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Untangling the Bizarre CIA Links to the Ground Zero Mosque

By **Mark Ames**
September 10, 2010 | 2:36 p.m

So far, the debate over the proposed Islamic center near Ground Zero has unfolded along predictable lines, with the man at the center of the project, Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, drawing attacks from the right painting him as a terrorist sympathizer with [ties to Hamas](#) and the [Muslim Brotherhood](#).

But meanwhile, links between the group behind the controversial mosque, the CIA and U.S. military establishment have gone unacknowledged.

For instance, one of the earliest backers of the nonprofit group, the Cordoba Initiative, that is spearheading the Ground Zero mosque, is a 52-year-old Scarsdale, New York, native named R. Leslie Deak. In addition to serving on the group's board of advisors since its founding in 2004 by Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, Deak was its principal funder, donating \$98,000 to the nonprofit between 2006 and 2008. This figure appears to represent organization's total operating budget—though, oddly, the group reported receipts of just a third of that total during the same time period.

Deak [describes himself as](#) a "Practicing Muslim with background in Christianity and Judaism, [with] in-depth personal and business experiences in the Middle East, living and working six months per year in Egypt." Born into a Christian home, Deak became an Orthodox Jew and married a Jewish woman before converting to Islam when he married his current wife, Moshira Soliman, with whom he now lives in Rye.

Leslie Deak's [resume](#) also notes his role as "business consultant" for Patriot Defense Group, LLC, a private defense contractor with offices in Winter Park, Florida, and in Tucson. The only names listed on the firm's website are those of its three "strategic advisers." These include retired four-star [General Bryan "Doug" Brown](#), commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command until 2007, where he headed "all special operations forces, both active duty and reserve, leading the Global War On Terrorism," and [James Pavitt](#), former deputy director for operations at the Central Intelligence Agency, where he "managed the CIA's globally deployed personnel and nearly half of its multi-billion dollar budget" and "served as head of America's Clandestine Service, the CIA's operational response to the attacks of September 11, 2001."

Besides Pavitt, Brown and a third advisor, banker Alexander Cappello, the Patriot Defense Group is so secretive it [doesn't even name its management team](#), instead describing its anonymous CEO as a former Special Forces and State Department veteran, the group's managing director as a former

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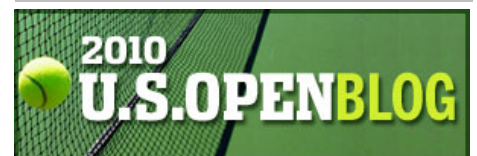


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CIA officer experienced in counter-terrorism in hostile environments and the group's corporate intelligence head as a "23-year veteran of the U.S. Secret Service who worked on the personal security details of former Presidents Bush and Clinton."



Leslie Deak and Moshira Soliman/ PanachePrive

Patriot Defense Group's primary business involves leveraging its government connections and know-how. The firm is divided into two divisions: one that "focuses exclusively on the needs of the U.S. military and law enforcement communities as well as the requirements of friendly foreign governments," and a corporate division, which "provides business intelligence and specialized security services to corporate clients and high net-worth family enterprises."

So, to recap: From 2006 to 2008, R. Leslie Deak worked as a "business consultant" to this super-secretive security contractor with ties to the CIA and counterterrorism forces, and in those same three years he also donated nearly \$100,000 in seed money to the foundation now advocating the construction of the so-called Ground Zero Mosque.

Interestingly, during the same three-year period during which the Deak Family Foundation was financing the Cordoba Initiative, Deak also donated a total of \$101,247 to something called the National Defense University Foundation. The National Defense University is a network of war and strategy colleges and research centers (including the National War College) funded by the Pentagon, designed to train specialists in military strategy. The organization recently announced a November 5 **dinner gala** in honor of Defense Secretary and former CIA chief Robert Gates. Sponsors include Northrup Grumman, Boeing, Lockheed Martin and...the Patriot Defense Group.

Deak also sits on the NDUF's board of directors, the chairman of which is Mark Treanor, the former general counsel for Wachovia bank from 1998 through its collapse in 2008 and a major bundler of campaign donations for the McCain-Palin ticket in 2008. Wachovia, now owned by Wells Fargo, was recently fined \$160 million for **laundering "at least \$110 million" in Mexican drug money** between 2003 and 2008, while Treanor was Wachovia's general counsel, though the figure is likely higher since Wachovia admitted it didn't put any controls on at least \$420 billion—that's *billion*—in cash moved through its network of Mexico currency exchanges.

Which leads to another odd coincidence: Laundering money for drug lords is what brought down Deak & Co., the company run by Leslie Deak's father, Nicholas Deak, years ago. The elder Deak, a former top intelligence commander during World War II for the OSS (the forerunner of the CIA), was the founder of Deak-Perera, which became for a time one of the world's biggest foreign currency and gold dealers. But in 1984, a Presidential Commission on Organized Crime accused the firm of acting as a money laundering operation for Columbia drug cartels, who reportedly brought sacks of cash containing tens of millions of dollars into Deak's Manhattan offices. By the end of 1984, Deak & Co. had declared bankruptcy, and a year later, Nicholas Deak **was murdered** in the company's

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headquarters at 29 Broadway by a deranged homeless woman.

After the firm went bankrupt and Leslie Deak was left on his own, the corporation was broken up and sold off in pieces. One company that **traces its beginnings** to the defunct Deak empire is Goldline International, a business concern well known to fans of Glenn Beck as well as California investigators. Goldline is to Glenn Beck what General Electric was to Ronald Reagan: The company sponsors Beck's TV and radio shows as well as his touring act, and Beck is its public face. The Los Angeles County District Attorney's office, along with the Santa Monica City Attorney's office, are currently investigating Goldline for defrauding customers by railroading gullible customers into buying their most debased products.

Speaking of Glenn Beck, it has been reported that Saudi Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal, the second-largest shareholder in News Corp., the parent company Fox News, which airs Beck's program, is also a major funder of Imam Rauf's projects, **as Jon Stewart viewers heard all about last week**.

Coincidences happen, of course. (For instance, Pamela Geller, the blogger who's become the leading voice denouncing the mosque project was once, bizarrely enough, associate publisher of *The New York Observer*.)

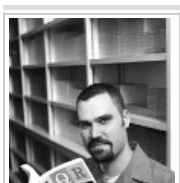
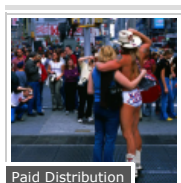
But add to this array of unexpected connections the work of Imam Rauf on behalf of the U.S. government—which includes **servicing as an FBI "consultant"** and **being recruited** as a spokesperson by longtime George W. Bush confidante Karen Hughes, who headed up the administration's **propaganda efforts** in the Muslim world—and a compelling picture begins to emerge. Bush's favorite Imam, with backing from a funder with connections to the CIA, the Pentagon and the currency trading company that now sponsors rightwing firebrand Glenn Beck, proposes to build a mosque around the corner from the site of the most devastating terrorist attack ever visited on America. In the name of "[**cultivating**] **understanding among all religions and cultures**," he puts forth a project that offends a majority of Americans and deals a significant setback to the broader acceptance of Muslim-Americans. It's a little like Billy "White Shoes" Johnson claiming the only reason he moonwalks after scoring a touchdown is to lower tensions on the football field and raise the other team's spirits.

Whether the Cordoba Initiative ever gets its way with the Ground Zero Mosque, it may well have a lasting legacy at odds with its stated intention: By damaging the very moderates and progressives who actually view New York, and the nation as a whole, as a tolerant melting pot, and strengthening the position demagogues on both sides, it will almost certainly deal a setback to interfaith relations. It will also help to hobble the Democratic party. Which just might have been the point all along.

Either that, or it's merely a coincidence that this controversy has erupted now, during crucial mid-term elections. In which case we can all go back to what we were doing before—either denouncing the Park51 Mosque as an affront to Americans, or championing it as a symbol of our fundamental rights—playing our accustomed roles in a drama that seems too perfect, somehow, to believe.

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COMMENTS (7 posted)

CIA ties to mosque

Submitted by [huffster](#) on Fri, 09/10/2010 - 17:24.

Some say that the CIA and its contractors stirred up trouble with the insurgents so that they'd have more to do over there with security.

Are they doing the same with the mosque/social center?

Creating job "security?"

[REPLY](#)

Not persuasive

Submitted by [Caleb Crain](#) on Fri, 09/10/2010 - 18:39.

This article doesn't convince me at all. If it's true that Deak has close ties to the CIA and was a big donor to Park 51, then it seems much more plausible to me that his motivation was a wish to promote interfaith dialogue, based on his life story and his experiences in the region, than a crackpot-worthy undermine-the-liberals scheme.

To link Deak to Wachovia's misdeeds because he has served on a board of directors with a former Wachovia lawyer seems very weak. To link Deak to the rightwing politics of a company that had its origins in an entity split off during the bankruptcy of Deak's late father 25 years ago seems even weaker. If you subtract the Wachovia and the Glenn Beck mentions from this article, all that's left is that one donor to Park 51 seems to have worked closely with the CIA. Much as it pains me to say it, given my own mistrust of the agency, neither it nor its officers are necessarily evil all the way through.

[REPLY](#)

Why are we cowering in fear?

Submitted by [mjkoch](#) on Fri, 09/10/2010 - 23:01.

A woman says she will name her teddy bear Mohammed and is threatened with death. A cartoonist in Denmark draws an image of Mohammed and is threatened with death and Europe folds before Islamic threats. A nutcase in Florida with less than fifty followers in a country of three hundred million people is accused of bringing us to a war of civilizations because he wants to burn a prayer book and America's leaders fall over themselves trying to placate the worlds Muslims. Salman Rushti writes a book called The Satanic Verses and is threatened with death.

Why does one religion cause the entire world to cower in fear every time one solitary individual offends them? Since 911 7% of hate crimes have been against Muslims, 65% have been against Jews. There have been movies in Hollywood depicting Jews and Christians in offensive ways but you never hear about Jews and Christians threatening to murder people who criticize them, nor do they condone suicide bombings and barbaric beheadings. We have an imam who wants to build a mosque near Ground Zero who cannot utter one word of contempt for the terrorist group Hamas that sends suicide bombers into restaurants, shopping malls, schools, and on busses and blows innocent men, women, and children to pieces and the liberal media in America trip over themselves rushing to defend this imam. Why are we cowering in fear to the threats these Islamists are making?????

[REPLY](#)

RE: "Why are we cowering in fear?" ~ mjkoch

Submitted by [DICKERSON3870](#) (not verified) on Sat, 09/11/2010 - 02:16.

SEE: "The Most Terrifying of All Battles: When the Enemy Lies Within Ourselves" ~ By Arthur Silber, 08/16/10

(excerpt... Those who repeatedly and furiously denounce the "Ground Zero mosque," as they speak in horrified tones of the coming conquest of America by Islam, tremble before one possibility far more than any enemy they have chosen to identify. Their capacity for more accurate perception and even minimal self-awareness is altogether obliterated by their greatest of all fears: that they might have to hold up a mirror to their own souls and see the diseased, twisted nature of what they have allowed to permanently reside there. Such people cannot be reasoned with, and it is futile to try. But we should always remember what it is that actually drives them to such destructive rage, and that it has nothing at all to do with the source they are willing to identify. This pattern is, of course, as old as humankind. What we loathe in ourselves, we place in others. Then we destroy those others, believing we thus destroy what we loathe.

But the enemy still lives, inside us. Until that is understood, the battle will never end, nor will the destruction, the suffering and the death...

ENTIRE COMMENTARY – <http://powerofnarrative.blogspot.com/2010/08/most-terrifying-of-all-batt...>

[REPLY](#)

hidden connections

Submitted by lea on Sat, 09/11/2010 - 11:56.

An invisible traumatic plot line connects
the demolition of the towers with the imposition of 'the mosque'
A spiritual leader who volunteers to give advice
in torture matters ?
a peace maker who warns retaliation if his ego tower not erected?
a landlord who lets its tenants agonize in infected units?
a real estate magus who never even ONCE thought the site
was controversial?
Some are having too much fun taking the populace for a bunch of schmucks
being the oilsnake imam the first one to blame.

[REPLY](#)

Huh?

Submitted by HollyM on Sun, 09/12/2010 - 03:00.

Above it says "the Patriot Defense Group is so secretive it doesn't even name its management team"

A little googling might help

<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/joseph-robinson-cpp-chs-iii/14/317/608>

Director of Operations at Patriot Defense Group (amongst other things)

<http://www.corporationwiki.com/Florida/Winter-Park/patriot-defense-group...>

Officers:

Kevin J Billings

Todd M Wilcox

Who is Kevin J. Billings?

<http://www.zoominfo.com/search#search/profile/person?personId=299625485&...>

Kevin Billings, is a twenty one year veteran of the United States Secret Service having served Presidents George H.W. Bush and William J. Clinton.

Check that link out, it has a link about Joe Robinson and Kevin J. Billings speaking together

Todd M. Wilcox, this is from 1999 (he's in the third column not too far above "Confirmations")

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CREC-1999-09-08/pdf/CREC-1999-09-08-pt1-PgS...>

THE FOLLOWING-NAMED MEMBERS OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE DEPARTMENTS OF COMMERCE AND STATE TO BE CONSULAR OFFICERS AND/OR SECRETARIES IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, AS INDICATED:
CONSULAR OFFICERS AND SECRETARIES IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

Googling works wonders if you really want to find something that is "so secretive":)

[REPLY](#)

mission accomplished

Submitted by Peter Chamberlin on Sun, 09/12/2010 - 04:53.

The past connections and family ties to defense and intelligence related concerns confirm that Mr. Deak has government DNA in his blood. This entire scam has been another CIA/Special Forces psyop intended to escalate the process of hatred-generating division that was set in motion by the real perpetrators of the 911 attacks. Waging war for the American people now means waging war on the American people.

The most important part of this psychological warfare operation was blocking and defusing any planned 911 protests in New York and across the country. If you refused to become one of the rabid, drooling Muslim haters yesterday, you were guilty of some kind of treason, the same kind of treason displayed by those who doubted that Saddam had nukes. It is not treason to question the official lies that promote war as a profit-making venture, or those that protect the powerful state interests behind the Sept. 11 attacks.

The connections to Glen Beck, Palin and McCain and the Tea Party crowd reveal that this was another Republican disinformation job, comparable to the "Panama Canal giveaway," which put Reagan in the White House, or the "October surprise" that actually stole the election for him. The words "Republicans" and "dirty tricks" are connected for good reason.

The only real danger represented by this mosque was that building it would actually unite Americans of all religions in an effort to end this war and understand why it all happened in the first place, or why we meekly allowed a supposedly "just war" of revenge to become an open-ended war for profit.

The danger that we would regain our footing and come to our senses has now passed. We can now get back to the gleeful killing at hand and prepare to welcome our new Republican administration.

[REPLY](#)

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