

John McCain's Sweet Ride: Lobbyist's Plane Flew Saudi Royals After 9/11

February 27, 2008

by Daniel Hopsicker

(condensed, read the full article at <http://www.madcowprod.com/02272008.html>)

The lavishly-furnished custom Boeing 727 airliner (727PX) which ferried Senator John McCain on four occasions during his Presidential run in 2000, also flew Saudi Royals out of the U.S. right after 9/11, carrying an entourage of Saudi Royals from Las Vegas to London six days after the 9/11 attack in a controversial operation later scrutinized by the 9/11 Commission. The 727 figures in the current tempest over his relationship with lobbyist Vicki Iseman, who provided and flew with McCain on the plane.

With hundreds of air charter companies and airliners to choose from, the Saudis chose a company that owns "Worship Ministries" and Christian Network, Inc., turning to Paxson Communications, a "Christian broadcaster" which owned the plane, to make its corporate jet available to spirit the Saudi princes and their entourage out of the U.S. six days after 9/11.

The Saudi Royal party made good their escape from Las Vegas on an airliner sporting a Christian symbol of peace, a dove, on its tail, an intriguing detail and compelling human interest story—Muslims flying Air Jesus.

Go figure.

"Red-carpeting the entourage"

At the time, the controversial evacuation of rich Saudis prompted charges of special treatment and inadequate screening of passengers by the FBI. The FBI, of course, denied it, but in uncharacteristically colorful language. "I say baloney to any inference we red-carpeted any of this entourage," an FBI official wrote in a 2003 internal note.

"Red-carpeting the entourage" may be the least of it.

The McCain lobbying scandal has been called as "silly as a blonde joke," and an "assault on working women," although the nature of the 'work' being engaged in by the working women under assault was left unspecified.

Lobbyist Vicki Iseman, McCain's very own "Campaign Suicide" Blonde, nestled cozily beside Big John McCain on a 727 tricked out to suit the garish tastes of Saudi Royal Princes. A year later this same plane would become one of six flying Saudi evacuation flights which would be scrutinized by the 9/11 Commission.

The connection between the Saudi Royal Family and a company that owns "Worship Ministries" and Christian Network, Inc. is not immediately apparent.

Let's take a look at 'da planes.'

In the worst possible way, they wanted to get out of Dodge. The Saudi Royals and their entourage in Vegas were understandably anxious to get out of the U.S. in a hurry in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack.

What aroused suspicion was the 9/11 Commission Report's unusually terse statement and non-committal language when discussing the provenance of the Saudi flight out of Vegas. They never named the owner, as they did with the other planes involved. The 9/11 Commission's addendum on the Saudi flights names the owners of the other airplanes involved, but neglects to mention that Saudi Royals escaped on a plane belonging to a Christian broadcaster. They called it "Chartered Flight B 727-21, Tail Number N727PX."

"On September 20, 2001, 18 members of the party of Saudi Prince Abdulmajeed Bin Abdulaziz departed from Las Vegas, Nevada, for Stamstead, England aboard a chartered B 727-21, tail number 727PX, destination Stamstead Airport (London) England," read the Commission addendum on the Saudi flights.

"Before departure the aircraft was swept, perimeter security was provided, and all persons boarding were matched to previously provided passports and a manifest by agents of the USCS."

The 727 that ferried both John McCain and Saudi Royals actually belonged to Vicki's boss, Lowell "Bud" Paxson, whose Paxson Communications owns a down-market Christian broadcaster called PAX-TV.

Paxson was Vicki's biggest client. Nothing wrong with that.

Two others of the six flights scrutinized by the 9/11 Commission were flown by air contractors known to be involved in CIA renditions on planes whose flight logs recorded trips to Guantanamo Bay, where the CIA's detention facility was doing brisk business.

Two of the six, in other words, were CIA planes.

A third plane belonged to an unlikely player, the national carrier of the African nation of Gabon. Or rather from its President, a friend of Jack Abramoff's so close and personal that his checks usually had six zeros in them.

Omar Bongo is President-for-Life (bien sur!) of Africa's beyond-corrupt Republic of Gabon. He seems an unlikely personage to pop up in an aviation-related story. But what he lacks in aviation credentials he more than makes up for with his close ties to Republican lobbyist Jack Abramoff. Bongo paid Abramoff \$9 million for the promise of an Oval Office meeting with President Bush. And in May 2004, he got a 30-minute meeting in the White House with George W. Bush.

All of the planes we've looked at so far that were used, along with McCain's lobbyist's 727, had, and have interesting associations. But only one of the planes is, well, you know... officially connected.

To the Mob. The owner is a very close personal friend of the biggest crime boss in New England.

The six planes scrutinized for flying Saudis out of the U.S. share heavy political connections at the top end of American political life, and have more in common than can be accounted for by chance.

Where does the plane McCain and his lady friend flew on fit in? What's a religious broadcaster doing in such motley company?

Christian broadcasters wouldn't seem to have a lot in common, just as organizations, with the CIA, the Mob, and disgraced Republican lobbyist Jack Abramoff.

Was John McCain's use of this particular plane pure happenstance? Did the Saudis charter PAX-TV's 727 by mistake?

There's something slightly sinister about "Campaign Suicide" Vicki Iseman's corporate client list. She and Tampa-based lobbying firm Alcalde & Fay service a roster of companies comprising a "Who's Who" of a peculiarly American netherworld...

Gambling casinos and Saudi money mingle with covert operations of the CIA, felonious schemes of Republican lobbyists... even a television network responsible for the scurrilous Swift Boat documentary that sunk John Kerry's chances for the Presidency in 2004...

They represent the brother of a Saudi billionaire wanted for securities fraud, cruise ship lines making billions a year but paying no American taxes...A broadcasting network, Sinclair, responsible for producing and airing the "documentary" that swift-boated John Kerry's Presidential ambitions in the 2004 elections...

In several different ways, Paxson Communications and Jack Abramoff's "people" have, shall we say, "close business ties." Currently winding out, the Abramoff Scandal will not have run its course until the completion of the upcoming trial of three New York Mafia Gambino Family members for the murder of casino ship line owner Gus Boulis. Paxson and Abramoff are connected though Gus Boulis.

Gus Boulis owned a dozen casino gambling ships parked at ports around Florida. The casinos, to this day, are completely unregulated. No one knows how much money they take in every day.

Jack Abramoff coveted Gus Boulis' casino business in the worst possible way. So he "supposedly" duped an otherwise savvy Chicago hedge fund named Citadel Investment into lending him \$32 million to purchase Boulis' fleet of a dozen unlicensed offshore gambling vessels. Then, in relatively short order, having been paid no more than a mere pittance of the agreed-upon sale price, Gus Boulis was dead.

The real question in the McCain scandal isn't about whether McCain had sex with an attractive blonde female lobbyist, or whether he improperly intervened with letters to Federal Agencies on her client's behalf. Both are so commonplace as to barely qualify as news.

Chilling thought: Jack Abramoff might have been fronting planes for the CIA. That's certainly an awful thought, well-worth being hidden...

The prospect seems almost too awful to contemplate.