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The Mossad Caucus Exposed

By Justin Raimondo
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Once again, a scandal involving spying and the state of Israel is rocking Capitol Hill, with one big difference. This time, instead of the usual scenario where Israel is spying on us, the tables are turned and it's those usually hapless Americans who have been secretly looking over the shoulder of their "ally." The *Wall Street Journal* reports that the National Security Agency (NSA) not only eavesdropped on the private communications of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but that

"The National Security Agency's targeting of Israeli leaders and officials also swept up the contents of some of their private conversations with U.S. lawmakers and American-Jewish groups. That raised fears – an 'Oh-s – moment' one senior US official said – that the executive branch would be accused of spying on Congress."

At the time, Netanyahu and his government were engaged in an all-out campaign to torpedo the nuclear agreement with Iran, and that effort wasn't limited to using their American fifth column to put pressure on Congress and the Obama administration. Israeli intelligence planted malware in the hotel computers where US negotiators were staying during the negotiations in Switzerland: they intercepted highly sensitive inside information on the talks, and leaked it. Did they leak to members of Congress opposed to the Iran deal? It no doubt occurred to the US intelligence community to ask this question, and answering it was a matter of national security. As the *Journal* reports:

*“Stepped-up NSA eavesdropping revealed to the White House how Mr. Netanyahu and his advisers had leaked details of the U.S.-Iran negotiations – **learned through Israeli spying operations** – to undermine the talks; coordinated talking points with Jewish-American groups against the deal; and asked undecided lawmakers what it would take to win their votes, according to current and former officials familiar with the intercepts.”*

The original FISA legislation empowered the NSA to collect information as long as its “primary purpose” is to discover the activities of foreign agents in the United States: surely Israeli government officials — and Americans acting under their orders — qualify as “foreign agents.” So the NSA collection in this instance was and is perfectly legal. Furthermore, federal agencies were given much more leeway under the amendments to the original legislation contained in the Patriot Act. As the Electronic Privacy Information Center puts it:

“The government can now obtain a pen register/trap and trace device ‘for any investigation to gather foreign intelligence information,’ without a showing that the device has, is or will be used by a foreign agent or by an individual engaged in international terrorism or clandestine intelligence activities.... However, USA-PATRIOT Act includes a provision prohibiting use of FISA pen register surveillance under any circumstances against a United States citizen where the investigation is conducted ‘solely on the basis of activities protected by the First Amendment.’ This exemption limits to some extent the potential overreach of this expanded authority.”

Israel’s congressional amen corner, which is now howling “Scandal!” and is determined to launch an “investigation,” claims that this surveillance was aimed at their First Amendment right to take orders from Bibi Netanyahu. However, this defense fails to make the important distinction between speech and espionage. The Israeli government was clearly engaged in the latter when it bugged US diplomats engaged in delicate negotiations – and released that sensitive information to domestic opponents of the Iran deal, including but not necessarily limited to members of Congress.

Indeed, the Associated Press published a sensationalistic account by George Jahn purporting to reveal a “draft” of the agreement which supposedly let the Iranians ... inspect themselves. This story was scrubbed of the damning details in subsequent versions, and was effectively debunked, but the damage was done: to this day, Donald Trump and the Israel lobby are running around citing this as evidence that the agreement is a “bad deal.” AP cited an anonymous “official” as their source, but neglected to tell us what government this person represents. The Israel lobby was more brazen, however, in identifying the source. As Omri Ceren, Managing Director at The Israel Project, admitted:

“The Obama administration tried keeping this information secret, which would have prevented American lawmakers and the American people from finding out the full extent of our diplomats’ collapse to Iran. The Associated Press had to get the document from overseas and reveal it that way.”

From the Mossad straight to George Jahn’s word processor.

That the very same people who support surveillance of Americans and vehemently denounce efforts by civil libertarians to end the NSA's scooping up our data indiscriminately are now screaming foul when confronted with their own canoodling with Israeli foreign agents is the kind of hypocrisy we have come to expect from this crowd. Spying on ordinary Americans is fine with them, but when it comes to stopping Israeli espionage – well, that's just not cool.

Yet a broader point needs to be made. These people have inverted the proper role of government surveillance: they support it when it involves spying on, say, Antiwar.com, as revealed in this FBI memo. But when it comes to perfectly legitimate targets of such intelligence gathering – such as the efforts of a hostile foreign power aimed at scotching delicate negotiations – they're against it.

And they know perfectly well what they're doing. Marco Rubio joined his neoconservative backers in denouncing the US "spying on our allies," and even averred it might be "worse than some people might think," but in private he defended the surveillance. A reporter for Breitbart.com overheard him telling Rep. Trey Gowdy:

"We spy on everyone. That's the nature of intelligence. It's more complicated than the [WSJ] story makes it seem."

You bet it's more complicated than Rubio and his allies dare to publicly admit. Israel has one of the most aggressive spying operations targeting the US, which our intelligence officials have testified is "unrivaled and unseemly." During congressional hearings over efforts by the Israel lobby to get the Jewish state enrolled in the visa waiver program, US intelligence officials testified against legislation that would have allowed Israelis unfettered access to our shores: one congressional aide told *Newsweek* that revelations detailing the nature and extent of Israeli spying on and in the US were "terrifying."

The ever-clueless Rand Paul went on Fox News saying he was "appalled" by the NSA's interception of Israeli agents' communications, babbling that "this is exactly why we need NSA reform."

No it isn't. The junior Senator from Kentucky and formerly rising presidential candidate went on to conflate targeted counterintelligence surveillance with "listening in on foreigners' conversations when they're talking to Americans: we're scooping up tens of thousands of conversations with Americans, which is a real problem. You can see how it stifles speech when you eavesdrop on congressmen. It might stifle what they say and who they communicate with."

This is absolute baloney. US intelligence agencies had good reason to target the Israelis, who were engaged in espionage against the United States. If members of Congress were part of that covert Israeli effort, and got caught with their pants down – like former Rep. Jane Harman did – then that's just tough. If you're going to function as an unregistered agent of a foreign power, then that's the risk you take – and the price you pay. These people are just lucky that they aren't being prosecuted for receiving classified information when they weren't authorized to possess it – not to mention violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act. In a rational world, they'd be in

the dock facing charges: unfortunately, we live in a world where the Israel lobby, and not the law of the land (or common sense) calls the shots.

One bit in the *Wall Street Journal* piece was particularly telling. In discussing the administration's vow to ease off on monitoring the communications of foreign leaders, one official is cited as saying: "There was little debate over Israel. 'Going dark on Bibi? Of course we wouldn't do that.'" That's because Israel is right up there with China and Russia as one of our principal adversaries in the covert world of spy-vs-spy.

Israel an "ally"? Don't make me laugh.