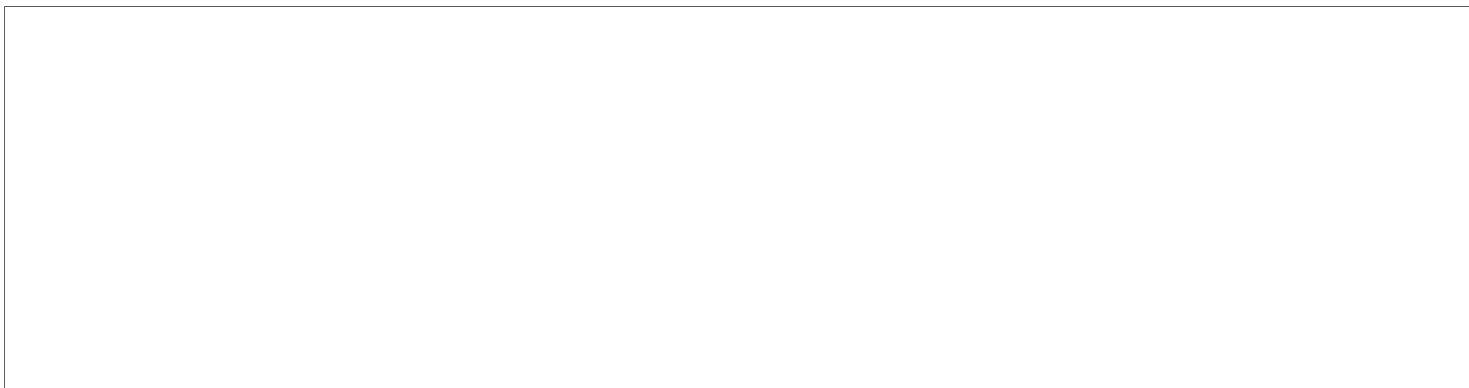


RELEASE IN
PART B5,B6

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, February 3, 2011 5:04 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Frank Wisner, the Diplomat Sent to Prod Mubarak

From: Feldman, Daniel F
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Sent: Thu Feb 03 03:40:34 2011
Subject: Fw: Frank Wisner, the Diplomat Sent to Prod Mubarak



B5

Thanks, as always, and good luck!
Dan

From: Rina Amiri [redacted]
To: Feldman, Daniel F; Singh, Vikram J; Barnett R Rubin [redacted]; Nasr, S Vali R; Pauli, Rosemarie; Ruggiero, Frank J
Sent: Wed Feb 02 22:31:02 2011
Subject: Frank Wisner, the Diplomat Sent to Prod Mubarak

B6

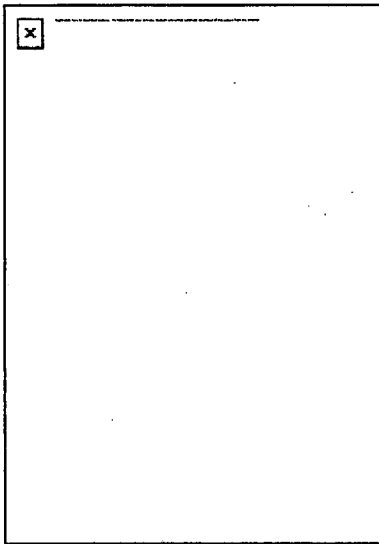
Frank Wisner, the Diplomat Sent to Prod Mubarak

By SHERYL GAY STOLBERG

Published: February 2, 2011

WASHINGTON — Once a month or so, a coterie of aging diplomats convenes at the elegant Metropolitan Club of New York. Over lunch in a glass-enclosed restaurant overlooking Central Park, they engage in verbal thrust and parry over the foreign policy issues of the day.

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Darko Vojnovic/Associated Press

Frank G. Wisner, a diplomat who came of age when U.S. power reigned supreme.

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The man who sits at the head of the table is Frank G. Wisner, a bald, barrel-chested, martini-drinking (he gave up cigars, friends say) 72-year-old retired ambassador and businessman. Like his lunch mates, he is of a distinct class in Washington: a corps of foreign policy realists who came of age in an era when American power reigned supreme, and who have the heft and experience to troubleshoot the crises of the moment.

When the United States and Iran headed into a stalemate on nuclear issues during the administration of George W. Bush — who had branded Iran part of the “axis of evil” — Mr. Wisner was among several well-connected former officials pursuing a “track two” process of back-channel communications to find a way out. (The effort fizzled.)

When Mr. Bush was contemplating war in Iraq, Mr. Wisner joined with Edward P. Djerejian, another fellow former ambassador, to publicly warn against it. Yet when Mr. Bush needed help bringing Kosovo to independence, his State Department deployed Mr. Wisner as chief negotiator there. (He was successful.)

“He’s one of the supreme American diplomats of the last 30 to 40 years,” said R. Nicholas Burns, who oversaw the Kosovo talks as under secretary of state.

This week, Mr. Wisner, whose stints around the globe have included four ambassadorships, one of them to Egypt, was briefly President Obama’s man in Cairo, charged with prodding an old friend, President Hosni Mubarak, to make his exit. How much effect he had was unclear. On Wednesday, as Mr. Mubarak resisted Mr. Obama’s demand for an immediate peaceful transition and each side dug in its heels, Mr. Wisner left the country.

“He wasn’t sent there to flatter him and hold his hand,” said Leslie H. Gelb, the longtime diplomat and journalist who co-founded the lunch club with Mr. Wisner. “He was sent there because he has a very close relationship with Mubarak, and because that’s the kind of person who can best deliver some hard messages.”

An imposing presence with a resonant voice whose last posting was as ambassador to India, Mr. Wisner has spent the years since his retirement in 1997 operating at the nexus of diplomacy and business. For more than a decade, he was vice chairman of the insurance giant A.I.G.; he left in 2009, just as the company was getting bailed out by American taxpayers, and joined the lobbying firm Patton Boggs.

He is well known in foreign policy circles, but not beyond them. Unlike the late Richard C. Holbrooke — the Obama administration envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, who was one of Mr. Wisner’s best friends — he does not crave the limelight. But he is respected enough that his name is being bandied about as a possible Holbrooke replacement, a job friends say he would be unlikely to take.

“He’s not a flashy fellow in the sense that Dick was,” said Morton I. Abramowitz, another longtime diplomat who knows Mr. Wisner well. “But he’s very solid, he studies the issues, he’s a very serious guy who works very quietly, very effectively and knows how to deal with people.”

Mr. Gelb put it this way: “Dick saw being a public figure as part of the power he needed to do what he wanted. Frank was much more of an inside man.”

But as did Mr. Holbrooke, Mr. Wisner relished the frisson of the diplomat’s life. He has been married twice to upper-crust French women; Mr. Wisner’s current wife, from whom he is separated, was once married to Pal Sarkozy, the father of President Nicolas Sarkozy of France.

He is accustomed to being dropped into chaotic situations. During the administration of the first President Bush, Mr. Wisner was sent to the Philippines to help stabilize the administration of President Corazon Aquino. She had survived several coup attempts by rogue elements of the Philippine military, and Mr. Wisner’s office in the United States Embassy was part of the old American governor-general’s suite.

Cigar in hand, he loved to take visitors out on the giant veranda overlooking the bay and describe the sweep of American interactions with the Philippines, back to the days of the Spanish-American War.

Here in Washington, news that Mr. Obama had tapped Mr. Wisner revived memories for some of an even more colorful Frank Wisner: Mr. Wisner’s father, a freewheeling if mentally unstable cold-war-era spy who helped found the modern C.I.A. and ran its clandestine service. The elder Mr. Wisner’s clandestine exploits were said to have included masterminding an anticommunist coup in Guatemala in 1954. He suffered a mental breakdown after the Soviets crushed the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and never quite recovered; in 1965, he committed suicide.

His son chose a more conventional path, the Foreign Service. He graduated from Princeton University in 1961, learned Arabic and pursued a career that took him from Algeria to Vietnam at the height of the war there, to Zambia, Egypt, the Philippines and India, with tours every so often back in Washington.

“I told Frank, ‘The title of ambassador does not suffice for you, Frank. We need to call you Pasha,’ ” said Mr. Djerejian, using the honorary title. “He reveled in the role of being an ambassador. He loved the substance and the trappings of the role, and was very enthusiastic about representing the United States abroad.”

At the monthly lunch meetings, Mr. Wisner plays the role of enforcer when the discussion gets too rowdy. The high-powered attendees include J. Stapleton Roy, an East Asia specialist and three-time ambassador, and Mr. Holbrooke before his death.

Mr. Gelb says they met for a time at an Albanian restaurant, which everyone liked, until Mr. Wisner insisted they move to the Metropolitan Club. Mr. Gelb decided it was a waste of time to negotiate.

“A Zambian minister once told me it was always easier to agree with Frank than to let the meeting go on for four days,” he said. “He has that kind of persistence.”