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Moves to Seize Mosques Spark Outrage

The Feds allege the Alavi charitable foundation has ties to Iran

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Government authorities had long suspected that the Alavi charitable foundation, associated with the late shah of Iran, was linked to the country's current ruling theocracy. But it was not until last week that federal prosecutors in New York began legal action against the foundation, seizing its ownership share of the Piaget Building, a 36-story Fifth Avenue skyscraper in Manhattan situated not far from Rockefeller Center and the Museum of Modern Art. The Justice Department also moved to take over bank accounts, four mosques, and other properties across the country allegedly connected to the foundation, according to court papers.

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No allegations of wrongdoing were made against the tenants or occupants of the skyscraper or the mosque properties. All the facilities are likely to remain open while the forfeiture case winds its way through the courts in what could be a lengthy process, legal experts say. All told, the value sought in the case is more than \$500 million, making it one of the largest counterterrorism-related seizures in history.

The day the proceedings were announced, the White House renewed 30-year-old economic sanctions against Iran prohibiting companies from doing business there without a special license. Relations between the two countries, President Obama noted, "have not yet returned to normal."

The move comes at a tense period in Iranian-U.S. relations. The U.S. military is withdrawing substantial forces from neighboring Iraq, very likely leaving Iran with a stronger hand there as a result. There are also the perennial

diplomatic machinations over Tehran's nuclear program, which the West suspects of being an attempt to develop atomic weapons. And last week, Tehran announced it was

charging three Americans caught on the Iranian side of the Iran-Iraq border with espionage, an accusation Washington denies.

Word of the government's steps to seize mosques sent chills through the American Muslim community, already fearful of reprisals following the recent shootings at Fort Hood, allegedly by a Muslim gunman. "The timing couldn't be worse," said Ibrahim Hooper, national communications director for the Council on American-Islamic Relations. Yesterday, Hooper interrupted an evening of media calls about the pending mosque seizures to speak with police arriving at CAIR's Washington headquarters in response to death threats against the group in the days since the Fort Hood rampage.

Legal experts say there is little precedent for the federal takeover of houses of worship. But they note the government appears willing to allow the mosques to keep operating. "The effect on religious worship here may be minimal," says Roman Storzer, a partner at Storzer & Greene, a Washington firm that specializes in religious liberty cases. "It's too early to tell."

Nonetheless, many Muslims are outraged at the government's actions. "I'm extremely skeptical that the link between these mosques and this organization is so strong as to merit the seizing of a considerable amount of assets that do a lot of good for the Muslim community," says Shahed Amanullah, a prominent Muslim blogger based in Austin. "The government better be prepared to make a very good case, because this is unprecedented."

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Seize Mosques

According to the story, the congregations do not own the mosques, Alavi does. Now they have a new landlord. Whats the big deal?

hank_v of MT
Nov 18, 2009 11:26:17 AM
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Obama is a Type 2

For all the obvious reasons pertaining to American principles about Church and State, it is surprising that Obama seized the mosques.

Steve Wang of PA
Nov 18, 2009 11:13:48 AM
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OBAMA WOULD BE PISSED

danny of MN

What makes this especially surprising is that Obama had made it a big deal of going to the Middle East to say that he was going to be the Man to help bridge Muslims to the modern world.

But, clearly, in this case, seizing these mosques is just Obama's latest move in the deadly chess match with Iran. Issues about making friends with Muslims and issues about American principles of protecting the Church from State interference were set aside.

So is Obama doing something not in character?

Ringer, in his book, *Winning Through Intimidation*, says that there are 3 types of people:

1. The first type tells you he wants your chips, and then he proceeds to try to take them away from you.
2. The second type tells you he DOESN'T want your chips, but then he proceeds to try to take them away from you.
3. The third type, Ringer says, is the most dangerous. He tells you he doesn't want your chips. He BELIEVES he doesn't want your chips. But then he proceeds to try to take them away from you.

Clearly, George Bush was a believer. And Obama is revealing himself to be a Type 2.

I think we are now beginning to realize that Obama understood what he needed to say to get elected; but now that he is elected, what Obama actually does is solely a function of what is politically expedient at the moment. Whatever Obama said while campaigning, Obama treats as ancient history (only marginally relevant to today's modern world).

Obama has shown this attitude with regard to all sorts of

issues: gay rights, torture issues, freedom of information/transparency issues, etc. Obama said one thing while campaigning; but now that he is president, he underplays principle and does what is political expedient.

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Obama is not a great president, but I guess he is better than the apparent alternatives.

To paraphrase

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