

From: David Fenton  
Date: January 10, 2013 8:00:22 PM EST  
To: James Fallows <[jfallows@nyu.edu](#)>  
Cc: Robert Naiman <[r.naiman@nyu.edu](#)>

I apologize for my error. He didn't go to jail he was sentenced to probation. He SHOULD have gone to jail

Here is the Wikipedia summary

During investigation of the [Iran-Contra Affair](#), Lawrence Walsh, the [Independent Counsel](#) tasked with investigating the case, prepared multiple felony counts against Abrams but never indicted him.<sup>[22]</sup> Instead, Abrams entered into a plea agreement with Walsh. Abrams pled guilty to two misdemeanors of withholding information from Congress.<sup>[23]</sup> He was sentenced to a \$50 fine, probation for two years, and 100 hours of community service. However, Abrams was pardoned by President George H. W. Bush, in December 1992 (as he was leaving office following his loss in that year in the U.S. presidential election). On February 5, 1997, the D.C. Court of Appeals publicly censured Abrams for giving false testimony on three occasions before congressional committees. Although a majority of the court voted to impose a public censure, three judges in the majority would have imposed a suspension of six months, and a fourth judge would have followed the recommendation of the Board on Professional Responsibility that Abrams be suspended for a year.

[edit]

David Fenton, CEO  
fenton

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On Jan 10, 2013, at 7:54 PM, "James Fallows" <[jfallows@nyu.edu](#)> wrote:

I am going to write something about this on the Atlantic's site. I cannot at the moment think of a comparable case in which:  
- Someone with comparably "reputable" institutional pedigree (I am talking about CFR, not Abrams personally given his own varied background)  
- Making a comparably bald "bigotry" charge  
- In a comparably high-stake confirmation debate.

And getting away with it. (Was there any single person who was as central to the "accusations" in Chas Freeman's case as Abrams, and his wife who's centrally involved in Emergency Committee for Israel, have been in this case?)

If someone has an analogy I'd be interested in hearing it. And I'm talking strictly in the post Joe McCarthy/Roy Cohn era.

On Thu, Jan 10, 2013 at 7:43 PM, Scott McConnell <[scottm@nyu.edu](#)> wrote:

I'm hearing that from other people, even some (non-Jewish) but until now thoroughly house-broken neocons.

Abrams and the neocons are reaching the Army-McCarthy-hearing point and expect a Joseph ("Have you no sense of decency, Sir") Welch point. They are digging their own political grave here.

Sent from my iPad

On Jan 10, 2013, at 7:21 PM, David Fenton <[dfenton@nyu.edu](#)> wrote:

i think Elliot should go back to jail.

David Fenton, CEO  
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On Jan 10, 2013, at 7:20 PM, "Chas Freeman" <[chfreeman@nyu.edu](#)> wrote:

## Elliott Abrams's Truth Problem

by [Ali Gharib](#) Jan 9, 2013 2:45 PM EST

Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the council on Foreign Relations Elliott Abrams testifies before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. (Jim Watson / AFP / Getty Images)

Why does anyone still take [Elliott Abrams](#) seriously? After a role in a [scandalous cover-up of U.S.-backed atrocities](#) in El Salvador in the 1980s, Abrams was finally held to account, if only for a decade, when he plead to convictions on two misdemeanor counts—and was disbarred—for lying to Congress, under oath, in the Iran-Contra affair. By the 21st century, however, Abrams was back and took up residence in the second Bush administration, where he led the way on [disastrous policy](#) after [disastrous policy](#). And yet Abrams's postings under Bush somehow rehabilitated his image, leading after his departure from government to a posting at the prestigious Council on Foreign Relations. Despite what you think might be a well-established lack of credibility and judgement, Abrams got [invited by National Public Radio](#) to discuss the nomination of Chuck Hagel to serve as Barack Obama's defense chief. Here's the rather remarkable ending of the exchange with host Melissa Block:

ABRAMS: I think he has a chance at his confirmation hearing to show that he is not what he appears to be, which is frankly an anti-Semite. It's not just being anti-Israel. He's got a problem with what he calls "the Jews," "the Jewish lobby." I think if he cannot satisfy people that he is not, in fact, bigoted against Jews, he certainly should not be confirmed.

BLOCK: You're saying, Mr. Abrams, that you consider Chuck Hagel to be an anti-Semite, not just have to positions on Israel that you don't agree with, but you consider him to be an anti-Semite.

ABRAMS: I think if you look at statements by Hagel, and then you look at the statements by the Nebraska Jewish community - about his unresponsiveness to them, his dismissal of them, his hostility to them—I don't understand really how you can reach any other conclusion that he seems to have some kind of problem with Jews. ...There's an animus here, an animus that was visible to the Jews of the Nebraska. And that's what the committee needs to look into.

I was surprised that Block sounded surprised at Abrams's answer. After all, Abrams [wrote more or less the same same thing](#) on the website of the *Weekly Standard*, the very publication that [launched the first attack scurrilously labeling Hagel an anti-Semite](#). In the piece, Abrams cited the testimony of several members of the Nebraska Jewish community who go on at great length in an article for a far-right wing Jewish newspaper. Abrams went on: "And the record seems unchallenged: Nebraskan Jewish activists and officials have said he was hostile, and none—including Obama supporters and Democratic party activists—have come forward to counter that allegation." Except the unanimity Abrams relies on simply does not exist. Late last year, the Israeli-born Rabbi Aryeh Azriel of Temple Israel in Omaha, Nebraska, [wrote the local paper](#) to note his long friendship with Hagel and recounted the defense chief-designate's visits to his congregation. The next day, Azriel told the *Huffington Post* that the anti-Semitism accusations against Hagel were ["extremely stupid, and definitely not helpful."](#)

Earlier this week, I spoke to another member of the Nebraska Jewish community, Richard Robinson, the head of Norfolk Iron and Metal in Norfolk, Nebraska. "The guy would be a superb Secretary of Defense. He's very intelligent. He's very worldly," Robinson said of Hagel, whom he described as a friend of nearly 20 years. I asked about the allegations of anti-Semitism, like those hurled by Abrams: "That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. He's very fair and open-minded," Robinson told me. "He doesn't have an ounce of bigotry in him. He's not anti-Semitic; he's not anti-Israel. I can't believe people are making these accusations about him." If Abrams had bothered to do a little research instead of relying solely on a right-wing newspaper, he would have seen that the unanimity he holds up is a sham.

The other story Abrams recounts to insist that Hagel's Senate confirmation hearing focus on purported anti-Semitism is the case of the USO station in Haifa, Israel. A decorated Vietnam vet, Hagel helmed the USO, an organization dedicated to caring for military service members abroad. Accusations recently surfaced on a neoconservative blog alleging that Hagel sought to shutter the Haifa USO station (with some alleged unsavory language along the way). At the *Standard*, Abrams cited the blog: "The Israeli who headed the USO site, Gila Gerson, was later given a prize by the U.S. Navy for her work. There seems little doubt that USO Haifa was immensely successful and valued," he wrote. "It's in that context that Hagel's 1989 effort to shut it down, and his comments when doing so, become problematic." The original right-wing item noted in passing that, in fact, under Hagel's leadership the Haifa station was [kept open](#) even as ten others in the region closed. (Hagel took the indebted organization into the black, which as recently as last Nov. 3 was the sort of thing Republican partisans held up as a qualification to be President, let alone Defense chief.) What's more, the research was again lacking: the *Atlantic's* [Steve Clemons bothered to get on the horn](#) to Gerson (also Gerzon). "I admire him. I have great respect for him," the longtime USO Haifa head told Clemons. "For me, it was an absolute gift of God and for our volunteers when Chuck Hagel came to Israel." Clemons also spoke to a host of other American and Israeli officials involved with the USO who were roundly supportive of Obama's defense pick, and concluded that this neoconservative attack, too, was "groundless."

Abrams wrote that Hagel has not apologized for being anti-Semitic, as [he did for his anti-gay remarks](#) nearly a decade and a half ago. Again, Abrams doesn't note the [report](#) by the *Washington Post's* Dana Milbank that, with regard to the term "Jewish lobby," "Hagel said he misspoke (he used the phrase "Israel lobby" elsewhere in the interview)." Of course, an apology would be admitting guilt—something Hagel was right to do for his anti-gay remarks. Only Hagel's supposed anti-Semitism is a slander pushed [almost exclusively by a small coterie of neoconservatives](#). The only relatively moderate Israel lobby group carrying this mantle is the American Jewish Committee, which, much to its shame, continues to suggest Hagel is soft on anti-Semitism by [pushing a story](#) of Hagel refusing to sign a single letter by [omitting any of the context](#). Even Abe Foxman has [backed away](#) from anti-Semitism allegations.

Abrams's remarks about Hagel are getting noticed: the Council on Foreign Relations, as establishment as think tanks get, is [facing pressure](#) to be answerable for its fellow's baseless accusations. Remarkably, CFR pushed out Henry Siegman after ["complaints from Jewish members"](#) about his outspoken criticisms of Israel's right-wing leadership. One wonders if the group faces similar complaints about Abrams's conduct. And that gets at the real scandal here, which is not Chuck Hagel's record, but that anyone takes Abrams at his word despite his voluminous history of mendacity.

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Ali Gharib is a Senior Editor for Open Zion, where he writes about the intersection of U.S. foreign policy and the Middle East. Before joining the Daily Beast, he reported for ThinkProgress, Inter Press Service and other outlets.

For inquiries, please contact The Daily Beast at [editorial@thedailybeast.com](#).

On Thu, Jan 10, 2013 at 6:58 PM, Robert Naiman <[r.naiman@nyu.edu](#)> wrote:

What specifically do you think of CFR's response to the criticism? Doesn't CFR have some culpability by giving Abrams a credential and institutional affiliation that helps him gain access to mainstream media to do what he is doing? I'm not saying that I think that CFR should necessarily terminate their relationship with Abrams; I'm just saying that I don't think CFR's response is adequate. I think CFR should have some standards for its fellows about promoting civil, fact-based democratic public discourse on U.S. foreign policy. I'm genuinely curious to know what other folks think about this.

On Thu, Jan 10, 2013 at 5:22 PM, Chas Freeman <[chfreeman@nyu.edu](#)> wrote:

Robert:

This is, of course, an outrage. But it's also typical of the way the anti-Semitic smear is banded about these days.

Elliot Abrams is an ardent armchair Zionist who thinks that a commitment to Israel is an essential qualification for public service in the United States. Abrams doubts that Hagel has such a commitment. Abrams thus "has a problem" with Hagel. Abrams is a Jew. Ergo, he asserts, Jews have a problem with Hagel. Logically, therefore, Hagel has a problem with Jews. What slimy nonsense!

But NPR is far from the only media outlet to fail to note or challenge the bizarre reasoning on which this baseless slander rests.

Chas

On Thu, Jan 10, 2013 at 5:31 PM, Robert Naiman <[r.naiman@nyu.edu](#)> wrote:

It seems to me that CFR's response to Elliott Abrams going on NPR and calling Hagel an anti-Semite was quite inadequate. What do you think?

"As you may know, the Council on Foreign Relations takes no institutional position on matters of policy," CFR's vice president for global communications and media relations Lisa Shields told *Al-Monitor* by email Tuesday. "The views expressed by our more than seventy experts, who reflect a broad range of backgrounds and perspectives, are theirs only."

<http://backchannel.al-monitor.com/index.php/2013/01/3889/sen-nelson-netanyahu-raised-no-concerns-about-hagel/>

Is it "matters of policy" at issue here? Here's what Abrams said on NPR:

ABRAMS: I think he has a chance at his confirmation hearing to show that he is not what he appears to be, which is frankly an anti-Semite. It's not just being anti-Israel. He's got a problem with what he calls "the Jews," the Jewish lobby. I think if he cannot satisfy people that he is not, in fact, bigoted against Jews, he certainly should not be confirmed.

BLOCK: You're saying, Mr. Abrams, that you consider Chuck Hagel to be an anti-Semite, not just have to positions on Israel that you don't agree with, but that you consider him to be an anti-Semite.

ABRAMS: I think if you look at the statements by Hagel, and then you look at the statements by the Nebraska Jewish community - about his unresponsiveness to them, his dismissal of them, his hostility to them - I don't understand really how you can reach any other conclusion that he seems to have some kind of problem with Jews.

Here's how Abrams is identified by NPR:

BLOCK: Elliott Abrams is a senior fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

## - Hagel Critic: 'He Seems To Have Some Kind Of Problem With Jews'

<http://www.npr.org/2013/01/07/168817789/hagel-critic-he-seems-to-have-some-kind-of-problem-with-jews>

It's Elliott Abrams' CFR affiliation which NPR is implicitly saying justifies putting him on NPR.

Is it "matters of policy" which are at stake here?

People across the United States now think that Hagel is an anti-Semite because they "heard it on NPR." Most Americans don't know who Elliott Abrams is, and what his non-CFR affiliations are.

What is CFR's responsibility for this situation?

—  
Robert Naiman  
Policy Director  
Just Foreign Policy