

# Why Does Perle Have Security Clearance?

by Jeffrey Steinberg and Michele Steinberg

The Pentagon events of July 10-11 in Richard Perle's Defense Policy Board (DPB), in which Perle reportedly plotted a campaign to fire uniformed military leaders who oppose the war in Iraq, and which featured a now-notorious discussion of waging aggressive war against Saudi Arabia—a U.S. military and political ally—again raise long-standing questions about Perle's agenda. The primary question: Why Perle has not been fired as head of the DPB, now that the anti-Saudi briefing has been repudiated by both the Bush Administration and the RAND organization (whose employee gave the briefing); and why he remains trusted to have security clearance.

These were pressing matters of U.S. national security as long ago as 1984. In that year was published a remarkable book, *The Armageddon Network*, which documented an FBI investigation of a high-level Senate staff member and close Perle collaborator—Steven Bryen—for allegedly passing classified information to Israeli government agents, in order to sabotage relations between the United States and Arab nations. The book, a first-hand account written by businessman Michael Saba, provides massive documentation in the form of investigative records obtained under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

It is a chilling reminder of the activities of a network of Israeli "moles" inside the Washington policy establishment who are today pushing for war against Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. It is all the more alarming because the two central figures in *The Armageddon Network* are central to the Iraqi war drive today: Perle at the DPB, and Bryen at the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs. From the JINSA platform, Bryen, using his connections to the Likud troika of Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, and Douglas Feith in the Defense Department, is able repeatedly to appear before Congressional committees as an "independent" expert, when he is actually an agent of right-wing interests of the Israeli Likud party.

*The Armageddon Network* documents an incident in 1978, when the Jimmy Carter Administration was seeking approval for the sale of F-15 fighter planes to Saudi Arabia. While there never was an indictment in the case, the Bryen incident was a precursor of the Jonathan Jay Pollard spy case, which emerged in 1985. Pollard, a spy for a secret network inside the Israeli government run directly by Ariel Sharon, was arrested outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C. The Israelis slammed the door on Pollard and his wife, who were trying to escape from the FBI and get asylum. A decade later, the Israeli government admitted that Pollard was their spy, and

Pollard remains in prison serving a sentence of life without parole. Bryen was luckier than Pollard, and today, Bryen is an established member of the neo-conservative network gunning for a global war against Islamic and Arab countries. But the Perle-Bryen nexus is no less dangerous to U.S. interests than the network for which Pollard worked.

## The Steven Bryen Case

The following timeline, of events too important to be swept under the rug, is taken from *The Armageddon Network*.

**March 8, 1978:** The Pentagon delivered a top-secret memorandum to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, titled "DOD Analysis of Saudi Request to Purchase F-15 Fighter Aircraft." The memo was classified "Secret Nonfor," meaning that it was not to be shared with any foreign government or foreign national.

**March 9, 1978:** Washington lobbyist Michael Saba witnessed a discussion at the coffee shop of the Madison Hotel, between Steven Bryen and at least three Israelis, presumed to be officials of the Israeli Ministry of Defense, traveling with then-Minister of Defense Ezer Weizman. Bryen told the Israelis, "I have the Pentagon documents on the bases, which you are welcome to see." He assured them that there was a staffer at the National Security Council, involved in arms sales, who "is with us." After the Israelis and Bryen departed, Saba—executive director of the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) for two years—wrote notes from the conversation, and prepared a sworn affidavit.

**March 10, 1978:** Saba met with Sen. James Abourezk (D-S.D.), who arranged for him to meet with Deputy Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti, to discuss the previous day's incident. At the meeting, Saba was introduced to John Davitt, Chief of the Department of Justice Internal Security Division. In extensive meetings in Washington with attorney Tom Shack, Saba prepared a 13-page affidavit. He also met with Bill Quandt, Middle East desk officer at the National Security Council.

**April 1, 1978:** Journalist Nick Luddington wrote an article for Associated Press, detailing the Saba account of Bryen's alleged espionage activity for Israel. Luddington reported, from a confidential Defense Department source, that the day before Bryen's meeting with the Israelis, the Defense Department had delivered a classified report on Saudi Arabia's request to purchase U.S. F-15 aircraft, to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC). In his meeting with the Israelis, Bryen had talked about the prospect of preventing the F-15 sales to the Saudis.

**April 6, 1978:** The *Washington Post* reported that Bryen was taking a leave of absence from his SFRC post to prepare for his upcoming marriage. The same day, FBI Special Agent Stephen Pletcher called Saba, to arrange an interview about the Bryen espionage allegations.

**April 25, 1978:** FOIA documents later obtained by NAAA and Saba in 1983 reveal that FBI Agent Pletcher conducted his first interview with Bryen on this date. Bryen was

asked to submit to a polygraph test, but stalled by saying he must get the okay of the SFRC first.

**May 8, 1978:** FBI Agent Pletcher, in a second interview with Bryen, told the latter of a possible espionage case developing against Zvi Rafiah, counsellor at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, who was probably one of the men at the Madison Hotel meeting. Rafiah was assigned to kill the I-Hawk sales to the Saudis, and solicited information from Bryen. SFRC staffers confirm that Rafiah was in Bryen's office three times a week, in an area adjacent to where classified documents were kept. The two men were often heard speaking loudly in Hebrew, and staffers gave the impression that Rafiah treated Bryen as someone who worked under him.

Bryen told Pletcher that Senators Clifford Case (R-N.J.), John Sparkman, and Richard Stone (D-Fla.) had told him he could not submit to a polygraph exam. During a 1977 trip to Jordan that Bryen had taken with Senator Stone, Bryen had requested a briefing on Jordan's missile systems. U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering checked with the Pentagon and refused Bryen's request.

**June 20, 1978:** Pletcher's third interview with Bryen included several topics. Prior to the Madison Hotel meeting, Senator Stone had sent a letter to the Defense Department requesting classified data and satellite photos of the Tabruk air base in Saudi Arabia. Bryen's name was cited on the request letter. The Pentagon refused.

**Aug. 14, 1978:** A Washington "friend" called Saba in South Dakota to tell him that President Carter was able to salvage the F-15 sales to the Saudis on the basis of the Bryen case. Saba was told that Bryen would soon be brought to testify before a Federal grand jury probing the spy allegations.

**Sept. 25, 1978:** Nathan Lewin, Bryen's attorney, wrote his first letter to Philip Heymann, head of the Criminal Division of the Justice Department. As a result of the letter, Heymann assigned his deputy, Ron Stern, to assume oversight over the Bryen probe. Lewin and Heymann had been close friends for 20 years. When Heymann first moved to Washington in 1978, he stayed at Lewin's house, until he found his own lodging. The two men had criss-crossed careers, dating back to *Harvard Law Review*, clerking for Supreme Court Justice John Harlan, working in the Solicitor General's office of the Department of Justice, and at the State Department Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs.

**Oct. 26, 1978:** Saba received a call from FBI Agent Pletcher, who informed him that he had retired from the FBI (on June 1, 1978), and gave him the name of his replacement, Tim Mahoney. Six weeks later, Mahoney contacted Saba to arrange a meeting.

**November 1978:** Bryen returned to his duties on the SFRC, but his return was short lived, as his sponsor, Sen. Clifford Case had been defeated in the Republican primary and would leave the Senate in January 1979. Bryen had been on Case's staff since 1971.

This coincided with the completion of a Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) analysis of the Pentagon document on

Saudi F-15 purchases, to determine whether it could have been the document referred to by Bryen as the "document on the bases" in his meeting with the Israelis at the Madison Hotel. While the document was not about "bases" per se, the DIA analysis concluded that the document could have been defined in such terms, as it did provide a detailed review of military bases and military capabilities of all the major nations of the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia and even Israel. The Justice Department revealed that Bryen's fingerprints were found all over the documents. The Justice Department did not reveal publicly whether they had found fingerprints of Zvi Rafiah on the same.

**Nov. 13, 1978:** Seymour Hersh wrote a story in the *New York Times*, reporting that CIA Director Stansfield Turner had fired career CIA officer David Sullivan for passing classified CIA material to Richard Perle, then a staffer working for Sen. Henry "Scoop" Jackson (D-Wash.). There was pressure on Jackson from the CIA to take similar action against Perle, but the Senator refused.

Saba also cites Hersh's book on Henry Kissinger, which recounts an earlier incident, in which FBI wiretaps of the Israeli Embassy in Washington revealed that Perle was passing classified National Security Council documents to the Israelis.

**Jan. 26, 1979:** A Department of Justice Action Memorandum by Davitt and Joel Lisker requested authority to convene an investigative grand jury, since Lewin and Bryen had refused to cooperate with deposition offers.

**Feb. 9, 1979:** Bryen left the Senate staff and became executive director of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, an antecedent to the present-day neo-conservatives, many of whom are with Perle today at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). The group's members included: Sen. Henry Jackson (D-Wash.), Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.), Ben Wattemberg, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Elliott Abrams, and Norman Podhoretz.

**March 5, 1979:** Relations between Lisker/Davitt and Lewin had become so strained that Deputy Assistant Attorney General Robert Keuch was sent to meet with Lewin, in an attempt to set ground rules for a deposition. Lewin demanded that questions be limited, and that no questions be asked about Bryen's ties to the Israel lobby.

**May 25, 1979:** Keuch wrote on Heymann's letterhead to Davitt and Lisker, approving the convening of an investigative grand jury, to conduct an unrestricted probe into the allegations of espionage and violations of the Foreign Agents Registration Act by Bryen.

**May 31, 1979:** Lewin learned of the authorization for convening the grand jury.

**June 7-8, 1979:** Lewin had two phone discussions with Heymann and they reached an agreement on a limited deposition of Bryen, to avoid the need for the grand jury probe. Lisker and Davitt sought documents and interviews from the SFRC and the new committee general counsel, Patrick Shea, and set limiting ground rules, including that he be present at

all interviews with SFRC staff.

**Sept. 6, 1979:** Lewin wrote to Heymann, protesting that Lisker was suggesting that there might have to be two deposition sessions with Bryen, given that the SFRC was stalling on providing documents that would be necessary for full questioning of Bryen. The SFRC had set further restrictions, including that Senator Case, Bryen, and Lewin had the right to pre-screen all documents before they were turned over to Lisker.

**Oct. 10, 1979:** Message to Keuch that "PBH [Heymann] wants to close this—Joel will get letter to Lewin telling him."

**November 1979:** Lisker memo to Davitt reporting that he had finally gotten access to four committee documents that prove that Bryen was "furnishing information to the Israeli Defense Ministry."

**December 1979:** Bryen became executive director of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs. The group was founded in 1976 as a study group on U.S.-Israeli security affairs, but with the appointment of Bryen, JINSA would become a major propaganda and recruiting organ for Israel within the ranks of the U.S. military. JINSA under Bryen pushed for U.S. military bases in Israel and opposed arms sales to Saudi Arabia, which JINSA accused of financing Iraqi and Palestine Liberation Organization terrorists.

**April 1980:** The NAAA filed an FOIA request to the FBI on the Bryen probe.

**August 1980:** The FBI wrote to the NAAA confirming that it had located 600 pages of documents responsive to the FOIA request.

**June 7, 1981:** Israeli Air Force jets bombed the Osirak nuclear reactor in Baghdad, Iraq.

**Aug. 3, 1981:** Richard Perle was confirmed as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy. His nomination had been held up for weeks because of his announced intention to name Bryen as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for ISP (Bryen did not have to be confirmed by the Senate, so the Perle hearing afforded the only opportunity to probe the spy allegations against him). Senators John Warner (R-Va.), Jeremiah Denton (R-Ala.), and James Exon (D-Neb.) put a hold on the Perle nomination, pending revelations about Bryen. Eventually Scoop Jackson negotiated a deal whereby the Senators would be given access to the FBI files on Bryen, in return for unfreezing the Perle nomination.

**Aug. 19, 1981:** David Sadd met with James McCue of the Defense Department Clearance office regarding Bryen.

**Sept. 28, 1981:** William H. Taft IV wrote to the NAAA that the Bryen "files do not provide sufficient basis" to deny him security clearances. Taft was the general counsel to the Secretary of Defense.

**Nov. 13, 1981:** Fred Iklé, Deputy Secretary of Defense, wrote to the NAAA that Bryen had been granted his security clearance, and would assume his full duties as Perle's assistant. (Iklé is today a member of Perle's Defense Policy Board.)

**November 1981:** NAAA was so furious at the coverup of

the Bryen espionage matter, that it hired FOIA expert attorney Robert Belair of Kirkpatrick, Lockhart, Hill, Christopher, and Phillips, to take the case to Federal court.

Around the same time, a review of the papers of the late Sen. Clifford Case that were donated to Rutgers University in New Jersey, revealed that Bryen used his work for Case, and 1975 appointment to SFRC staff (Case was the ranking minority member) to sabotage U.S. strategic relations with Arab countries. By January 1978, Bryen was the staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia, and worked closely with Sen. Richard Stone, the subcommittee chair. Throughout this period, Bryen's priority was blocking sales of fighter jets to Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and preventing Saudi Arabia from building up its Tabruk Air Force Base with U.S. aid. One document found in the Case files was a memo from Bryen to Case just before the Madison Hotel meeting, in which Bryen wrote that Saudi Arabia lacked the money to purchase U.S. F-15s that had been offered.

**October 1982:** Shoshana Bryen, wife of Steven Bryen, who has replaced him as executive director of JINSA, brought a delegation of American military and others to Israel and Lebanon, and were toured through southern Lebanon by Ariel Sharon. This was one month after the massacres of Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shatila camps in Beirut by Lebanese Phalangists, with complicity of the Israeli Defense Forces.

**December 1982:** NAAA received a partial FOIA release, including heavily redacted documents, which, nevertheless confirmed that the Justice Department and FBI had been attempting to conduct a serious probe into the Bryen spy allegations, and that there had been previous reports from SFRC staffers that Bryen was passing classified information to Israel.

**Dec. 28, 1982:** Douglass Wood of Justice Department FOIA division wrote a memo indicating that 450 pages out of the 600 pages on the Bryen investigation were missing from the file. However, he assured that the original case agents had their own file copies and that the material would be recovered and made available as appropriate.

**April 6, 1983:** NAAA filed a lawsuit in Federal District Court in Washington, D.C. under FOIA, to obtain the missing documents. The government admitted that the full 600 pages had been found, and that an additional 400 pages were also discovered.

**April 17, 1983:** Jeff Gerth wrote a *New York Times* exposé of Perle's ties to Israeli corporations. Gerth focussed on Shlomo Zabłudowicz and his son Chaim, proprietors of Soltam Ltd., Établissements Salgad, and Tamares Ltd., which, in 1980 alone, paid Perle's Abington Corp. \$90,000 in commissions and consulting fees.

**July 1983:** *Monitin* magazine reported on an Israeli communications firm, Tadiran, half-owned by General Telephone and Electric and half-owned by Elron/Elbit, Israeli defense firms. The article named Zvi Rafiah as a Tadiran "consultant" on sales to the U.S. Department of Defense.