

# The Tale of Two Assassination Plots

**Exclusive:** President Barack Obama vows to punish Iran for a dubious assassination plot against the Saudi ambassador, but an actual murder of a diplomat in Washington in 1976 carried out by right-wing allies in Chile was followed by three decades of obstruction, Robert Parry reports.

By Robert Parry

With Official Washington abuzz over a bizarre U.S. accusation that Iran's Quds spy agency plotted to assassinate the Saudi ambassador, it might be worth recalling how American authorities responded to an actual terror bombing in Washington 35 years ago that killed a former Chilean foreign minister and an American co-worker.

Because that 1976 assassination was carried out by an allied intelligence agency, Chile's DINA, against a perceived "leftist," Orlando Letelier, the CIA then run by George H.W. Bush hid evidence of Chile's guilt and circulated false cover stories of Chile's innocence that were picked up by the major U.S. news media.

Shortly after Letelier and a female co-worker, Ronni Moffitt, were killed by a bomb planted under his car, Bush's CIA leaked a false report clearing Chile's military dictatorship, misinformation that was spread through Newsweek magazine, the New York Times and other U.S. news outlets.

The CIA disseminated the exonerating report despite later admissions that the CIA was aware in 1976 that Chile was participating in Operation Condor, a cross-border campaign targeting political dissidents, and despite the CIA's own suspicions that the Chilean junta was behind Letelier's murder, the first terrorist bombing of its type in Washington D.C.'s history.

In a report to Congress in September 2000, the CIA officially admitted for the first time that the mastermind of the terrorist attack, Chilean intelligence chief Manuel Contreras, was a paid asset of the CIA. The CIA also acknowledged publicly that it consulted Contreras in October 1976 about the Letelier assassination.

The report added that the CIA was aware of the alleged Chilean government role in the Letelier-Moffitt murders at the time and included that suspicion in an internal cable. "CIA's first intelligence report containing this allegation was dated 6 October 1976," a little more than two weeks after the bombing on Sept. 21, 1976, the CIA disclosed.

Nevertheless, the CIA then under CIA Director George H.W. Bush leaked for public consumption an assessment clearing DINA, which was then run by Contreras.

Relying on the word of Bush's CIA, Newsweek reported that "the Chilean secret police were not involved" in the Letelier assassination. "The [Central Intelligence] agency reached its decision because the bomb was too crude to be the work of experts and because the murder, coming while Chile's rulers were wooing U.S. support, could only damage the Santiago regime." [Newsweek, Oct. 11, 1976]

Bush, who became vice president in 1981 and president in 1989, has never explained his role in putting out the false cover story that diverted attention away from the real terrorists. Nor has Bush explained what he knew about the Chilean intelligence operation in the weeks before Letelier and Moffitt were killed.

### **A Newsweek Story**

As a Newsweek correspondent in 1988, when Bush was running for president, I prepared a detailed story about Bush's handling of the Letelier assassination. The draft story included the first account from U.S. intelligence sources that Contreras was a CIA asset in the mid-1970s. I also learned that the CIA had consulted Contreras about the Letelier assassination, information that the CIA then would not confirm.

The sources told me that the CIA sent its Santiago station chief, Wiley Gilstrap, to talk with Contreras after the bombing. Gilstrap then cabled back to CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, Contreras's self-serving assurances that the Chilean government was not involved.

Contreras told Gilstrap that the most likely killers were communists who wanted to make a martyr out of Letelier, a deception that Bush's CIA and right-wing media allies used to muddy the investigative waters in fall 1976.

In 1988, my story draft also described how Bush's CIA had been forewarned in 1976 about DINA's secret plans to send agents, including DINA's assassin Michael Townley, into the United States on false passports.

Upon learning of this strange mission at the time, the U.S. ambassador to Paraguay, George Landau, cabled Bush about Chile's claim that Townley and another agent were traveling to CIA headquarters for a meeting with Bush's deputy, Vernon Walters. Landau also forwarded copies of the false passports to the CIA.

Walters cabled back that he was unaware of any scheduled appointment with these

Chilean agents. Landau immediately canceled the visas, but Townley simply altered his plans and continued on his way to the United States.

The CIA has never explained what action it took, if any, after receiving Landau's warning. A natural follow-up would have been to contact DINA and ask what was afoot or whether a message about the trip had been misdirected.

"It is quite beyond belief that the CIA is so lax in its counterespionage functions that it would simply have ignored a clandestine operation by a foreign intelligence service in Washington, D.C., or elsewhere in the United States," wrote John Dinges and Saul Landau in their 1980 book, *Assassination on Embassy Row*. "It is equally implausible that Bush, Walters, Landau and other officials were unaware of the chain of international assassinations that had been attributed to DINA."

### **No New Light**

The CIA report in 2000 shed no new light on why the CIA and other U.S. officials reacted so benignly to such a clearly sinister threat as Townley's secret mission.

"One thing is clear," Dinges and Landau wrote in their book, "DINA chief Manuel Contreras would have called off the assassination mission if the CIA or State Department had expressed their displeasure to the Chilean government. An intelligence officer familiar with the case said that any warning would have been sufficient to cause the assassination to be scuttled. Whatever Walters and Bush did if anything the DINA mission proceeded."

With no apparent effort by the CIA to block his mission, Townley arrived in the United States and enlisted some right-wing Cuban-Americans in the Letelier plot. He then went to Washington to plant the bomb under Letelier's car.

On Sept. 21, 1976, two of Townley's Cuban-American associates detonated the bomb by remote control as Letelier drove his car down Massachusetts Avenue with Ronni Moffitt and her husband, Michael, as passengers. (Michael Moffitt was the only one to survive the bombing.)

Within hours, Letelier's associates had accused the Pinochet regime, citing its hatred of Letelier and its record for brutality. The Chilean government, however, heatedly denied any responsibility.

That night, at a dinner at the Jordanian Embassy, Senator James Abourezk, a South Dakota Democrat, spotted Bush and approached the CIA director. Abourezk said he was a friend of Letelier's and beseeched Bush to get the CIA "to find the bastards who killed him."

Abourezk said Bush responded: "I'll see what I can do. We are not without assets in Chile." A problem, however, was that one of the CIA's best-placed assets DINA chief Contreras was part of the assassination.

Despite Bush's promise of the CIA's full cooperation in tracking down the Letelier-Moffitt killers, the CIA did the opposite, planting the false exoneration and withholding evidence that would have implicated the Chilean junta.

"Nothing the agency gave us helped us to break this case," federal prosecutor Eugene Propper told me in a 1988 interview as I was drafting my article for Newsweek.

The CIA's non-cooperation included never volunteering Ambassador Landau's cable about the suspicious DINA mission nor copies of the fake passports containing a photo of Townley, the chief assassin. Nor did Bush's CIA divulge its knowledge of the existence of Operation Condor.

Two years later, FBI agents in Washington and Latin America broke the case after discovering Operation Condor on their own and tracking the Letelier assassination back to Townley and his accomplices in the United States.

In 1988, as then-Vice President George H.W. Bush was running for president and citing his CIA experience as an important part of his government experience, I submitted questions to him asking about his actions in the days before and after the Letelier bombing. Bush's chief of staff, Craig Fuller, wrote back, saying Bush "will have no comment on the specific issues raised in your letter."

As it turned out, the Bush campaign had little to fear from my discoveries. When I submitted my story draft with its exclusive account of Contreras's role as a CIA asset Newsweek's editors refused to run the story.

Washington bureau chief Evan Thomas told me that executive editor Maynard Parker's response to my article was to accuse me of being "out to get Bush." According to longtime Newsweek's staffers, Parker was regarded as having very close ties to the CIA and to Henry Kissinger who was Secretary of State in 1976.

After my Newsweek story was spiked, it took 12 more years before the CIA admitted that it had paid Contreras as an intelligence asset and consulted with him about the Letelier assassination.

### **Victim, Not Accomplice**

Still, the CIA report issued in 2000 sought to portray the spy agency as more victim than accomplice. According to the report, the CIA was internally critical

of Contreras's human rights abuses and skeptical about his credibility. The CIA said its skepticism predated the spy agency's contact with him about the Letelier-Moffitt murders.

"The relationship, while correct, was not cordial and smooth, particularly as evidence of Contreras' role in human rights abuses emerged," the CIA reported. "In December 1974, the CIA concluded that Contreras was not going to improve his human rights performance.

"By April 1975, intelligence reporting showed that Contreras was the principal obstacle to a reasonable human rights policy within the Junta, but an interagency committee [within Gerald Ford's administration] directed the CIA to continue its relationship with Contreras." (The reference to an "interagency" group suggests that Kissinger's State Department would have had a role in the decision.)

The CIA report added that "a one-time payment was given to Contreras" in 1975, a time frame when the CIA was first hearing about Operation Condor, a cross-border program run by South America's military dictatorships to hunt down dissidents living in other countries. The report added:

"CIA sought from Contreras information regarding evidence that emerged in 1975 of a formal Southern Cone cooperative intelligence effort 'Operation Condor' building on informal cooperation in tracking and, in at least a few cases, killing political opponents.

"By October 1976, there was sufficient information that the CIA decided to approach Contreras on the matter. Contreras confirmed Condor's existence as an intelligence-sharing network but denied that it had a role in extra-judicial killings."

Also, in October 1976, the CIA said it "worked out" how it would assist the FBI in its investigation of the Letelier assassination, which had occurred the previous month. The spy agency's report offered no details of what it did, however. The report added only that Contreras was already a murder suspect by fall 1976.

"At that time, Contreras' possible role in the Letelier assassination became an issue," the CIA's report said. "By the end of 1976, contacts with Contreras were very infrequent."

Even though the CIA came to recognize the likelihood that DINA was behind the Letelier assassination, there never was any indication that Bush's CIA sought to correct the false impression created by its leaks to the news media asserting DINA's innocence.

## The Carter Break

After Bush left the CIA with Jimmy Carter's inauguration in 1977, the spy agency distanced itself from Contreras, the CIA report said. "During 1977, CIA met with Contreras about half a dozen times; three of those contacts were to request information on the Letelier assassination," the CIA report said.

"On 3 November 1977, Contreras was transferred to a function unrelated to intelligence so the CIA severed all contact with him," the report added. "After a short struggle to retain power, Contreras resigned from the Army in 1978. In the interim, CIA gathered specific, detailed intelligence reporting concerning Contreras' involvement in ordering the Letelier assassination."

Though the CIA report contained the first official admission of a relationship with Contreras, it shed no light on the actions of Bush and his deputy, Walters, in the days before and after the Letelier assassination. It also offered no explanation why Bush's CIA planted false information in the American press clearing Chile's military dictatorship.

While summarizing its relationship with Chile's military dictatorship, the CIA in 2000 refused to release documents from a quarter century earlier on the grounds that the disclosures might jeopardize the CIA's "sources and methods." The refusal came despite President Bill Clinton's specific order to release as much information as possible.

The CIA may have been playing for time. With CIA headquarters renamed the George Bush Center for Intelligence and with veterans of the Reagan-Bush years still dominating the CIA's hierarchy, the spy agency might have expected that the election of Bush's son, Texas Gov. George W. Bush, would free it from more demands to open up its records.

Immediately after taking office on Jan. 20, 2001, President George W. Bush signed an executive order sparing presidential records from his father's administration and Ronald Reagan's from being cleared for public release.

Later, after the 9/11 attacks, Bush expanded his order to allow ex-presidents and their descendants the power to withhold records forever. That executive order remained in place until Barack Obama took office in 2009 and rescinded Bush's plan for dynastic control of White House documents.

The Bush Family's reputation also benefitted from years of foot-dragging regarding the prosecution of Contreras and his boss, Gen. Augusto Pinochet, for a variety of crimes, including torture of dissidents, drug trafficking, money-laundering, illicit arms shipments and international terrorism such as the Letelier bombing in Washington.

When Pinochet faced perhaps his greatest risk of prosecution in 1998 when he was detained in London pending extradition to Spain on charges of murdering Spanish citizens former President George H.W. Bush protested Pinochet's arrest, calling it "a travesty of justice" and joining Kissinger in a successful appeal to the British courts to let Pinochet go home to Chile.

Once Pinochet was returned to Chile, the wily ex-dictator employed a legal strategy of political obstruction and assertions of ill health to avert prosecution. Until his death on Dec. 10, 2006, he retained influential friends both inside the Chilean power structure and in key foreign capitals, especially Washington.

## **A Long History**

Pinochet's years in the service of U.S. foreign policy dated back to the early 1970s when Richard Nixon's administration with Kissinger as national security adviser wanted to destroy Chile's democratically elected socialist government of Salvador Allende.

The CIA launched a covert operation to "destabilize" Allende's government, with the CIA-sponsored chaos ending in a bloody coup on Sept. 11, 1973. Gen. Pinochet seized power and Allende died from a gunshot wound (reportedly self-inflicted) as Pinochet's forces stormed the Presidential Palace.

Thousands of Allende's supporters including Americans and other foreigners were rounded up and executed. Many also were tortured.

With Pinochet in control, the CIA turned its attention to helping him overcome the negative publicity that his violent coup had engendered around the world. One "secret" CIA memo, written in early 1974 and later declassified, described the success of "the Santiago Station's propaganda project." The memo said:

"Prior to the coup the project's media outlets maintained a steady barrage of anti-government criticism, exploiting every possible point of friction between the government and the democratic opposition, and emphasizing the problems and conflicts that were developing between the government and the armed forces.

"Since the coup, these media outlets have supported the new military government. They have tried to present the Junta in the most positive light." [See Peter Kornbluh's *The Pinochet File*]

Despite the CIA's P.R. advice, Pinochet and his military subordinates insisted on dressing up and acting like a casting agent's idea of Fascist bullies. The dour Pinochet was known for his fondness for wearing a military cloak that made him resemble a well-dressed Nazi SS officer.

Pinochet and the other right-wing military dictators who dominated South America in the mid-1970s also had their own priorities, one of which was the elimination of political opponents who were living in exile in other countries.

Though many of these dissidents weren't associated with violent revolutionary movements, the anticommunist doctrine then in vogue among the region's right-wing military made few distinctions between armed militants and political activists.

By 1974, Chilean intelligence was collaborating with freelancing anti-Castro Cuban extremists and other South American security forces to eliminate any and all threats to right-wing military power.

The first prominent victim of these cross-border assassinations was former Chilean Gen. Carlos Prats, who was living in Argentina and was viewed as a potential rival to Pinochet because Prats had opposed Pinochet's coup that shattered Chile's long history as a constitutional democracy.

Learning that Prats was writing his memoirs, Pinochet's secret police chief Manuel Contreras dispatched Michael Townley, an assassin trained in explosives, to Argentina. Townley planted a bomb under Prats's car, detonating it on Sept. 30, 1974, killing Prats at the door and incinerating Prats's wife who was trapped inside the car.

On Oct. 6, 1975, another Pinochet/Contreras assassin approached Chilean Christian Democratic leader Bernardo Leighton who was walking with his wife on a street in Rome. The gunman shot both Leighton and his wife, severely wounding both of them.

### **Operation Condor**

In November 1975, the loose-knit collaboration among the Southern Cone dictatorships took on a more formal structure during a covert intelligence meeting in Santiago. Delegates from the security forces of Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia committed themselves to a regional strategy against "subversives."

In recognition of Chile's leadership, the conference named the project after Chile's national bird, the giant vulture that traverses the Andes Mountains. The project was called "Operation Condor."

The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency confidentially informed Washington that the operation had three phases and that the "third and reportedly very secret phase of 'Operation Condor' involves the formation of special teams from member countries who are to carry out operations to include assassinations."



The Condor accord formally took effect on Jan. 30, 1976, the same day George H.W. Bush was sworn in as CIA director.

In Bush's first few months, right-wing violence across the Southern Cone of South America surged. On March 24, 1976, the Argentine military staged a coup, ousting the ineffectual President Isabel Peron and escalating a brutal internal security campaign against both violent and non-violent opponents on the Left.

The Argentine security forces became especially well-known for grisly methods of torture and the practice of "disappearing" political dissidents who would be snatched from the streets or from their homes, undergo torture and never be seen again. Like Pinochet, the new Argentine dictators saw themselves on a mission to save Western Civilization from the clutches of leftist thought.

They took pride in the "scientific" nature of their repression. They were clinical practitioners of anticommunism refining torture techniques, erasing the sanctuary of international borders and collaborating with right-wing terrorists and organized-crime elements to destroy leftist movements.

Later Argentine government investigations discovered that its military intelligence officers advanced Nazi-like methods of torture by testing the limits of how much pain a human being could endure before dying. Torture methods included experiments with electric shocks, drowning, asphyxiation and sexual perversions, such as forcing mice into a woman's vagina.

The totalitarian nature of the anticommunism gripping much of South America revealed itself in one particularly bizarre Argentine practice, which was used when pregnant women were captured as suspected subversives.

The women were kept alive long enough to bring the babies to full term. The women then were subjected to forced labor or Caesarian section. The newborns were given to military families to be raised in the ideology of anticommunism while the new mothers were executed.

Many were taken to an airport near Buenos Aires, stripped naked, shackled to other prisoners and put on a plane. As the plane flew over the Rio Plata or out over the Atlantic Ocean, the prisoners were shoved through a cargo door, sausage-like, into the water to drown. All told, the Argentine war against subversion would claim an estimated 30,000 lives.

### **Picking Up the Pace**

The 1976 Argentine *coup d'etat* allowed the pace of cross-border executions under Operation Condor to quicken.

On May 21, gunmen killed two Uruguayan congressmen on a street in Buenos Aires. On June 4, former Bolivian President Juan Jose Torres was slain also in Buenos Aires. On June 11, armed men kidnapped and tortured 23 Chilean refugees and one Uruguayan who were under United Nations protection.

Despite protests from human rights groups, Pinochet and his fellow dictators felt immune from pressure because of their powerful friends in Washington. Pinochet's sense of impunity led him to contemplate silencing one of his most eloquent critics, Chile's former Foreign Minister Orlando Letelier, who lived in the U.S. capital.

Earlier in their government careers, when Letelier was briefly defense minister in Allende's government, Pinochet had been his subordinate. After the coup, Pinochet imprisoned Letelier at a desolate concentration camp on Dawson Island, but international pressure won Letelier release a year later.

Soon, Pinochet was chafing under Letelier's rough criticism of the regime's human rights record. Letelier was doubly infuriating to Pinochet because Letelier was regarded as a man of intellect and charm, even impressing CIA officers who observed him as "a personable, socially pleasant man" and "a reasonable, mature democrat," according to biographical sketches.

By summer 1976, George H.W. Bush's CIA was hearing a lot about Operation Condor from South American sources who had attended a second organizational conference of Southern Cone intelligence services.

These CIA sources reported that the military regimes were preparing "to engage in 'executive action' outside the territory of member countries." In intelligence circles, "executive action" is a euphemism for assassination.

Meanwhile, Pinochet and intelligence chief Manuel Contreras were putting in motion their most audacious assassination plan yet: to eliminate Orlando Letelier in his safe haven in Washington, D.C., the attack carried out on Sept. 21, 1976.

Though U.S. prosecutors eventually grasped the criminal nature of the Pinochet government, the wheels of justice turned slowly. Before the prosecutors could climb the chain of command in Chile, the Republicans had returned to power in 1981, with George H.W. Bush serving as vice president and acting as a top foreign policy adviser to President Ronald Reagan.

Despite the mounting evidence of Pinochet's guilt in a terrorist act on U.S. soil, the dictator was lifted from his pariah status of the Carter years to regain a position as a favored ally under Bush and Reagan.

When help was needed on sensitive projects, the Reagan administration often turned to Pinochet. For instance, in 1982, after Reagan decided to tilt Iraq's way during the Iran-Iraq War, one of Pinochet's favored arms dealers, Carlos Cardoen, manufactured and shipped controversial weapons to Saddam Hussein's army.

Regarding these Iraqi arms shipments, former National Security Council aide Howard Teicher swore out an affidavit in 1995 detailing Reagan's 1982 decision and describing the secret roles of CIA Director William Casey and his deputy, Robert Gates, in shepherding the military equipment to Iraq.

Teicher said the secret arming of Iraq was approved by Reagan as part of a National Security Decision Directive. Under it, Casey and Gates "authorized, approved and assisted" delivery of cluster bombs and other materiel to Iraq, Teicher said.

Teicher's affidavit corroborated earlier public statements by former Israeli intelligence officer Ari Ben-Menashe and Iranian-born businessman Richard Babayan, who claimed first-hand knowledge of Gates's central role in the secret Iraq operations.

In his 1992 book *Profits of War*, Ben-Menashe wrote that Israeli Mossad director Nachum Admoni approached Gates in 1985 seeking help in shutting down unconventional weapons, especially chemicals, moving through the Chilean arms pipeline to Iraq.

Ben-Menashe wrote that Gates attended a meeting in Chile in 1986 with Cardoen present at which Gates tried to calm down the Israelis by assuring them that U.S. policy was simply to ensure a channel of conventional weapons for Iraq.

Though Gates denied Ben-Menashe's and Babayan's allegations in 1991 when Gates underwent confirmation hearings to be CIA director he has never been asked to publicly respond to Teicher's affidavit which was filed in a Miami court case in 1995.

### **Investigative Disinterest**

Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee were aware of the discrepancies between the Teicher and Gates accounts when Gates appeared at a Dec. 5, 2006, confirmation hearing to be Secretary of Defense, but no one asked Gates to respond to Teicher's sworn statement.

Other potential avenues for understanding Pinochet's covert role in supporting anticommunist strategies in the Reagan-Bush era also opened in 2006, as former DINA chief Contreras turned on his old boss.

In a court document filed in early July 2006, Contreras implicated Pinochet and one of his sons in a scheme to manufacture and smuggle cocaine to Europe and the United States, explaining one source of Pinochet's \$28 million fortune.

Contreras alleged that the cocaine was processed with Pinochet's approval at an Army chemical plant south of Santiago during the 1980s and that Pinochet's son Marco Antonio arranged the shipments of the processed cocaine. [NYT, July 11, 2006]

At the time of this alleged cocaine smuggling, Pinochet was a close ally of the Reagan administration, providing help on a variety of sensitive intelligence projects, including shipping military equipment to Nicaraguan Contra rebels who also were implicated in cocaine smuggling to the United States. [For details on the contra-cocaine scandal, see Robert Parry's *Lost History*.]

Contreras said Eugenio Berrios, a chemist for Chile's secret police, oversaw the drug manufacturing. Berrios also was accused of producing poisons for Pinochet to use in murdering political enemies. Berrios disappeared in 1992. [For details on the Berrios mystery, see Consortiumnews.com's "Pinochet's Mad Scientist."] ]

As this drip-drip-drip of evidence accumulated implicating Pinochet and his American allies in serious crimes and international intrigue, it fell to the second generation of George Bush presidents to put a finger in the dike.

Near the end of the Clinton presidency in 2000, an FBI team reviewed new evidence that had become available in the Letelier case and recommended the indictment of Pinochet. But the final decision was left to the incoming Bush-43 administration and George W. Bush, like his father, chose to protect Pinochet. In doing so, the younger George Bush also protected his father's reputation and the legacy of the Bush Family.

Freed from Washington's legal pressure, Pinochet was able to fend off intermittent attempts in Chile to bring him to justice during the last half dozen years of his life.

"Every day it is clearer that Pinochet ordered my brother's death," human rights lawyer Fabiola Letelier told the New York Times on the 30th anniversary of the Letelier-Moffitt assassinations. "But for a proper and complete investigation to take place we need access to the appropriate records and evidence." [NYT, Sept. 21, 2006]

Ultimately, Pinochet escaped a formal judgment of guilt for his many crimes, dying on the afternoon of Dec. 10, 2006, at the Military Hospital of Santiago from complications resulting from a heart attack.

The negligence (or complicity) of the CIA and other branches of the U.S. government in enabling and then shielding the well-connected perpetrators of the Letelier assassination stands in stark contrast to the over-the-top outrage aimed at Iran regarding bizarre allegations that its Quds intelligence agency plotted with an Iranian-American car salesman and a Mexican drug cartel to kill Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to the United States, Adel A. al-Jubeir.

Though no direct evidence publicly implicates the Iranian government itself in the plot (and the car salesman's "cartel" contact was really a paid informant of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration), President Barack Obama and other top U.S. officials have vowed to retaliate with even more punitive actions against Iran.

It also appears that the CIA under its new director, retired Gen. David Petraeus, played a key role in convincing officials in the Obama administration to take the strange plot seriously.

Petraeus, who as commander of U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan blamed Iran for U.S. military reversals in those two countries, now appears in position to get his new agency to push these anti-Iranian accusations more aggressively. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Petraeus's CIA Fuels Iran Murder Plot.](#)"]

Petraeus also has built his sterling Washington reputation partly on his close ties to prominent neoconservatives, such as Frederick Kagan and Max Boot, even enlisting them to help sell his desires for "surge" escalations in Iraq and Afghanistan. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Neocons, Likud Conquer DC Again.](#)"]

The top aim of today's neocon agenda is to support Israel's eagerness to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities with the United States either taking part directly or at least providing support. As CIA director, Petraeus finds himself in a perfect position to generate the necessary "intelligence" to bolster that neocon goal.

At minimum, the contrasting reactions from Official Washington to an actual assassination (carried out by a supposed ally in 1976) and an imaginary one (supposedly conceived by a despised adversary today) speak to the endless hypocrisy that underlies America's "war on terror."

**[For more on related topics, see Robert Parry's *Lost History, Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, now available in a three-book set for the discount price of only \$29. For details, [click here.](#)]**

**Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at [neckdeepbook.com](#). His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege:***

*The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq and Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth' are also available there.*

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