put on hold.

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 CIA 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 gameplan 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 it some 11 years later, Bush is now implementing that older strategy trying to make the veracity of all the rumours hang 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 just for such developments as we are witnessing today.



John Sununu



Ronald Reagan



Jimmy Carter



William Casey

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... Bush ...