

he was a scholar for twenty years and now holds the similarly named chair at the [Foundation for Defense of Democracies](#).

Academic career

Ledeen holds a Ph.D. in History and Philosophy from the [University of Wisconsin–Madison](#) where he studied under the [Jewish](#) German-born historian [George Mosse](#). His doctoral dissertation eventually became *Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, 1928–1936*, first published in 1972. The book was the first work to explore Italian leader [Benito Mussolini](#)'s efforts to create a Fascist international in the late 1920s and early 1930s. After leaving the University of Wisconsin-Madison Ledeen taught at [Washington University in St. Louis](#) but left after being denied tenure. Some faculty indicated that questions about the "quality of his scholarship" and about whether or not Ledeen had "used the work of somebody else without proper credit" were issues, although some also noted that "the 'quasi-irregularity' at issue didn't warrant the negative vote on tenure."^[1]

Ledeen subsequently moved to [Rome](#), where he was hired as the Rome correspondent for *The New Republic* and was named a visiting professor at the [University of Rome](#). In Rome, Ledeen worked with Italian historian [Renzo De Felice](#), who greatly influenced Ledeen, drawing a distinction between "fascism-regime" and "fascism-movement."^[2]

Ledeen's political views developed to stress "the urgency of combating centralized state power and the centrality of human freedom"^[3] Ledeen continued his studies in Italian fascism with a study of the takeover of [Fiume](#) by Italian [irredentist](#) forces under [Gabriele d'Annunzio](#), who Ledeen argued was the prototype for Mussolini.

In 1980, in the period leading up to the US presidential election, Ledeen, along with [Arnaud de Borchgrave](#), wrote a series of articles published in *The New Republic*^[4] and elsewhere about [Jimmy Carter](#)'s brother, [Billy Carter](#)'s contacts with the [Muammar al-Gaddafi](#) regime in [Libya](#). Ledeen testified before a Senate subcommittee that he believed that Billy Carter had met with and been paid off by [Yasser Arafat](#) of the [Palestinian Liberation Organization](#).

Ledeen has been a long time and active supporter of political dissidents, particularly [Iranians](#), and co-founded The Coalition for Democracy in [Iran](#).

Work in Italy

Ledeen worked for the Italian military intelligence agency [SISMI](#) in 1980 providing "risk assessment"^[1] and consulting on [extradition](#) matters between Italy and the US.^[5] It was during his time in Italy which Ledeen came out in his belief in the "Bulgarian connection" [conspiracy theory](#) concerning [Grey Wolves](#) member [Mehmet Ali Ağca](#)'s 1981 attempt to assassinate [Pope John Paul II](#). The theory has since been attacked by various authors and journalists, including *Washington Post* reporter [Michael Dobbs](#), who initially believed the story as well. The theory was adopted in 2005 by the [Italian Mitrokhin Commission](#). According to [Craig Unger](#), "With [Ronald Reagan](#) newly installed in the White House, the so-called Bulgarian Connection made perfect [Cold War](#) propaganda. Michael Ledeen was one of its most vocal proponents, promoting it on TV and in newspapers all over the world."^[5]

Work in the United States

In the early 1980s, Ledeen appeared before the newly established Senate Subcommittee on Security and Terrorism, alongside former CIA director [William Colby](#), author [Claire Sterling](#) and former *Newsweek* editor Arnaud de Borchgrave. Both Ledeen and de Borchgrave worked for the [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#) at [Georgetown University](#) at the time.^[6] All four testified that they believed the Soviet Union had provided for material support, training and inspiration for various terrorist groupings.^[7]

Ledeen was involved in the [Iran–Contra affair](#) as a consultant of [National Security Advisor Robert C. McFarlane](#). Ledeen vouched for Iranian intermediary [Manucher Ghorbanifar](#). In addition, he met with Israeli Prime Minister [Shimon Peres](#), officials of the Israeli Foreign Ministry and the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) to arrange meetings with high-ranking [Iranian](#) officials, whereby U.S supported [Iranians](#) would be given weapons by Israel, and would proceed to negotiate with [Hizbollah](#) for the release of hostages in [Lebanon](#).^[8] Ledeen's own version of the events is published in his book *Perilous Statecraft*.^[9]

Yellowcake forgery allegations

Main article: [Niger uranium forgeries](#)

According to a September 2004 article by [Joshua Micah Marshall](#), [Laura Rozen](#), and [Paul Glastris](#) in *Washington Monthly*:^[10]

"The first meeting occurred in Rome in December, 2001. It included Franklin, Rhode, and another American, the neoconservative writer and operative Michael Ledeen, who organized the meeting. (According to UPI, Ledeen was then working for Undersecretary of Defense [Douglas Feith](#) as a consultant.) Also in attendance was [Ghorbanifar](#) and a number of other [Iranians](#)."

Colleagues [Andrew McCarthy](#) and [Mark R. Levin](#) have defended Ledeen, writing^[11]

Up until now, the fiction recklessly spewed by disgruntled intelligence-community retirees and their media enablers—some of whom have conceded that the claim is based on zero evidence—has been that Michael had something to do with the forged Italian documents that, according to the Left's narrative, were the basis for President Bush's "lie" in the 2003 State of the Union Address that Saddam Hussein had obtained yellowcake uranium (for nuclear-weapons construction) in Africa.

Iraq War advocacy

Regarding the "pre-emptive" invasion of [Iraq](#), in 2002 Ledeen criticized the views of former National Security Adviser [Brent Scowcroft](#), writing:^[12]

He fears that if we attack Iraq "I think we could have an explosion in the Middle East. It could turn the whole region into a cauldron and destroy the War on Terror."

One can only hope that we turn the region into a cauldron, and faster, please. If ever there were a region that richly deserved being cauldronized, it is the Middle East today. If we wage the war effectively, we will bring down the terror regimes in Iraq, Iran, and Syria, and either bring down the Saudi monarchy or force it to abandon its global assembly line to indoctrinate young terrorists.

That's our mission in the war against terror.

Ledeen specifically called for the deposition of Saddam Hussein's regime by force in 2002:

So it's good news when Scowcroft comes out against the desperately needed and long overdue war against Saddam Hussein and the rest of the terror masters.^[12]

and:

Question #2: Okay, well if we are all so certain about the dire need to invade Iraq, then when do we do so?

Ledeen: Yesterday^[13]

Ledeen's statements prior to the start of the Iraq war such as "desperately needed and long overdue war against Saddam Hussein" and "dire need to invade Iraq" caused [Glenn Greenwald](#) to label his later statement that he "opposed the military invasion of Iraq before it took place" to be an "outright lie".^[14] However, Ledeen maintains these statements are consistent since: "I advocated—as I still do—support for political revolution in Iran as the logical and necessary first step in the war against the terror masters."^[15]

Views on Iran

Although Ledeen was in favor of invading Iraq, he also believes that Iran should have been the first priority in the [War on terror](#).^[16] *The New York Times* describes Ledeen's views as "everything traces back to Tehran"^[16] Ledeen's phrase, "*faster, please*" has become a signature [meme](#) in Ledeen's writings (it is currently the title of his blog on the [Pajamas Media](#) website) and is often referenced by [neoconservative](#) writers advocating a more forceful and broader "war on terror." In 1979, Ledeen was one of the first Western writers to argue that [Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini](#) was a "clerical fascist", and that while it was

9. ↑ Ledeen, Michael Arthur (1999). *Crusade Statecraft: an insider's account of the Iran-Contra affair*. New York: Simon & Schuster. ISBN 0-671-18994-1.
10. ↑ Joshua Micah Marshall, Laura Rozen & Paul Glastris (September 2004). "Iran-Contra II?," *Washington Monthly*. Archived from the original on 2004-08-30.
11. ↑ Andrew McCarthy and Mark R. Levin (28 July 2006). "Rolling Smear" *National Review Online*. Archived from the original on 2006-08-19.
12. ↑ 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210 211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259 260 261 262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270 271 272 273 274 275 276 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