

SPOOKY TIMING

I assume this is a coinkydink. But oh what a coinkydink it is.

Sergei Tretyakov, a high-ranking Russian spy whose defection to the United States in 2000 was regarded as one of the most significant coups against the Russian government since the collapse of the Soviet Union, died June 13 at his home in Osprey, Fla.

Mr. Tretyakov's wife said he died after suffering a heart attack, according to Pete Earley, the author of a book about Mr. Tretyakov. The former Russian spy was 53 and news of his death was withheld at the request of his family pending an investigation into the cause, Earley said.

[snip]

At the time of his defection on Oct. 11, 2000, Mr. Tretyakov allegedly had been working as a double agent for the United States for three years while he was the SVR's second-in-command in New York. From 1995 to 2000, he oversaw all Russian covert operations in the city and had more than 60 intelligence officers under his command, according to [a book by Pete Earley on Tretyakov].

The intelligence Mr. Tretyakov handed over during his time as a double agent amounted to more than 5,000 top-secret SVR cables and scores of classified Russian intelligence reports. He wrote an estimated 400 papers for the CIA, the FBI, the State Department and the White House.

The WaPo doesn't say it explicitly, but Tretyakov was, at the time of his defection, the First Secretary at the Russian Mission to the UN

in NYC. The Russian handlers of the illegal spy ring just swapped back to Russia served in the same kind of role (Russian Official #2, who is described in most detail in the complaints on the spies, is or was the Second Secretary to the Russian Mission). And the FBI has had the network of illegals under surveillance since at least 2000, suggesting that Tretyakov likely alerted the US of the extent of the ring when he defected (the FBI started surveillance before he defected, but if he was a double agent as has been reported, he may have tipped the US off to the ring).

And look at how it lines up with the discussions of and timing of the bust:

June 5: Mikhail Semenko's laptop chats with Russian Official #2 surveilled

June 9: Chapman's laptop chats with Russian Official #1 surveilled

June 11: Obama briefed about Russian spy swap

June 13: Tretyakov dies

June 16: Chapman's laptop chats with Russian Official #1 surveilled

June 18: Obama chairs NSC meeting on Russian spy swap

June 24: Obama and Dmitri Medvedev go to Ray's Hell Burger

June 25: Complaint against 9 spies dated

June 26: FBI collects evidence against last two remaining spies; FBI agent says to Chapman, "I know you are going back to Moscow in two weeks."

June 27: Spies arrested

June 29: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov complains about timing of arrest; Obama reported to be miffed about timing of arrest; DOJ attributes timing to pending travel—presumably Chapman's

Week of July 5: White House almost
cancels spy swap because names of
proposed spies in Russia leaked

July 8: Spy swap completed

July 10: Two weeks after FBI Agent said
Chapman would be traveling to Russian in
two weeks; Tretyakov's death reported

The family may have withheld news of Tretyakov's death by the heart problem he had had his entire life, but the delay also happened to have delayed news of his death until the spying activity he was originally part of was—at a minimum—exposed as part of this spy sting. And note the meetings involving President Obama on arresting the illegals and conducting the spy swap happened within a week before and after his Tretyakov's death.

So maybe it's not such a coinkydink after all...