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The Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy



DOJ orders the AZC to Register as a Foreign Agent

"Attached hereto is the entire file relating to the American Zionist Council and our efforts to obtain its registration under the terms of the Foreign Agents Registration Act..."

Documents

In the early 1960's Israel funneled \$5 million (more than \$35 million in today's dollars) into US propaganda and lobbying operations. The funds were channeled via the quasi governmental Jewish Agency's New York office into an Israel lobby umbrella group, the American Zionist Council. Senate Foreign Relations Committee investigations and hearings documented funding flows, propaganda, and public relations efforts and put them into the [record](#). But the true fate of the American Zionist Council was never known, except that its major functions were visibly shut down and shifted over to a former AZC unit known as the "Kenen Committee," called the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (or AIPAC) in the late 1960's. The following chronology provides links to images of original Department of Justice case files released on June 10, 2008 under a Freedom of Information Act filing.

John F. Kennedy President, Robert F. Kennedy Attorney General

| Document/File Date | Contents |
|----------------------------|---|
| 08/27/1962 | AZC internal memo - Lenore Karp to Rabbi Jerome Unger about AZC Department of Public Information literature distribution. |
| Undated | 1962-1963 AZC Public Relations Plan summary |
| 10/31/1962 | Assistant Attorney General and Director of the Internal Security Division J. Walter Yeagley notifies Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy "...we are soliciting next week the registration of the American Zionist Council under the Foreign Agents Registration Act...You may be aware that the American Zionist Council is composed of representatives of the various Zionist organizations in the United States including the Zionist Organization of America." |
| 11/06/1962 | Nathan B. Lenvin, head of the FARA section, memo to central files, about a meeting with Jewish Agency representative Maurice M. Boukstein who asks about FARA applicability to AZC. "...in his view it was doubtful that any great protest would be made since in the discussions he has had with various officials connected both with the Zionist Council and the Jewish Agency he had made it clear in his view an agency relationship would result which may require registration." |
| 11/14/1962 | Edwin Guthman letter to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy and Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach about future AZC FARA registration order. "I doubt very much there will be any fuss. I don't think the American Zionist Council is in any position to do so...the Council has compromised its position." OK'd by Robert F. Kennedy. |
| 11/21/1962 | DOJ orders AZC to register under FARA "...receipt of such funds from the American Section of the Jewish Agency for Israel constitutes the Council an agent of a foreign principal...the Council's registration is requested." |
| 12/06/1962 | AZC President Rabbi Irving Miller response to DOJ "The request for registration contained in your letter raises many questions of fact and of relationships which first must be resolved by us before compliance can be made. Therefore, it is requested that you be good enough to grant us a delay of 120 days..." |
| 01/02/1963 | Isaiah L. Kenen incorporates the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in Washington, DC |
| 01/24/1963 | DOJ draft file memo about 01/23/1963 DOJ meeting with AZC head legal counsel Simon H. Rifkind "...he had advised his client to discontinue completely the agency relationship and cut off the receipt of any additional funds...Mr. Lenvin pointed out specifically that the termination of the 'activities' on the part of AZC did not absolve it of its obligation to register..." |
| 01/25/1963 | Article in the National Jewish Post, filed in FARA Section - "AZC Gives Up \$ to Avoid Foreign Agent Registration" |
| 02/01/1963 | DOJ Executive Assistant Thomas Hall memo to Nathan Lenvin updating meeting notes "Mr. Hall emphasized that a contrary conclusion would not of course be reached during the course of this meeting and suggested that the subject submit a detailed argument as to why it was of the opinion it should not be required to register..." |
| 02/08/1963 | DOJ AZC January 23, 1963 meeting notes by Nathan Lenvin filed "discontinuance of receipt of such funds thus terminating the agency relationship did not absolve the Council of its obligation to register." |
| 02/19/1963 | American Council for Judaism (AJC) newsletter. "The American Zionist Council (coordinating political action arm of all U.S. Zionist organizations) was asked last month by the Justice Department to register as a 'foreign agent' of the State of Israel." |
| 03/07/1963 | New York Times reporter Tony Lewis calls FARA section to verify AZC foreign agent order state AJC press release. |
| 3/23/1963 | AZC Counsel "Memorandum of Law in support of our position that the American Zionist Council is not required to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938." |
| 04/01/1963 | Nathan Lenvin file memo of DOJ AZC meeting on April 1, 1963- AZC Memorandum of Law rejected. "...if necessary I would be willing to recommend, if the representatives of the Council insisted upon these points, that the matter be litigated." |
| 04/05/1963 | Thomas Hall memo with J. Walter Yeagley notes "Okay, but let's get it concluded. Have we sent them J.A. reg[istration] statement?" |
| 05/02/1963 | Nathan Lenvin file memo of DOJ AZC meeting on May 2, 1963 "Finally, Judge Rifkind raised the point...that the vast number of Jews who adhered to the principles of Zionism could not understand how 'our administration' could do such harm to the Zionist movement and impair the effectiveness of the Council by insistence on registration. He appealed to the discretionary power of the Department...Mr. Katzenbach then noted that if the Council made a full disclosure of the receipt and expenditure of the funds it had received from the Jewish Agency so that such information would then be available for public inspection the purposes and objectives of the Registration Act might well be accomplished and very likely there would be nothing further for the Government to do..." |
| 05/23/1963 | First Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings on Israeli Foreign Agents (Senate Records) |
| 06/28/1963 | Wall Street Journal article "Federal lawyers near decision on whether to require the American Zionist Council to register as an agent of the Israeli government. High Justice Department officials weigh the risk of offending Jewish opinion in |

The DOJ Orders the American Zionist Council to Register as a Foreign Agent

the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Fulbright also eyes the council's activities."

[06/28/1963-07/26/1963](#) Citizen telegrams and letters urging FARA decision based on legal merits rather than political considerations.

[07/02/1963](#) Irene Bowman FARA section file memo on a June 28, 1963 DOJ AZC meeting, "Mr. Adrian W. DeWind and a Mr. Kahn (ph) of the law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison ...for the purpose of submitting for the Department's examination a stack of publications and several books prepared by the American Zionist Council...Prior to Mr. DeWind's departure he said he was disturbed by what he described as the speed with which the American Council on Judaism learned that the Department had solicited the registration of the American Zionist Council. He wondered whether there was a leak in the Department."

[07/15/1963](#) Congressman Donald Rumsfeld letter to Robert F. Kennedy about status of AZC FARA registration.

[07/19/1963](#) Thomas K. Hall Memo to Deputy AG Katzenbach and J. Walter Yeagley on Wall Street Journal Article. Yeagley notes "I called Judge Rifkind Thursday July 18. He said he thought the material had been submitted and was 'embarrassed.' Fri[day] someone else from the firm called asking for still another 2 or 3 weeks as their controller or someone is in Europe."

[07/19/1963](#) J. Walter Yeagley responds to Rumsfeld "ultimate determination will be based on the law as applied to the facts...not on any consideration of its effect on the public opinion of the Jewish community..."

[07/26/1963](#) American Council for Judaism Letter to RFK about AZC FARA registration "I am enclosing latest issue of our newsletter, Brief, featuring our comments on the Department of Justice investigation of the American Zionist Council..."

[07/26/1963](#) Theresa Green FARA memo about AZC phone call request for two week filing deadline extension.

[7/30/1963](#) Routing memo from Deputy AG Nicholas Katzenbach to J. Walter Yeagley "I guess this is the correct response. Rifkind should be needed, but much depends on Fulbright, too."

[8/1/1963](#) [Second Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings on Israeli Foreign Agents \(Senate Records\)](#)

[08/14/1963](#) FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover offers J. Walter Yeagley FBI assistance to investigate the AZC "In view of recent public hearings...it is requested that you advise whether any investigation is desired..."

[8/14/1963](#) J. Walter Yeagley response to 7/30/1963 Katzenbach routing memo (copy from above) "Mr. Hall - is it time to write Rifkind or send memo to A.G. or send in FBI?"

[08/15/1963](#) Thomas K. Hall internal FARA memo about AZC legal counsel "stalling hoping that time will resolve the difficulties faced by the AZC...We should go on record with the AG (copy to deputy) outlining the posture of this matter and indicate the need for more drastic action..."

[8/16/1963](#) Irene Bowman, FARA section analysis on alleged AZC FARA violations derived from Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings. "...the Department should insist on the immediate registration of the American Zionist Council under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, and if such registration is not forthcoming, appropriate action should be taken to enforce such a request."

[08/17/1963](#) AZC Executive Director Rabbi Jerome Unger letter and filing to FARA Section "Enclosed herewith are the two reports of Income and Expenditures of the American Zionist Council..."

[08/20/1963](#) Nathan Lenvin query asking if Irene Bowman would accept as FARA registration, Bowman: "Absolutely not!"

[08/22/1963](#) J. Walter Yeagley memo to Nicholas Katzenbach: "There is also attached a proposed letter from me to Judge Rifkind requesting a registration to be filed within ten days."

[08/23/1963](#) J. Walter Yeagley to FBI Director "...registration was originally solicited by letter dated November 21, 1962...Pending a determination as to whether further letter should be written insisting on registration no investigation will be required. You will be kept advised of developments in this matter."

[10/11/1963](#) DOJ Demand for AZC Registration "the Department expects a response from you within 72 hours with regard to this matter."

[10/17/1963](#) J. Walter Yeagley notes of DOJ AZC meeting attended by Nicholas Katzenbach. "Judge Rifkind then made a plea for no registration, stating it was the opinion of most of the persons affiliated with the Council that such registration would be so publicized by the American Council on Judaism that it would eventually destroy the Zionist movement...he did not believe his clients would file any papers or sign any papers indicating that the organization was an agent of a foreign principal. I told him that any such information or material that is supplied on that basis would be made part of the Department's public files available for inspection by the public..."

Lyndon B. Johnson President, Robert F. Kennedy Attorney General

[12/11/1963](#) AZC Counsel to DOJ "...our client is not prepared to register as an agent of a foreign government. It has, however, no reluctance to make this information available voluntarily..."

[01/02/1964](#) Deputy AG Katzenbach asks DOJ FARA section to prepare a "reply for his signature in a friendly rather than a hostile tone...to the effect that the material he submitted is not satisfactory..."

[01/10/1964](#) Deputy AG Katzenbach letter to AZC counsel "The material you submitted is much less useful than what I had expected you were going to submit and of course there is no disclosure unless the data is available for public inspection."

[01/16/1964](#) AZC counsel Rifkind to Katzenbach "I shall try to accommodate my trip to Washington to some occasion when I am there on other business..."

[02/03/1964](#) Nathan Lenvin meetings with AZC counsel Rifkind "Judge Rifkind opened the meeting by showing me a pamphlet distributed by the American Council for Judaism which contained charges that Zionists were acting as propaganda agents for the State of Israel...he was concerned that any disclosure which were being made should not be such as to substantiate these charges made by the American Council [for Judaism]... Mr. Rothenberg made one caveat, that they would have to be sure anything they submitted would not ultimately prejudice the organization in the eyes of the public."

[02/10/1964](#) Ed Guthman Letter to J. Walter Yeagley "I don't see how we can accept a caveat that an organization won't submit information that might prejudice it publicly."

[02/10/1964](#) J. Walter Yeagley letter to AZC counsel Rothenberg "the Department is not concerned with the Council's expenditures in connection with exempt activities such as Hebrew education and culture but requests that the Council submit a statement detailing its other expenditures and particularly those under the category of the Department of Information and Public Relations..."

[02/12/1964](#) AZC counsel Rothenberg acknowledgement "I acknowledge receipt of your letter..."

[03/16/1964](#) AZC counsel Rothenberg letter to Lenvin - "You are familiar, I know, with the agreement reached between Judge Rifkind and Mr. Katzenbach, in the presence of Mr. Yeagley, with regard to additional information to be furnished your Section. Such agreement was reached, as I understand it, in the realization by Mr. Katzenbach that with the present size of the staff of the Council it would be indeed burdensome to furnish your department with itemization of expenses of the past two years. A sample itemization was therefore forwarded to you for a period of approximately three months."

[03/16/1964](#) James Weldon FARA letter to Rothenberg "it is requested you advise of your progress in this matter".

[04/28/1964](#) AZC counsel Rothenberg letter to Weldon "Reference is made to my letter of March 16 addressed to Mr. Nathan B. Lenvin."

[04/30/1964](#) Assistant AG Yeagley note to Deputy Attorney General Katzenbach "This is the most blatant stall we have encountered. Do you mind suggesting what we do next because all of us here would call their records before a grand jury."

[05/4/1964](#) Assistant AG Yeagley note to Katzenbach forwarding 3/16/1964 Rothenberg inquiry "Here is tickler from Rothenberg about his March 16 letter on the American Zionist Council. Do you want me to do something on this?"

Lyndon B. Johnson President, Nicholas Katzenbach acting Attorney General

[10/07/1964](#) Acting AG Katzenbach letter to AZC counsel Rothenberg "While we have endeavored to make our requests as reasonable as possible, we cannot accept your suggestion since the information offered is not in compliance with the Act or what we thought our understanding was with Judge Rifkind."

[10/20/1964](#) Irene Bowman FARA section review of AZC filing for 1962 and 1962 - "sample itemization deemed deficient."

[10/30/1964](#) Nathan Lenvin notes October 22, 1964 DOJ-AZC meeting - "Mr. Katzenbach had to excuse himself shortly after the meeting commenced because of urgent business elsewhere, but before he left he made clear to Mr. Rothenberg that, in response to the latter's assertion that to submit all of the financial information we had previously requested for a two- to two-and-a-half year period would be a great burden on the subject, we would accept a statement as to a typical three month expenditure projected for the entire period concerned." Assistant AG Yeagley notes "They are to include the names for confid[ential] info of the Dept. not for public file."

[11/04/1964](#) AZC counsel Rothenberg letter "Pursuant to understanding reached at our meeting...I write to give you an outline of the information to be submitted."

[11/09/1964](#) Nathan Lenvin FARA section cover memo to Bowman "looks okay to me, please prepare a reply"

[11/18/1964](#) J. Walter Yeagley letter to AZC counsel Rothenberg "Your proposed outline of the information to be contained in the report appears to be in accordance with our understanding."

[11/23/1964](#) AZC counsel Rothenberg letter to Nathan Lenvin, FARA section - "In accordance with our understanding I have asked the American Zionist Council to proceed with the preparation of the report."

[01/19/1965](#) Irene Bowman FARA section memo to Nathan Lenvin - "To date to my knowledge no such report has been submitted."

Lyndon B. Johnson President, Nicholas Katzenbach Attorney General

[02/25/1965](#) Nathan Lenvin FARA memo to files - "The delay, according to Mr. Rothenberg, was caused by the inability of the subject to collect all of the information we wanted in the detail it was indicated..."

[03/02/1965](#) Harry A. Steinberg, Executive Director AZC cover letter and filing to FARA section "There is also enclosed herewith, in duplicate, a listing of persons who have received funds as shown in the record of disbursements. Mr. Rothenberg has requested of you that this listing be kept separate and apart from the record of disbursements in any public files in your Section."

[03/02/1965](#) AZC FARA section filing for April 1, 1962 to June 30, 1962 (public)

[03/02/1965](#) AZC FARA section filing for April 1, 1962 to June 30, 1962 (non-public)

[03/23/1965](#) Irene Bowman, FARA memo that AZC filing is in "substantial compliance" Irene Bowman handwritten note "I agree with the conclusion that the material be accepted and put into form for public examination."

[03/24/1965](#) Irene Bowman, FARA retraction and list of AZC filing inadequacies "While it appears possible to make up a registration statement from documents furnished by a prospective registrant, these documents should furnish all of the information required by the Act to be stated in a registration statement. The above material, none of which is executed under oath, fails to provide the following information which is material for the purpose of the Act..."

[03/31/1965](#) Nathan Lenvin file transfer to J. Walter Yeagley - "Attached hereto is the entire file relating to the American Zionist Council and our efforts to obtain its registration under the terms of the Foreign Agents Registration Act...In her memorandum to Files, Mrs. Bowman points out certain lacunae, which fail to establish all of this material as meeting all of the requirements for registration...we were well aware that no full and complete registration statement in the ordinary sense would ever be received...only alternative to a refusal to accept what has been submitted as compliance with the Act would be to institute prosecutive proceedings, which would be impractical...no useful purpose would be served by including these names in the material which would be made available for public inspection."

[4/08/1965](#) Nathan Lenvin instruction memo to Ulida Eldred, FARA section "The material filed by the American Zionist Council (AZC) was filed in accordance with an understanding between the Department and the AZC...If you should receive inquiries as to whether the AZC is registered under the Act, you should respond in the negative. You should advise, however, that the AZC has filed information with this Section which is available for public examination."

[05/17/1965](#) Nathan Lenvin / J. Walter Yeagley notice to files - "...material of the AZC was placed in an expandable portfolio to distinguish it in appearance from the registration statements which are filed in manila folders. In the event Mrs. Eldred receives inquiries as to whether the AZC is registered under the Act, she has been instructed to respond in the negative."

[05/14/1965](#) J. Walter Yeagley Yeagley requests closure of AZC case at the FBI "the material does not comprise a registration statement but does supply basic information regarding the activities of the AZC financed in part by the Jewish Agency..."

[05/20/1965](#) Nathan Lenvin to J. Walter Yeagley on special handling/case closure - Yeagley handwritten note "OK. This seems to be what attorney Gen[eral] Kennedy and the then Dep[uty] AG Katzenbach had in mind."

[06/22/1965](#) 05/17/1965 New York Times article: AZC convenes a major meeting at Jewish Agency New York headquarters "revising its program to strengthen every phase of Jewish religious and cultural life in this country...there should be no appeasement at the expense of Israel." FARA section file copy, reviewed by DOJ officials.

[11/27/1967](#) The American Israel Public Affairs Committee AIPAC applies for a federal tax exemption. The US Treasury Department grants it backdated to 1953.

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