
Chapter 15

Another lie

I would like to share with you, the reader, why I feel it necessary to go into so much detail about this part of my story. Dealing with the Iranian government was an unending circle of frustration and dishonesty. A friend of my brother who used to work in one of the government offices in Iran said they would use different color pens when they signed a document in order to send messages to each other. For example, if they used blue ink, it meant to stall the person. If they used red ink, it meant to refuse their request. This way they could silently work together to cause hardship for certain individuals, and sadly, I was one of them!

One of our relatives, Hossain, a ranking member in the military, met two Navy Colonels in a meeting and talked with them in reference to my situation. He then asked them to check with Col. Mirshekar to see if there were anything they could do to resolve my problem so I could leave the country and go to my family. Hossain himself had spoken with other military lawyers and found out that there was no merit in the demands of the Personnel Department about the conversion of the money in my case.

Later on when Hossain spoke with one of the Colonels again, he said that Colonel Mirshekar expressed **that the problem was not with him, but with the Budget and Credit Department. They had created all the problems**

and were asking for more money in US dollars. He told them everything he had done was to help me!

I was taking notes about all these misrepresentations by different people and pointing them out to Nader. He often bragged about Iran, and how much they have achieved and how he believed in the system of their government. Though I was already at my wits end, I did not want to discourage him about his country. I tried to patiently wait to see how much longer Nader could take the lies and trickery of those people.

The following Friday, my aunt came to Karaj to purchase an apartment house and I went along to see how things would go. Being away all these years, I was very curious about how dealings and transactions went on a day to day basis. The next day, I went along with Nader to take his daughter, Mahdieh, to a hospital because she was not feeling well and she was due to have a baby any day. Her mom (my sister) was with us as well. We took them to the hospital, and then headed back to the Navy base.

We went straight to the Budget and Credit Department and spoke with Mr. Goodarzi and Captain Salehi, his boss. They already had a letter prepared and changed everything from Rial to Dollar at the rate of 30 years ago, it was calculated for \$43k. Nader looked at the letter and found some mistakes. They converted all the money instead of only a portion that was characterized as “mission expenses”. These were probably related to the summer training I attended with the U.S. Marine, Air Force, and Navy each year I was at the Citadel. Nader questioned the calculation and showed them the correct conversion of the expenses. They corrected the calculation and it changed to \$37,300 all together, then they gave us a copy of it. Now it needed to be

signed by their department head! (Another un-necessary run-around!).

From there, we went to see Col. Ansari at the personnel Department. He did not act like the same person as before toward us and started complaining by telling us that he had prepared this letter two weeks ago and except for a phone call from me, no one came to take care of it. I told him to be happy and smile, for we had been busy and told him about our discoveries and whom we talked to, as well as our letter of complaint against the parties involved. He then became calmer and said perhaps the next person would not have to deal with the same issues any more.

Now, here is what surprised me about those letters that they had to write back and forth to each other, which made me very apprehensive:

- *The letters were not on any official papers with headings such as: “Iranian Navy or the Personnel Department, etc.”*
- *Most of their communications could have been handled by a phone call or using one of their soldiers to courier for speed and reliability.*
- *They had created this method of communication to deliberately give me a run-around and to prolong my stay there, for some unknown reasons to me.*

Perhaps they wanted a bribe from me since they kept hinting about it in many indirect ways. Col. Ansari many times expressed that I should not offer him anything as a gift, not even something as small as a pencil because he would not accept them, as he was only doing his job. He also said that if he paid too much attention to my case, some

people in his office might think that I had brought a bag of money into his office. One of my relatives told me that it sounded like he wanted bribe money by the way he talked, for this is the way they talk when they want something under the table. It is an indirect way of telling you what they want and it is a common practice by many in Iran.

On Monday, May 16, I called the Navy and spoke with Captain Salehi in the Budget and Credit Department. I told him my name and that I was calling to see if the letter was ready and signed by the department head.”

He responded, “Oh, I just talked to the commander about signing the Letter of Approval, and it should be ready for you to pick up today.” But later on, I learned that it was neither signed nor reviewed by anyone yet.

I was getting tired and agitated, and as a result we did not go back to the Navy base for a couple of days. Furthermore, Nader needed to take care of his wife, his daughter and the new born baby too. However, when we did go back to the base and spoke with Captain Salehi, he said that he had sent the letter to his commander but he had not received a response yet.

I asked him where his commander’s office was located at, that we might go there to help finish the process. He pointed to the building in the same base and the name of the person to see.

I asked him to please call his commander and let him know that we were coming to see him. This time Ali was with me to help take care of these matters.

We went to the engineering building where the commander’s office was and spoke with Mr. Alemi. He was

tall and skinny, but in civilian clothes. He looked for the letter but could not find it. He then asked us for the file number. We did not have that, so I asked him to please call Captain Salehi and get the number or whatever else he needs.

These people were making me so irritated on purpose by acting so irresponsible, and the reality was, they had us by our tails and we could not do anything about it except to play their games. I had to stay calm and in control of my emotions, for I did not want to let them know that what they were doing was bothering me.

Then he called Captain Salehi, got the number, entered it into his computer and was able to find the letter he wanted. He then brought it to where we were and started by telling us that the conversion of the money may be wrong. Just as he began to question us about it, I interrupted him by saying; “Mr. Alemi, I do not wish to go there. We are accepting the letter just the way it is and this is also the wish of the Personnel Department, so go ahead, approve it, and let us go on with their plan.”

After 30 minutes he came back with another letter consisting of two lines saying “We approved this letter and here is our signature”. (What a joke!)

We then took the sealed envelope back to the Budget and Credit Department and asked Captain Salehi, What was left to do? This is what he said:

1. We now need to send this letter back to the Personnel Department for approval.
2. Then it goes to the Finance Department, and from there, it goes to the bank.

3. Once paid, I would then come back with a receipt and they will send that back to the Personnel Department, then from there to the Information Department.
4. They would send another letter to the Military Courthouse to clear my name.
5. Then the court will let the airport know that I am free to leave the country.

I could not believe what I was hearing! I knew that each one of those steps could take days or weeks but before I could respond, Captain Salehi turned to his lieutenant, Mr. Jafari, and asked him to hurry up the process by writing another letter to the Personnel Department to help keep me from making this long trip again.

The Lieutenant agreed but made his biggest mistake by telling me while we were all still in the same room, “Mr. Saïd, your letter will not be ready today; you need to call or come back tomorrow!”

That was the moment I was waiting for. I now knew for sure what I had suspected for quite some time. They had no intention of letting me go easily, if ever. Every day that I was

there was making it easier for them to attach something to my case. Even if I had paid the money they were demanding, I doubted that they would let me go.

I was not sure what to do next, but something was about to happen that would change everything. God's hand was moving!
