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\$400,000,000 AND FOUR U.S. HOSTAGES: They are “Joined at the Hip”!

By Stephen L. Bakke  August 5, 2016



“Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk.”

– Henry David Thoreau, journal entry, November 11, 1854

In January, the nuclear agreement with Iran was implemented amid many complaints, including speculation about the potential for secret “side deals.” For example, there was criticism for the fact that funds owed Iran from a “Shah era” arms deal would be paid to the current regime. The amount was \$1.7 billion and Obama denied it was ransom to release hostages. We haven’t recently heard much about any “ransom” because a direct connection was apparently never found, and Obama’s claims were “plausible” (I guess?). We are now hearing about the \$400 million “down payment” and its “circumstantial” relationship to a hostage release.

On the same day (night) four American hostages were released, \$400 million in cash was delivered in a cargo plane. It seems certain the plane carrying the hostages was delayed several hours until the cash was delivered. One hostage confirms being advised that their delay in being released was because another plane had to arrive first. And now, the administration even admits Iran requested simultaneous cash delivery and hostage release. Apparently we complied.



While some government officials were admitting the U.S. made the simultaneous delivery based on Iran’s insistence, the administration used a tortured explanation to dismiss the possibility that the payment was any form of ransom. In a smug dismissal of any possibility of “ransom,” Obama scoffed: “It feels like some spy novel, or crime novel.”

Regarding the reason for using cash, Obama claims it was because of strict adherence to the prohibition against banking transactions with Iran. Please don’t insult me with that explanation! He could have delivered money or deposits using any number of international transactions through arrangements with other countries. As it was, the U.S. dollars were apparently converted (laundered) to Swiss Francs and Euros in Switzerland before being directed to Iran. Again why?

My dear Mr. President, if you don’t want these accusations and “spy novel” comparisons, don’t make it appear like something sleazy is going on. Unmarked cargo plane, dead of night, pallet of untraceable

cash, simultaneous hostage release, and absolute secrecy – no one can be blamed for reaching the obvious conclusion. And Iran is now publicly bragging about this negotiated ransom. I think there’s an old adage: “Where there’s a large amount of cash, look for a large amount of corruption!”

Reacting to the WSJ report that the simultaneous nature of the events was at Iran’s request, Jonah Goldberg made some speculations. He suggested that while telling ourselves and others that there was no ransom, the U.S. actually wanted Iran to think it was a ransom – to “grease the skids” I guess. But the reason we don’t pay ransom is to discourage further hostage taking. So why would we want Iran to think so – doesn’t that encourage the rascals to keep doing the same thing? And now there are reports of new hostages being taken. It appears Iran is turning their “superior” negotiating skills into a type of “profit center” for obtaining U.S. concessions and cash.



I believe it’s likely the “payment plan” was separately negotiated, but the paths were parallel and the simultaneous delivery was probably used to “sweeten the pot” for release of hostages – that’s the way many negotiations get done. Would the money have been paid anyway? Perhaps, eventually. But was the \$400 million payment drawn into this deal as an integral part of it? Absolutely!

During the course of the negotiations, the cash and the hostages became “joined at the hip.” Now that this suspiciously clandestine payment is common knowledge, denial just makes the situation appear worse!