

# Another Ignored Russian Warning

**Exclusive:** One year after the Cold War ended, Russia tried to cooperate with a U.S. national security investigation into possible treason by senior American officials only to see the information ignored. Two decades later, Russians feel their warning about a Boston Marathon bomber was ignored again, Robert Parry reports.

By Robert Parry

The distrust between U.S. and Russian intelligence services has become an issue in the Boston Marathon bombing case, but that history dates back to shortly after the Cold War ended when Russia supplied evidence to a major U.S. national security investigation and later learned that the material had been unceremoniously discarded.

In that 1992-1993 investigation, Rep. Lee Hamilton, then the incoming chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, asked his counterpart in the Russian Duma, Sergei V. Stepashin, for any evidence that Moscow might have about allegations that Republicans secretly collaborated with Iran in 1980 to delay the release of 52 U.S. hostages and thus torpedo President Jimmy Carter's reelection bid.

The matter, known as the October Surprise case, was extremely sensitive at the time of Hamilton's request on Oct. 21, 1992, because the clandestine meetings between Republicans and Iranians in 1980 allegedly involved Americans who, in 1992, included the sitting president, George H.W. Bush, and the sitting CIA director, Robert Gates.

But Russia seemed willing to cooperate, especially after Bush lost his own reelection bid in November 1992. So, just one year after the Soviet Union collapsed, the Supreme Soviet's Committee on Defense and Security Issues prepared a summary of internal Soviet-era intelligence files and sent the report to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow on Jan. 11, 1993, for delivery to Hamilton.

The Russian Report, matter-of-factly, identified Bush, Gates and William Casey (who in 1980 was Ronald Reagan's campaign director and later became CIA director) as having participated in a meeting with Iranians in Paris in October 1980 at which the Republicans promised Iran military assistance if Iran kept the hostages until after the U.S. presidential election.

"William Casey, in 1980, met three times with representatives of the Iranian leadership," the six-page report stated. "The meetings took place in Madrid and

Paris.”

At the Paris meeting in October 1980, “R[obert] Gates, at that time a staffer of the National Security Council in the administration of Jimmy Carter, and former CIA director George Bush also took part. In Madrid and Paris, the representatives of Ronald Reagan and the Iranian leadership discussed the question of possibly delaying the release of 52 hostages from the staff of the U.S. Embassy in Teheran.”

The Russian Report also described President Carter’s parallel offers to Iran to get the hostages freed before the Nov. 4, 1980, election. One key meeting occurred in Athens in July 1980 with Pentagon representatives agreeing “in principle” to deliver “a significant quantity of spare parts for F-4 and F-5 aircraft and also M-60 tanks via Turkey,” according to the Russian Report.

In return, Iranians “discussed a possible step-by-step normalization of Iranian-American relations [and] the provision of support for President Carter in the election campaign via the release of American hostages,” the report said.

The Russian Report observed that both the Reagan campaign and the Carter administration “started with the proposition that [Iran’s leader] Imam [Ruhollah] Khomeini, having announced a policy of ‘neither the West nor the East,’ and cursing the ‘American devil,’ imperialism and Zionism, was forced to acquire American weapons, spares and military supplies by any and all possible means.”

The Republicans simply won the bidding war. However, the legal difference between the rival efforts was that President Carter had the constitutional authority to conduct negotiations with foreign powers. The Republican campaign did not.

### **Tracing the Weapon Flow**

The Russian Report also described how the Reagan administration fulfilled its debt to Iran. “After the victory of R. Reagan in the election, in early 1981, a secret agreement was reached in London in accord with which Iran released the American hostages, and the U.S. continued to supply arms, spares and military supplies for the Iranian army,” the report said.

The deliveries were carried out by Israel, often through private arms dealers, the report said. Spares for F-14 fighters and other military equipment went to Iran from Israel in March-April 1981 and the arms pipeline stayed open into the mid-1980s, the report said.

“Through the Israeli conduit, Iran in 1983 bought surface-to-surface missiles of

the 'Lance' class plus artillery of a total value of \$135 million," the report said. "In July 1983, a group of specialists from the firm, Lockheed, went to Iran on English passports to repair the navigation systems and other electronic components on American-produced planes."

In other words, according to the Russian Report (and other evidence from U.S. and Israeli officials), the Reagan administration sanctioned U.S. weapons shipments to Iran before the Iran-Contra deals, which also moved through Israel in 1985-1986.

In early 1993, when the Russian Report arrived at the U.S. Embassy, it was still under the control of the Bush administration. So, the report was translated and topped with a dismissive preamble, questioning the quality of the Russian information and noting that the Russian government had not responded to a request for more details.

The embassy's preamble speculated that Moscow's report might be "based largely on material that has previously appeared in the Western media," though that supposition was not supported by any evidence. The classified cable containing the translation of the Russian Report was then forwarded to the House October Surprise Task Force, which Hamilton was chairing. [For the text of the Russian report, click [here](#). To view the U.S. Embassy cable that contains the Russian report, click [here](#).]

### **The Report's Odd Journey**

Though the Russian Report corroborated sworn testimony of a Republican-Iranian deal that the task force had already heard, the report arrived after the task force had decided in the wake of Bush's loss to Bill Clinton to simply say there was "no credible evidence" to prove that Bush and other Republicans had struck a deal with Iran in 1980.

Indeed, the task force's dismissive findings had already been sent to the printer and some reporters were being briefed on the negative conclusions when the Russian Report arrived. Then, instead of disclosing the contrary Russian information, Hamilton's task force just went ahead with a press conference to clear Bush, Gates, Casey, Reagan and other Republicans of a political dirty trick that bordered on treason.

The task force's chief counsel, Lawrence Barcella, stuck the Russian Report into a plain cardboard box along with other boxes of non-published material from the investigation. The boxes were subsequently moved to some auxiliary office space located in the Rayburn House Office Building's parking garage and there the boxes were dumped on the floor of an abandoned Ladies Room.

In December 1994, after congressional elections that ended the long-time Democratic control of the House, I gained permission to examine the unpublished files and was led to the boxes in the Ladies Room. I was told that I could only copy a dozen pages and that I would be under the supervision of a congressional staffer.

However, given the chaos of a party changeover in the House and the fact that it was just before Christmas, I was pretty much left alone with the boxes. When I opened them, I discovered that they contained a number of classified documents, including the U.S. Embassy cable with the Russian Report.

I volunteered to copy the material on an old Xerox machine and kept the number of pages at a dozen so as not to arouse attention to the fact that some of the documents were stamped secret. I then left with the Russian Report and several other classified documents. (Before the Republicans formally took control of the House in January 1995, I repeated the trip twice more.)

Yet, because the mainstream U.S. news media had swallowed the official debunking of the October Surprise allegations and because the story of Reagan's apparent skullduggery was considered "old news" I couldn't find any major publication interested in the documents that I had uncovered. To get the material to the American people, I eventually founded the Internet site that became Consortiumnews.com.

### **Confused Russians**

I also did the best I could to check with Russian officials to get their reaction to the silence that had followed their extraordinary report apparently the first time that Moscow had cooperated with Washington on an intelligence-related investigation since the end of the Cold War.

In the weeks after discovering the Russian Report, I contacted a well-placed government source in Europe who had close ties to senior Russian officials. At my request, the source inquired through his Moscow contacts about the basis for the Russian Report.

The source called back and said the Russians were insisting that the intelligence in the report was their own and that the information was reliable. The source chuckled at the notion that the Russians would just repackage some Western news clips and palm them off on Congress.

Noting the Russian need for U.S. financial assistance in early 1993, the source added that the Russians "would not send something like this to the U.S. Congress at that time if it was bullshit." Instead, the source said, the Russians considered the report "a bomb" and "couldn't believe it was ignored."

Only after I published articles on the Internet about the fate of the Russian Report did Moscow learn that not only did the House task force ignore the report, but actually stuck it in a box that was piled unceremoniously on the floor of a former Ladies Room off a congressional parking garage.

I also spoke directly with a senior Russian diplomat who was familiar with the report. Although the diplomat had not seen the documents upon which the report was based, he confirmed that the Soviet Union had its own well-placed sources in key governments connected to the U.S.-Iranian maneuvering. "There's no doubt the report is true," the diplomat stated.

Other intelligence sources have said the Soviet KGB was quite adept at collecting intelligence about countries near the Soviet borders, such as Iran, and had penetrated many Western intelligence services, especially in Europe but also in the United States. The general weakness of the KGB, according to these sources, was in analyzing the information, but the sources said often the raw data was accurate, frequently gleaned from wiretaps that are more common in authoritarian states than in democracies.

Years later, I discovered that the events surrounding the Russian Report were even more curious. While interviewing Lee Hamilton about a related issue, I broached the question of why he had not released the Russian Report to the public. He seemed baffled by my question. "I don't recall seeing it," Hamilton said.

So, I e-mailed Hamilton a PDF copy of the report, which he insisted he had never read before. I also contacted Barcella, who acknowledged in an e-mail that he didn't "recall whether I showed [Hamilton] the Russian report or not."

In other words, the Russian Report containing Soviet-era intelligence that implicated two U.S. presidents (Reagan and Bush-41) and two CIA directors (Casey and Gates) in what could be regarded as treason apparently was not even forwarded to the member of Congress who had requested it. [For more on the October Surprise case, see Robert Parry's *Secrecy & Privilege* and *America's Stolen Narrative*.]

### **The Boston Bombings**

While there are many differences between the case of the Russian Report and the case of Tamerlan Tsarnaev, the elder brother who has been identified as one of the Boston Marathon bombers, there are some similarities.

According to published reports and my own intelligence sourcing, the Russians became suspicious that, by 2011, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, whose family came from war-torn Chechnya, had become a radical Islamist who might join up with militants in

the Russian Caucasus region. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, militant secessionists had clashed with Russian troops there and terrorists had struck repeatedly at civilian targets in Moscow and elsewhere.

One source close to Russian intelligence told me that the Russians had monitored Tsarnaev's communications with family members, some of whom Moscow also regarded as possible security risks. The Russians then passed a summary of their findings to the FBI, but withheld the details.

The FBI has reported that it checked databases on Tsarnaev and turned up no derogatory information, prompting a request for more information from the Russians. However, much as the United States hesitates to share sensitive sources and methods with foreign intelligence services, so did the Russians.

There also remains a measure of distrust between the two Cold War rivals. Daniel Benjamin, the State Department's former top counterterrorism official, told the New York Times that "a culture of wariness" still exists more than two decades after the Soviet Union collapsed.

Beyond wariness, the two sides view the other with some disdain. I have spoken with former U.S. intelligence officials who disparage the quality of Moscow's intelligence analysts and I've talked with sources close to Russian intelligence who decry the foolish arrogance of the Americans.

To a degree, the experience of the Russian Report is illustrative of the misunderstanding and mistrust that still permeate this bilateral relationship. In 1993, Russian officials believed they were making an important contribution to an American national security investigation into whether senior U.S. officials had engaged in something close to treason only to have their dramatic evidence ignored, shunted aside and dumped in a women's bathroom.

Now, the Russians are wondering why the FBI didn't take more seriously their warnings about a young exile from the Chechen conflict whom the Russians had concluded was veering dangerously close to radical militancy.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).**

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# Almost Flunking on Global Warming

Focusing on issues like terrorism and austerity, the world has slid back toward neglecting the slow-grinding existential threat of global warming. A report card by an Establishment think tank offers poor grades on some of the most important subjects, reports ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

The Council on Foreign Relations has just released a "Global Governance Report Card" (prepared chiefly by Stewart Patrick) that assesses how the international community has been doing over the past five years in addressing six major global challenges: climate change, finance, nuclear proliferation, armed conflict, public health and terrorism.

Any evaluation this ambitious offers selections and judgments that can and will be shot at, but the report card (backed up by more detailed discussions in each subject area, including which states and organizations have been doing well or poorly) offers useful food for thought.

One of the main impressions is that the grades the global community has earned are unimpressive. They range from a B on finance and terrorism to a D on climate change, with the average somewhere around a C+. The world community is coasting through its curriculum. The dean's list does not appear to be in sight.

Another immediate impression is the relative performance in the different subject areas, especially that D for climate change. The graders probably have this about right. The pattern of performance reflects more attention to short-term attention-grabbers and less to long-term disasters in the making. Severe recessions and terrorist attacks command immediate attention; slow destruction of the planet does not.

For each of the six areas the United States gets its own separate grade for its part in the global performance. The U.S. grades vary in tandem with the world grades but are always a notch or two higher, ranging from a B+ for finance and terrorism to a C- for climate change. Does this reflect a U.S.-centric bias? Perhaps.

It also raises questions about the size of roles and responsibilities for different actors. The United States gets credit for doing more than most others about most of these problems, but some would argue (while others would not) that the United States, given its size and power, should be expected to do more.

One can also raise issues of consistency in the evaluations. On global finance

Germany is dinged as a “laggard” for initially pushing for austerity measures that “undermined market confidence and intensified economic challenges” elsewhere in Europe. But the discussion of the United States gives no hint of a parallel macroeconomic issue in America, including an issue of persistent unemployment.

The only criticism made of the United States in this section (other than points about its relations with the IMF and World Bank) is about Congressional inaction on the deficit that “subjected the U.S. Treasury bond market to unnecessary risk”, even though that market has shown no sign of anxiety and interest rates remain historically low.

Obviously different people can bring different values to such questions and to this exercise as a whole. Even when values are not involved, to say whether the world community has left a given situation in good or in poor shape often does not point to any one policy lesson.

In the armed conflict category, for example, the report card laments how messy Iraq has been since the U.S. withdrawal and how messy Afghanistan looks to be as the United States is drawing down there. Should the main lesson be that the United States should not have attempted any nation-building in those countries (and in Iraq, never have gone in at all), or that it has not done enough in the way of nation-building? One can find people on both sides of such questions.

As broad as the six subject areas are, in a sense they are not broad enough. Under terrorism, for example, high marks are given for attention to terrorist finance and terrorism with unconventional weapons, and yes, there certainly has been plenty of attention to those topics, but the world community is rated as doing a “poor” job of “fighting terrorism while protecting human rights.”

Some might go farther and argue that protection of human rights deserves to be a major category in its own right. The main lesson here is that interactions and trade-offs abound.

When the world community has messed something up it often has been a matter of focusing too narrowly on some single objective, such as stopping terrorism, overthrowing a dictator, or reducing a deficit, with insufficient attention to all the other interests and costs involved.

**Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency’s top analysts. He is now a visiting professor at Georgetown University for security studies. (This article first appeared as a [blog post](#) at The National Interest’s Web site. Reprinted with author’s permission.)**

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# America's Real Sources of Insecurity

The Boston Marathon bombings have dominated U.S. news for the past week, prompting fresh calls for ignoring constitutional protections in the face of

“Islamic terrorism.” But the reality is that politically motivated violence has declined in America over recent years, notes Lawrence Davidson.

By Lawrence Davidson

Americans may assume that public insecurity is a condition you find under dictatorships, where the agents of the state can burst through your door and cart you away without a warrant. That can now happen in the USA too, but only to those the government calls “terrorists.”

Perhaps naively, ordinary folks see themselves as immune from that sort of treatment. However, public insecurity has many roots. Americans actually experience, but almost never acknowledge, the fact that there is a correlation between U.S. democracy’s relatively broad array of freedoms and public high anxiety. Here are some of the ways this works:

–Economic freedom can, theoretically, break down class barriers and open up opportunities for enterprising citizens. It also leaves you free to become abjectly poor and produces a socio-political environment in which ideologically driven leaders hesitate to use the power of the state to solve the consequences of poverty. Being poor is, usually, a high-anxiety state.

–Political freedoms can become lopsided in favor of well-organized special interests with the financial ability to corrupt the political system. It might be that 90 percent or more of Americans favor reform of the gun laws and would feel safer if there were universal background checks on those purchasing firearms. It does not matter, though, because this majority does not know how to effectively use its political freedom to achieve this end.

As a consequence lobby groups that specialize in working the system (such as the National Rifle Association) can easily override the wishes of the majority and, as just happened, arrange for the most innocuous of gun reform legislation to be defeated in the Senate. Moved by the same lobby influence, the Senate is expected to reject the recently created UN Arms Trade Treaty. Thus the rest of us, and our children, are stuck in a situation that is very free for gun owners who can give their fantasies full play, but spells high anxiety for the rest of us.

–Media freedom, such as it is, is perhaps the greatest contributor to public insecurity because it has produced a consistent concentration on the negative. This occurs because either those who own the media outlets, and thus literally select the news we receive, hold an anxiety-producing worldview, or they see such an approach as good business. The spectacularly negative seems to sell newspapers and boost ratings.

At this point, one can ask who are most inclined to use freedom to promote practices and policies that are anxiety producing to great majority? It is often rigid, single-issue protagonists who are anything but free in their own minds. In fact their single-mindedness has blinded them to broader community interests and needs.

Take for instance, the Christian and Jewish ideologues making up such groups as Christians United for Israel and the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). The former is a Christian Zionist organization which claims to be "the largest pro-Israel organization in the United States serving 1.3 million members." AIPAC, of course, is one of the most influential lobby groups in the country.

And just how do these groups "serve" their constituents? Well, one way is by going around trying to convince the rest of us that we are in mortal danger from a nuclear Iran (which happens to be a country at odds with Israel). They have done a good job of implanting this anxiety-producing fantasy in the minds of the public, the media and many members of the U.S. Congress.

But how do I know the claim that Iran is seeking nuclear weapons is a fantasy? Because every time the heads of our government's intelligence services are asked about this they say it isn't true. Oddly, this gets very little press.

Such Zionist organizations also spread public insecurity through the promotion of Islamophobia, another fantasy which states that just about every Muslim in the U.S. is an al-Qaeda agent. As one friend of mine, Peter Loeb of Boston, has put it, "the word 'terrorist' has become equated with 'Arab/Muslim' in the American mind."

Thus, in an early reference to the recent Boston Marathon bombing, ABC News reported that "the deadliest terror attack on U.S. soil since 9/11 has left many people anxious. But Muslim Americans await the identity of the perpetrator with particular dread."

### **The Boston Marathon Case**

The recent anxiety that hit the nation over the Boston Marathon bombings is good example of just how exaggeratedly frightening a world our freedom (in this case media freedom) has created for us. If one bothers with the facts, one learns that "terrorist" attacks are not numerous in the U.S. and are in fact declining.

Most of them are not carried out by Muslims but by environmental and animal rights advocates. The Washington Post's WonkBlog reported that the Earth Liberation Front and the Animal Liberation Front were "two of the most active groups since 1970, with 161 attacks total (and 84 since 2001). But they've

killed zero people over the years , they mainly focus on setting fire to facilities, like SUV dealerships.”

Finally, U.S. law enforcement is getting better at dealing with these incidents. But all of this good news makes no impact in the face of something made into a major anxiety-producing national event by the media.

The Boston Marathon affair was carried out by two young immigrant brothers of Chechen ethnicity. The older brother, who was probably the leader in this escapade, appeared to be a disenchanted misfit. He was an aspiring and talented boxer who had his heart set on making the U.S. Olympic team. However, he learned that as a “foreign athlete” (he was not yet a citizen) he could not compete in the U.S. national championships.

He had come to feel that “there are no values anymore” and that “people can’t control themselves.” By the way, these are feelings that no devout Muslim would ever seriously entertain.

Unfortunately, freedom as practiced in the U.S. has its drawbacks. It has encouraged an often heartless individuality that disregards serious levels of poverty. It has allowed the evolution of interest group politics that often works against national interests in both domestic and foreign policies. And, in the guise of a free media, it has produced an environment that breeds exaggeration, fantasy and a general concentration on the most spectacular, and most negative, of news stories.

Does this make America’s freedoms, in principle, bad things? Not at all. But it does call attention to the fact that such freedoms, practiced unconditionally, can give free rein to the less communal and more selfish aspects of the human psyche. The result can be a form of negative blowback.

An intelligent, mature community will be aware of this fact and implement non-abusive regulations to assure that along with economic, political and media freedom comes responsible behavior. Alas, America as a society is not particularly intelligent or mature, so such reforms encouraging responsible behavior are unlikely.

The irony of it all is that it will be in the name of preserving freedom, in its peculiarly American radical individualistic form, that powerful elites and influential special interests will resist any effort to mandate the responsible use of those freedoms. As a consequence, high anxiety and freedom will continue to go along with each other.

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*National Interest; America's Palestine: Popular and Official Perceptions from Balfour to Israeli Statehood; and Islamic Fundamentalism.*

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