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The Direct Chain from Vegas Mafia to Trump Bombing Iran

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There is a direct financial pipeline — documented in federal investigations, court filings, and the president's own public statements — connecting organized crime money laundered through casino operations to the bombs now falling on Iran. It is not a conspiracy theory. It is a description of how American foreign policy actually works in the post-*Citizens United* era, and tracing it requires only that we follow the money with the same rigor we'd apply to any other criminal enterprise.

I want to be precise about what I'm claiming and what I'm not. I am not alleging that any single individual in this chain is a "mobster" in the Hollywood sense. What I am documenting is something more systemic and arguably more dangerous: a financial ecosystem in which organized crime revenue flows through the casino industry, accumulates as personal fortune, converts into political donations, and ultimately purchases specific foreign policy outcomes — including the war now being waged against Iran.

The Mob Built Vegas

This part isn't controversial. Las Vegas was built by organized crime — specifically the intertwined Jewish and Italian mafias of the mid-twentieth century. Meyer Lansky, born Meier Suchowljański in Belarus, became the financial architect of American organized crime, partnering with Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel and Charles "Lucky" Luciano to create what the press called the National Crime Syndicate. Lansky's genius was organizational: he built the infrastructure for cooperation between Jewish and Italian criminal networks, particularly in gambling operations in Florida, Cuba, and Las Vegas.

Siegel built the Flamingo Hotel with mob money. After he was murdered in 1947 for running up debts through theft and mismanagement, the syndicate accelerated development of the Las Vegas Strip and ruled the town for decades. Figures like Moe Dalitz — a bootlegger turned casino developer who was given the key to Las Vegas in 1979 — bridged the gap between outright organized crime and the "legitimate" casino industry that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s.

The “corporatization” of Las Vegas is often presented as a clean break with this criminal past. It wasn’t. It was more like a laundering of the industry itself — the same city, the same buildings in some cases, the same fundamental business model of extracting enormous sums from gamblers, just with new ownership structures and compliance departments layered on top.

Enter Sheldon Adelson

Sheldon Adelson made his initial fortune in the trade show business, selling COMDEX for about $860 million in 1995. But his transformation from wealthy businessman to one of the world’s richest men came through casinos — specifically through purchasing one of the most iconic mob-era properties in Las Vegas and then expanding into the organized-crime-saturated gambling markets of Asia.

In 1988, Adelson bought the Sands Hotel and Casino — literally a landmark of the Rat Pack era, steeped in mob history — for $110 million. He demolished it and spent $1.5 billion constructing The Venetian, which opened in 1999. But the real money, the tens of billions, came from Macau.

The Macau Connection: Triads and Money Laundering

Adelson’s Las Vegas Sands opened the Venetian Macao in 2007 and announced plans to invest $12 billion on the Cotai Strip. At its peak, roughly 85 percent of Las Vegas Sands’ net revenue came from Asia, according to the Las Vegas Sun. And it is in these Asian operations that the organized crime connections become explicit and documented.

ProPublica’s investigation revealed that Las Vegas Sands granted tens of millions of dollars in credit to a junket operation backed by Cheung Chi Tai, a Hong Kong businessman named in a 1992 U.S. Senate report as a leader of the Wo Hop To Triad — a Chinese organized crime gang. The company also did business with Charles Heung, a Hong Kong film producer identified as an office holder in a triad organization. These weren’t peripheral relationships; the junket system was the primary mechanism through which high-rolling gamblers — the “whales” who generated the bulk of casino revenue — were delivered to the tables.

The Campaign for Accountability formally asked the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and the Federal Election Commission to investigate whether illegally laundered foreign funds were making their way into the campaign coffers of American politicians through Adelson's operations. They documented that Cheung Chi Tai's criminal ties included involvement in a murder-for-hire scheme, and that he was facing money laundering charges in Hong Kong. They also documented Adelson's connections to Ng Lap Seng, a Chinese billionaire facing bribery charges in New York, described in a report commissioned by Las Vegas Sands itself as a triad member who controlled prostitution in Macau.

U.S. government reports confirm that Macau casinos relied on triads to supply them with profitable junkets. The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission reported to Congress in 2013 that triads exploited the loosely regulated junket industry to launder money. This wasn't a secret. It was the business model.

Federal Investigations — Plural

The federal scrutiny of Adelson's operations was extensive and multi-jurisdictional. The Los Angeles U.S. Attorney's office investigated Las Vegas Sands' handling of millions of dollars from Zhenli Ye Gon, a Chinese-born Mexican national later indicted for dealing in materials used to manufacture methamphetamine. Another "whale" under scrutiny, Ausaf Umar Siddiqui, had sent more than $100 million to the Sands before being convicted of taking illegal kickbacks.

Bloomberg reported that the DOJ probed the Singapore Marina Bay Sands casino, issuing grand jury subpoenas to a former compliance chief seeking documents on "money laundering facilitation" and abuse of internal financial controls.

ProPublica documented that Adelson personally instructed a top executive to pay about $700,000 in legal fees to Leonel Alves, a Macau legislator, despite warnings from the company's general counsel and an outside law firm that the arrangement could violate the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. In 2015, Sands agreed to pay a $9 million settlement with the SEC — with no admission of wrongdoing. The ousted

CEO of Sands China, Steven Jacobs, claimed he was fired because he was unwilling to collect sensitive information on Chinese officials to exert "leverage" on them, and fought for years to have documents released exposing ties between Sands associates and Chinese organized crime.

Let me be clear: Adelson was never convicted of any crime. The investigations were settled for relatively small penalties or faded away. But the pattern — documented by federal investigators, ProPublica, the Campaign for Accountability, and Adelson's own former executives — establishes beyond reasonable doubt that the Las Vegas Sands empire operated at the intersection of legitimate gambling and organized crime across three continents.

The Washing Machine

The casino industry has always functioned as a meeting point between legitimate capital and criminal capital. It doesn't need to *be* the mob; it just needs to not ask too many questions about where the money on the table comes from. And in return, enormous fortunes accumulate that then get redeployed into "legitimate" channels — real estate, media, and most consequentially, politics.

The pattern is consistent across every jurisdiction where Adelson operated. In Las Vegas, the industry grew out of the Lansky-Siegel era, and the corporatization was more rebranding than severing. In Macau, the relationship with triads was structural and operational. In Singapore, similar money laundering concerns prompted DOJ subpoenas. At every point, the business interfaced with criminal networks, processed their money, and converted it into legitimate wealth. The casino is the washing machine. It always has been. It takes money that can't be explained and turns it into money that can.

From Casino Fortune to Foreign Policy: The Adelson-Israel Pipeline

And here is where the chain becomes truly consequential. The fortune accumulated at this intersection of gambling and organized crime became — and this is not disputed by anyone — the single largest source of political funding shaping American Middle East policy for over a decade.

According to Track AIPAC, pro-Israel interest groups have spent over $230 million benefiting Donald Trump since 2020, with Adelson's Preserve America PAC alone pouring over $215 million into presidential elections. The Adelson family has sent approximately $600 million in reported political contributions to support Trump's three presidential campaigns and other Republican races since 2015.

Trump himself has been remarkably candid about what this money bought. Speaking to the Israeli Knesset, Trump boasted that "Miriam and Sheldon would come into the White House probably almost more than anybody outside of people that work there." He credited the Adelsons for specific policy outcomes, boasting that they were "responsible for so much" during his first term, including when he "terminated the disastrous Iran nuclear deal."

Most remarkably, Trump admitted on record that he asked Miriam Adelson whether she loves the United States or Israel more, and that she refused to answer. "That might mean Israel," Trump said, smiling. He then credited her influence for when he "terminated Iran's nuclear program with things called B-2 bombers."

The late Sheldon Adelson's position on Iran was not subtle. In 2013, as Responsible Statecraft documented, Adelson proposed that President Obama should scrap nuclear negotiations with Iran and instead fire a nuclear weapon into "the middle of the Iranian desert." He was quoted saying, "I really don't care what happens to Iran."

And the appointment of key officials follows the money. Trump himself tweeted in 2015 that "Sheldon Adelson is looking to give big dollars to Rubio because he feels he can mold him into his perfect little puppet." Marco Rubio is now simultaneously Secretary of State and interim National Security Advisor — an unprecedented consolidation of foreign policy power. At AIPAC's 2025 Congressional Summit, the organization's CEO bragged about having cultivated influence with three top national security officials in the Trump administration, naming Rubio specifically.

The War Room

According to NBC News reporting from June 2025, Trump's decision-making circle on Iran is remarkably small: JD Vance, Susie Wiles, Stephen Miller, and Marco Rubio. He has sidelined DNI Tulsi Gabbard — who testified in March 2025 that 18 US intelligence agencies assess Iran is not building a nuclear weapon — and has not been routinely consulting Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth. The people with institutional knowledge about whether the threat is real are excluded. The people in the room are political operatives and a Secretary of State installed at the behest of the administration's largest donor.

Stephen Walt at Foreign Policy has described this as a betrayal of Trump's base, noting that Trump "proved unable to overcome the dominance of Iran hawks inside the Republican Party." Tucker Carlson has called the attacks "absolutely disgusting and evil." As CNN reported, Trump has now launched a "massive and ongoing" military campaign alongside Israel that he himself describes as "war," warning it could cost American lives. The man who ran as the peace candidate has become exactly what he denounced.

The Israel Connection: From Lansky to the Knesset

There is a historical dimension here that deserves acknowledgment. The connection between organized crime and the state of Israel is not a conspiracy theory — it is documented history. Several notable Jewish-American mobsters provided financial support for Israel from the country's earliest days. Jewish-American gangsters used Israel's Law of Return to flee criminal charges. A Wikileaks cable titled "Israel: The Promised Land of Organized Crime?" revealed that American diplomats expressed grave concern about Israeli organized crime figures and took measures to prevent members of crime families from obtaining U.S. visas.

Meyer Lansky himself attempted to use the Law of Return to relocate to Israel in 1970 when facing federal pressure. Prime Minister Golda Meir ultimately denied him entry. But the broader pattern — of organized crime wealth flowing into pro-Israel political channels — did not end with Lansky's generation. It evolved and scaled.

Miriam Adelson was born in Tel Aviv and served as an officer in the Israeli military. She owns Israel Hayom, Israel's most widely circulated newspaper, which functions as a propaganda vehicle for Netanyahu's agenda. She is a megadonor to Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. After October 7, she wrote a column calling for dismissing Israel's critics worldwide, declaring they "should be dead to us." This is the person whose $250 million in donations Trump credits for his Iran policy. A dual Israeli-American national whose primary loyalty, by the president's own account, may be to a foreign country.

The Full Circuit

Let me trace the complete chain one more time, because the clarity matters. Chinese triads and organized crime figures funnel money through Macau casino junkets. Las Vegas Sands processes these transactions, allegedly ignoring money laundering red flags — as documented by multiple federal investigations. The resulting profits make the Adelson family one of the world's wealthiest. The Adelsons then channel over $600 million into American political campaigns, with explicit demands for specific Middle East policy outcomes. Those investments produce: the embassy move to Jerusalem, withdrawal from the JCPOA, and now the bombing — and full-scale war — against Iran.

The old mob guys — Lansky, Siegel, Dalitz — they bribed city councilmen and judges. They bought local cops and state legislators. What the post-Citizens United era enabled was the same basic operation scaled to purchasing the foreign policy of the world's most powerful nation. The mechanism is identical — money from morally compromised sources converted into political influence — just operating at a vastly larger scale, with vastly larger consequences.

And nobody in a position of authority has seriously tried to trace the full circuit, because doing so would implicate the entire system: the campaign finance regime, the casino industry's regulatory framework, and the basic premise that a dual-national billionaire should be able to purchase Middle East policy outcomes with gambling revenue of questionable provenance.

The Logic of Empire, Purchased

What this chain reveals is not merely corruption in the conventional sense. It is something more fundamental: the mechanism by which the logic of empire gets operationalized. The abstract forces we talk about when we discuss American imperialism — the military-industrial complex, the Israel lobby, the erosion of democratic governance — are not abstract at all. They are concrete financial flows, traceable from specific sources to specific policy outcomes.

The war with Iran was not an intelligence-driven response to a genuine threat. Our own intelligence community — all 18 agencies — has consistently assessed that Iran is not building nuclear weapons. The war was not demanded by the American public, who polls consistently show have no interest in another Middle East conflict. The war was not even consistent with the stated ideology of the administration that launched it, whose architects ran as peace candidates and who described their opponents as warmongers.

The war was purchased. And the currency was a fortune built at the intersection of organized crime and gambling, wielded by individuals whose primary allegiance is to a foreign nation's strategic interests.

This is the direct chain from Vegas mafia to Trump bombing Iran. Every link is documented. The only thing missing is the institutional will to see it whole.

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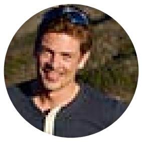

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