

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

(R)

Event: Ms. Janet McElligott
Type of Event: Interview – Conducted Under Oath
Date: October 20, 2003
Special Access Issues: Treated as ~~SECRET/NOFORN~~
Prepared by: Niki Grandrimo
Reviewed by: Scott Allan
Team Number: Three (Counterterrorism Policy)
Location: GSA Conference Room
Participants: Niki Grandrimo, Scott Allan, & Doug MacEachin

Interviewee Background

From 1984-1985, Ms. McElligott worked as a Legislative Aide for Senator Dan Evans. She then worked as the Assistant to the Legal Counsel and Executive Assistant to the PAC Director for the National Republican Senatorial Committee from 1985-1986. [REDACTED]

From 1986-1987, Ms. McElligott served as a Program Director at the Shanghai Institute of Science and Technology. In April 1987, Ms. McElligott was passed from FBI's East German Group to the FBI's China Group. Ms. McElligott stated that she received a "couple hundred dollars on and off for years" from the FBI. She noted that she worked for the FBI continuously from 1985 until the present. [S/NF]

In 1990, Ms. McElligott worked in the Office of National Service at the White House. She stated that she was close with Prescott Bush because she served on the Board of the US-China Chamber of Commerce with him for several years. However, shortly after taking the position at the White House, Ms. McElligott was placed on Administrative Leave for six months so that she could continue her employment with the FBI. From 1990-1992, Ms. McElligott worked in the Office of Congressional and Public Affairs at the Farm Credit Administration. [S/NF]

She then went to China from 1993-1994 to serve as a Foreign Expert on Economic Development for the Government of the People's Republic of China. While there, Ms. McElligott also lectured at the Beijing Language and Culture University for their Sino-Australia Program. In 1995, she served as the Press Director for Peru's President Alberto Fujimori during the United Nations Conference on Women in China. From 1996-1997, she served as Vice President for a US-based business enterprise to develop and implement workplace safety regulations for China. [U]

In December 1996, Ms. McElligott was a member of the International Red Cross Hostage Rescue Team that freed hostages from a war zone in Southern Sudan. In the fall of 1997, she began working as an Agent for the Government of Sudan ("GOS"). [REDACTED]

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958

60322-CP/FBI

By CP/FBI, Date 9/11/2008

~~SECRET/NOFORN~~

¹ In August 1998, Ms. McElligott worked as a Freelance Producer for NBC News, covering the United States Government's ("USG") bombing of the al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Sudan. From 1998-1999, Ms. McElligott worked as a Public Relations Specialist for the Government of Kazakhstan. She served as a consultant to the Arab Organization of Agricultural Development on their Environmental Conference in April 2003. Presently, Ms. McElligott continues to run her international political consulting business, McElligott Associates. [S/NF]

Background on Employment by the GOS

Ms. McElligott met Sudan's Ambassador to the US, Mahdi Ibrahim, in September 1996 at a party at the Chinese Embassy. At a lunch meeting with Ambassador Ibrahim several days later, the Ambassador asked her to help the GOS bring an art exhibit from Paris to Sudan. Ms. McElligott agreed and provided him her resume. She then engaged him in a discussion of political issues and impressed the Ambassador with her personal knowledge of Congressmen. At this time, Ms. McElligott did not receive payment from the GOS but she had begun to negotiate a contract with them. She stated that the lack of payment was not a problem because her income from other clients was profitable (in the low hundred-thousands) and could sustain her. This client list included, amongst others, Locust Hill Farms in Virginia, the Managing Director of Mitsubishi, the Japanese Cultural Ambassador, and the Chinese Vice Minister of Culture. [U]

Ms. McElligott then went to China and upon her return, was contacted by Ambassador Ibrahim who said that he needed to meet with her immediately. At the meeting, Ambassador Ibrahim told Ms. McElligott that eight employees of the International Red Cross were taken hostage in the war zone in southern Sudan. He stated that one of the hostages was a constituent of Congressman Bill Richardson and Ambassador Ibrahim wanted Ms. McElligott to brief him about Congressman Richardson in preparation of his meeting with the Congressman. Following Ambassador Ibrahim's meeting with Congressman Richardson, Ms. McElligott was made the liaison between the two men. Later, Ms. McElligott flew to Sudan as part of a hostage negotiating team that included Congressman Richardson, the US Ambassador to Sudan, Tim Carney, and two other State Department employees. The rebels wanted \$2.5 million from the GOS for the release of the hostages. Ms. McElligott stated that during the negotiations, she "grabbed the rebel leader and called him an extortionist." She said that she was traded for the hostages and remained in captivity until the GOS provided the ransom. In January 1997, following the hostage rescue, the GOS formally hired Ms. McElligott for \$100,000 per year. [U]

Ms. McElligott said that as a result of this incident, the Sudanese Minister of Interior ("the Minister") requested to see her. Prior to the meeting, Calvin Humphreys, Bill Richardson's staffer on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, told Ms. McElligott to ask about "bin Laden." At the time, she had never heard of Usama bin

9/11 Classified Information

~~SECRET/NOFORN~~

Laden ("UBL") and Mr. Humphreys did not tell her who UBL was. In February 1997, Ms. McElligott traveled to Sudan to meet with the Minister. At the meeting, Ms. McElligott asked the Minister about UBL. Initially, the Minister was angered by the question and attempted to end the meeting. At this time, Ms. McElligott told the Minister that if the GOS wanted her help, they needed to be honest with her.² [U]

For the next two and a half hours, the Minister told Ms. McElligott about UBL, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Carlos the Jackal, the International Criminal Police Organization ("INTERPOL"), and the French.³ She stated that the Minister told her that the GOS tried to give UBL to the USG but the USG did not want him. The Minister said that the GOS sent a military officer to the US in 1996 to meet with elements of the USG in Rosslyn, Virginia. The Minister also told Ms. McElligott that two US Ambassadors to Sudan, Don Petterson and Tim Carney, each delivered to the GOS white papers produced by the USG. The papers demanded that the GOS take action against terrorists operating in Sudan and detailed the actions that the USG would take if Americans were harmed. The Minister told Ms. McElligott that the papers were "ridiculous" because they asked the GOS to remedy problems, which he believed, did not exist. For example, she said, the USG wanted the GOS to close terrorist training camps in Sudan. The GOS told Ms. McElligott that the camps the USG were referring to were Police Defense Force ("PDF") camps used to train local militias, not terrorists. [U]

When asked about these camps, Ms. McElligott stated that PDF camps were what the GOS used to train civilians in guerilla warfare so that they could fight the rebels, who were using guerilla techniques against the GOS. She said that these camps were closed in 1998 because they were such a contentious issue. Though the GOS never showed her a camp, Ms. McElligott said that she believed the GOS regarding the camps. [REDACTED]

9/11 Classified Information

The GOS and UBL

Ms. McElligott stated that the National Islamic Front, headed by Hasan al-Turabi and the military, headed by Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir, overthrew the communists and seized power in 1989. Ms. McElligott stated that when the Islamists came to power, they eliminated the visa restrictions for Arabs because they wanted to bring "Gulf money" to Sudan. Instead, these lax restrictions allowed a number of radical Arab fighters to come to Sudan from Afghanistan. Ms. McElligott believed that UBL saw Sudan as the perfect

² Interestingly enough, Ms. McElligott seemed concerned with the truthfulness of the GOS as indicated in an undated memorandum to FBI's Glenn Posto which stated, "The minute you guys [GOS] lie to me, I walk." [U]

³ The Government of France requested that the GOS apprehend Carlos the Jackal, one of the world's most notorious terrorists of the 1970's and 1980's, and permit his extradition, which the GOS did. [U]

9/11 Classified Information

Islamic state. She stated that when UBL brought his money to Sudan, the GOS believed its "no visa" policy was working. [U]

When asked about Turabi's ties to terrorists, Ms. McElligott said that Turabi had ties with Islamists, not terrorists. She stated that Turabi was a spiritual leader who wanted to "keep his hands clean." Ms. McElligott said that Turabi thought UBL was useless because UBL was always talking about jihad. She believed that Turabi only wanted to take advantage of UBL's money, not support terrorism. [U]

Ms. McElligott stated that Turabi and Bashir were not equal partners. She said that Bashir was the President but Turabi ran the country. Ms. McElligott stated that she was working with Bashir. She said that when she asked Bashir about terrorism and UBL in Sudan, Bashir defended UBL, saying that he was a productive member of society (e.g. he built roads, owned a leather factory, etc). Ms. McElligott believed that Bashir did not want to expel UBL from Sudan before the USG asked the GOS to take such action. [U]

Expelling UBL from Sudan

Ms. McElligott said that when the USG asked the GOS to expel UBL, the GOS wanted to send UBL back to Saudi Arabia because UBL was a Saudi national. However, she believed that the Government of Saudi Arabia did not want to take UBL back because they were afraid that UBL's presence in Saudi Arabia would cause an uprising. She stated that the GOS told the USG that it would be better to keep UBL in Sudan because the GOS had UBL under surveillance and knew what he was doing. Ms. McElligott said that Gutbi al-Mahdi, the head of Sudan's Mukhabarat (Intelligence Agency), believed that the USG requested that the GOS expel UBL because the Government of Saudi Arabia was pressuring the USG. She believed that the Mukhabarat felt as though it had UBL under control. She stated that the Mukhabarat said that it intercepted all of UBL's phone calls and faxes. Ms. McElligott said that she believed this assertion because in 1997, she saw the GOS's extensive files on UBL. [U]

McElligott's Continued Employment for the GOS

In November 1997, Ms. McElligott received a cease and desist letter from the Department of Treasury's Office of Financial Asset Control ("OFAC") stating that in order to continue working for the GOS, Ms. McElligott would have to apply for a license due to sanctions placed on the GOS.⁵

9/11 Classified Information

⁵ On November 3, 1997, President Clinton issued Executive Order 13067, which, among other things, prohibits the exportation of goods, technology, or services from the US to Sudan without a license. [U]

⁶ Embassy Khartoum was closed in 1996 after the USG determined that Khartoum was too dangerous for Americans. Embassy staff was moved to the US Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. [U]

9/11 Classified Information

As such, the FBI told Ms. McElligott that they would help her obtain the necessary license. She stated that the FBI arranged two meetings at the State Department to discuss the issue. Ms. McElligott said that she heard third-hand that at the final meeting, State Department officials told the FBI's Mike Rolince that they were going to deny her license to work as a lobbyist for the GOS. When asked why she thought the State Department denied her license, Ms. McElligott stated that the State Department thought that she was "nuts." She said that she received a phone call from Steve Schwartz, who was the Sudan desk officer in the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs, in which he threatened to have her arrested for practicing personal diplomacy. [S/NF]

Ms. McElligott did not fight the decision because she had other clients and she did not want bad relations with OFAC. Despite the denial, Ms. McElligott continued to work for the GOS through exemptions for non-governmental organizations ("NGO")⁷ and media services.⁸ Because she was acting as an NGO, Ms. McElligott did not receive payment for work done for the GOS at this time. She stated that she did not need the money because she had other clients that kept her business profitable. However, in an undated memorandum she provided to the Commission, Ms. McElligott wrote, "I am having financial troubles" and "I have no income without a license." [U]

Ms. McElligott's FBI Service [S/NF]

9/11 Classified Information

GOS Offer to Share Information

Ms. McElligott stated that in February 1998, the GOS wanted Ms. McElligott to arrange a meeting between Ambassador Ibrahim and the FBI. At the meeting, Ambassador Ibrahim requested that FBI agents meet with Mukhabarat officials. Ambassador Ibrahim provided the FBI with an official letter from the GOS detailing the request. Ms. McElligott said that the GOS wanted to give the USG files on al Qaida including the founding members and its most dangerous operatives. However, when asked if the letter detailed this information, Ms. McElligott replied that the letter merely stated that the

⁷ EO 13067 allows exemptions for registered NGO's. Ms. McElligott did not state whether she received an NGO registration number from OFAC. [U]

⁸ Ms. McElligott stated that she was working for NBC News. [U]

GOS wanted "to cooperate" with the USG. The FBI said that it needed to get approval for the subsequent meeting. In June 1998, FBI Agent David Williams replied that the FBI was not able to accept the GOS's offer. [U]

When asked why she thought the FBI was unable to accept the offer, Ms. McElligott stated that the FBI had to defer to the State Department on the issue because Sudan was on the State Sponsors of Terrorism list. She commented that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said that the USG does not deal with terrorists. When asked if she thought that the FBI rejected the offer because they determined that the GOS's offer was not credible, Ms. McElligott stated that such was unlikely because the FBI continued to ask her to engage the GOS for them. When asked if she believed that the GOS had engagements with the USG to which she was not privy she said, "Yes." [U]

Embassy Bombings

On August 7, 1998, truck bombs exploded at the US Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. Two days later, al-Mahdi called Ms. McElligott and asked her to tell the FBI that the Mukhabarat "had something" for them but the FBI would have to "come to Khartoum to get it." Ms. McElligott conveyed the message to the FBI and they asked her if she knew what "it" was. Ms. McElligott told the FBI that she did not know but she said that she believed it to be important if the head of the Mukhabarat was calling her personally. The FBI said that they would convey the offer to "the appropriate senior officials." Ms. McElligott stated that the FBI did not respond for some time, but after the US bombed the al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant, the GOS withdrew its offer. Ms. McElligott said that she thought the State Department denied the FBI's request to go to Khartoum by denying them country clearance. She commented that it would not have been costly or difficult to send a USG official from Nairobi to Khartoum to examine the offer and that following the bombings of two US Embassies, the USG should have followed every lead possible. However, Ms. McElligott did admit that the offer was vague and lacked specificity. [U]

Ms. McElligott stated that she then went to Sudan following the US missile strikes to cover the story for NBC News. Upon her return, she was contacted by Seymour Hersh regarding an article he was writing entitled, "The Missiles of August." Mr. Hersh told her that "something big" was going on and her life was in danger. She said that she contacted the FBI and the FBI told her that they did not know what was going on but if she had the opportunity to leave the country she should. Ms. McElligott stated that her house was then broken-into three times. She said that she was never present but that each time, the police responded to her alarm sounding. Ms. McElligott also noted that each time, her alarm had been dismantled. However, she does not recall filing a police report after these incidents. Following the third break-in, Ms. McElligott went to Kazakhstan. [U]

Ms. McElligott stayed in Kazakhstan for five months. When she finally contacted al-Mahdi, he asked her to come to Sudan. In January 1999, Ms. McElligott met with al-Mahdi in Sudan. At the meeting, he told her that in August 1998, the GOS apprehended

two men who the GOS believed financed the Embassy bombings and the GOS wanted to make them available to the FBI. He stated that this was the offer that she had conveyed to the FBI. Al-Mahdi said that the GOS kept the two men in custody until September 4, 1998 and then released them. He said that he did not tell her the exact offer because he did not want to put her life in danger. Ms. McElligott believes that her home was broken-into because if she had publicized the USG's rejection of the GOS's offer, President Clinton, who was facing impeachment at the time, certainly would have been removed from office. [U]

McElligott's Recent Publicity

9/11 Classified Information

Ms. McElligott stated that after September 11, 2001, her name was continuously publicized and she did not want the media to write inaccurate stories about her. She stated that in talking to the press, the purpose was to attempt to open relations between the USG and GOS intelligence services, not gain publicity. Ms. McElligott believed that the files offered by the GOS to the FBI had information on five of the September 11, 2001 hijackers. However, she admitted that she had not seen this information because she believed if she asked too many pointed questions, the GOS would withdraw from her and her attempt to establish a link between the GOS and USG intelligence services would fail. Ms. McElligott stated that she also talked to the media after September 11, 2001 because she felt responsible (e.g. what if she had done something more to encourage the FBI to accept the GOS's offers). [U]

Ms. McElligott noted that the FBI began engaging the GOS in May 2000 and speculated that it was due to a change in USG leadership. [U]

Credibility of the GOS

Ms. McElligott said that initially, she was skeptical of the GOS based on information received from the USG. However, she stated that she challenged everything that the GOS said and was satisfied with their answers. Ms. McElligott did concede that it is possible that the GOS did not explain to or "show her" everything. Ms. McElligott stated that the GOS was aware that she was working for the FBI but did not care. She stated that the GOS wanted better relations with the USG and saw her contact with the FBI as an opportunity to garner such relations. [S/NFI]

~~SECRET/NOFORN~~

Ms. McElligott also conceded that the USG likely had more information relating to Sudanese links to terrorists groups than she did and this information could have justified the USG's isolation policy towards Sudan. [U]


NMG

~~SECRET/NOFORN~~