

# McGovern Protests Brennan's Speech

After learning that U.S. national security official John Brennan would address Jesuit-run Fordham's graduating class, ex-CIA analyst (and Fordham alum) Ray McGovern protested in a letter to the *Fordham Ram*. McGovern cited Jesuit principles of truth and justice – and Brennan's role in the “dark side” of the “war on terror.”

From Ray McGovern

Dear Editor:

I write to express shock and sadness that Fordham's trustees would think it consonant with Jesuit values to have Deputy National Security Adviser John Brennan give this year's commencement address.

Today is the ninth anniversary of the attack on Iraq “under false pretenses.” That is the phrase used by the chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee on June 5, 2008, announcing the bipartisan findings of a five-year investigation. He explained that the intelligence used to justify the war was “uncorroborated, contradicted or even non-existent.”

Former CIA colleagues serving with Brennan before and during the war assure me that, since he worked so closely with then-CIA director George Tenet, there is absolutely no possibility that Brennan could have been unaware of the deliberate corruption of the intelligence analysis profession to which I was proud to devote 27 years.

In the early 1980s, when I was conducting the morning briefings at the White House, I knew Brennan as a junior CIA analyst. It remains hard for me to believe that, 20 years later, he would give full support to Tenet in providing fraudulent intelligence in an attempt to “justify” a war of aggression.

Four years ago, Brennan became an advisor to candidate Barack Obama. After Obama won the election, it quickly became common knowledge that he planned to nominate Brennan for one of the highest intelligence posts, probably as director of the CIA.

When suddenly all hell broke loose, Obama's top political advisers began to dread what was bound to be a very ugly confirmation hearing in the Senate. Brennan, you see, had been an ardent, public supporter of the kidnapping/rendering of suspected terrorists to “friendly” Arab intelligence services for interrogation. He also defended the use of U.S. secret prisons abroad, as well as “enhanced interrogation techniques” (also known as torture).

Opposition to Brennan built to a crescendo just weeks after the election and included condemnation of using psychologists willing to violate their professional ethic of "Do No Harm" to assist in harsh interrogation.

Nov. 24, 2008 saw the publication of a letter to President-Elect Obama, signed by 200 psychologists, urging him not to select John Brennan to head the CIA because of his open support of "dark-side" policies (Brennan's, as well as Dick Cheney's, adjective). Brennan withdrew his name the next day, and The New York Times explained the move as a reaction to "concerns he was intimately linked to controversial CIA programs authorized by President Bush."

Brennan is now the administration's strongest advocate of extrajudicial killing of U.S. citizens by drones. As for civilian deaths from CIA drone strikes in Pakistan, Brennan made the preposterous claim last June that, over the previous year, "there hasn't been a single collateral death" from CIA drone strikes there.

Two years ago another alumnus, Michael Sulick, who was then head of all CIA covert operations including the drone attacks in Pakistan, came to lecture at Fordham. This was too much for Dean Brackley, S.J., a former Fordham professor with a social conscience, who had gone to El Salvador 20 years before to replace one of the Jesuits murdered there.

Fr. Brackley sent an email in which he commented: "It seems someone has a misbegotten case of the prestige virus at Fordham. Pretty sad. Is this what we stand for?"

From his new vantage point, the recently deceased Dean Brackley will need to have his wits about him, when Ignatius of Loyola asks him to explain this persistent viral disease at Fordham and other Jesuit universities. Fr. Brackley's response is likely to echo the prophetic words of Daniel Berrigan, S.J., 25 years ago.

In his autobiography, *To Dwell in Peace*, Berrigan wrote of "the fall of a great enterprise", the Jesuit university. He recorded his "hunch" that the university would end up "among those structures whose moral decline and political servitude signalize a larger falling away of the culture itself." Berrigan lamented "highly placed" churchmen and their approval of war, "uttered with sublime confidence, from on high, from highly placed friendships, and White House connections."

"Thus compromised," warned Berrigan, "the Christian tradition of nonviolence, as well as the secular boast of disinterested pursuit of truth, these are reduced to bombast, hauled out for formal occasions, believed by no one, practiced by no

one.”

A mutual colleague of Brennan and mine, a Catholic who also worked at very senior levels at the White House as well as the CIA, had an immediate, visceral reaction to the news of Fordham’s invitation to Brennan: “Oh my gosh. Disgusting. Obviously the Jesuits don’t get it.”

Worse still, maybe they do.

Sincerely,

Ray McGovern

**Fordham College, B.A. *summa cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa, 1961 Retired CIA officer turned political activist.**

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