



From deceit to discovery: the strange flight of 4L-AWA – an update

8 February 2010

...apparently, the “oil drilling equipment” was destined to the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC). If confirmed as the real buyer of the cargo, NIOC will have performed the same role it played in the mid 1980s during the Iran-Iraq war as a conduit of weapon shipments by European and US arms companies to the Khomeini regime. For example, documents and subsequent enquiries related to the Reagan Administration's secret deals with Iran during the mid-1980s (Iran-Contras affair) have revealed that NIOC was the consignee of a large cargo of spare parts and fuses for 'Hawk' missiles shipped on August 29, 1986 from Newark (New Jersey) to Zaventem airport (Brussels, Belgium). The missiles were shipped aboard a Boeing 747 (flight PE008), operated by People Express, and then re-expedited to Tehran by the Belgian company Comexas.¹ Successive changes of the cargo documentation and the circuitous set of fake and real companies that facilitated the shipment remind us of this current case involving 4L-AWA.

“Oil drilling equipment” was indeed a popular label for arms secretly shipped to Iran from Europe and the United States during the same 1980s. “Oil drilling equipment” was in effect the description for 18 'Hawk' missiles shipped on November 22, 1985 from the United States to Ostend, and from Ostend to Tehran, via Tel Aviv and Larnaka, Cyprus, aboard of a Boeing 707 (registration: J6-SLF) belonging to St. Lucia Airways, a company that regularly serviced CIA shipments. According to a subsequently declassified CIA document, the crew that flew the missiles was unaware of the real nature of the cargo.² Again, we see echoes of the current case...

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¹ See: Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, “*Enquête Parlementaire sur les livraisons d'armes et de munitions faites par la Belgique aux pays impliqués dans un conflit armé ou frappés d'embargo sur les armes (1987-1989)*”, February 28 1989, page 125/6; Block, Alan A. “*The origins of Iran-Contra: Lessons from the Durrani Affair.*” The Pennsylvania State University, Crime, Law & Social Change 33: 53–84, Kluwer Academic Publishers 2000 (based on T. Van De Meerse, Manager airfreight/Comexas, to Honorable T.F.G. Daly, Chief Judge, U.S. District Court, Bridgeport, CT., “Subject: Procès Verbal B 827/86 vo 400 Dated Nov. 13th 1987, Fax Nbr 00/1/818/8892363, sent to Judge Daly on 29 December 1989 from Comexas N.V., Zaventem, Belgium).

² Document dated November 20, 1986, unsigned, CIA Chronology Insert: “*CIA Airline Involvement*,” see also “Duane Claridge, Cable for the European CIA Station, *NSC Request*, dated November 23 1985, originals reproduced in Kornbluh, P., M. Byrne (eds), *The Iran-Contra Scandal: the declassified history*, National Security Archive, The New Press, New York, 1993; see also 100th Congress, 1st Session, U.S. Senate Select Committee on Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan Opposition “*Report of the Congressional Committees Investigating the Iran-contra Affair*,” U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee to investigate Covert Arms Transactions with Iran, Washington 1988, testimony by *CIA Air Branch Chief*, vol. 4, pp 791-932; and testimony by “*Proprietary Manager*” (Saint Lucia Airways’ director Dietrich Reinhardt), vol. 21, p. 413 and 600; and testimony by “*CIA Air Branch Subordinate*,” vol 4, p. 1101.

PACKING LIST

No.: 20091201/789

Date: 3/12/2009

Consignee:National Iranian Oil Industry
Hafez Crossing, Ghani Avenue, Tehran

Tel.: TBA Fax: +TBA

Notify: TBA

Tel.: TBA

Shipper:**Aerotrack Ltd**

Address: Kiev 254080, 19-21, Frunze Str.

Tel: +38(095) 5336136

Ukraine

Box Qty	Boxes content	Box Weight	Gross Weight	Dimensions
87 boxes	Geothermal Rigs spare parts – model MTEC6	30kg	2610kg	659mmX398mX265mm
1 box	Percussion drilling rig spare parts- model Buffalo 3000	125kg	125kg	1280mmX500mmX490mm
40 boxes	Rotary Drilling Rig spare parts – model Watertec 6	520kg	20800kg	5608mmX370mmX410mm
13 boxes	Mid-range Watertec 40 spare parts	520kg	6760kg	5680mmX410mmX370mm

PACKING LIST

No.: 20091201/789

Date: 3/12/2009

2 boxes	Mintec 6 spare parts - pumps	45kg	90kg	510mmX465mmX240mm
1 box	Mintec 12.8 drilling vales	43kg	43kg	510mmX465mmX240mm
1 box	Mintec 6 watr sleeves – spare parts	1250kg	1250kg	3900mmX1000mmX1500mm
2 boxes	Bespoke Mineral exploration Machine – spare parts	1000kg	2000kg	5600mmX1200mmX800mm
1 box	Spare parts for oil pump Spec 3	35kg	35kg	595mmX469mmX261mm
1 box	Spare parts for oil driller Spec 4	50kg	50kg	1000mmX1000mmX500mm
1 box	Spare parts for oil driller Spec 5	93kg	93kg	830mmX65mmX110mm
1 box	Spare parts for oil pump Spec 6	116kg	116kg	830mmX650mmX110mm

Total Weight: 33972T