

# Eyes Finally Open to Syrian Realities

**Exclusive:** For the past three years, Official Washington has viewed the Syrian civil war as “white-hatted” rebels against “black-hatted” President Assad, but finally some of the “gray-hatted” reality is breaking through, though perhaps too late, Robert Parry reports.

By Robert Parry

In late summer 2013, Official Washington was rushing to the judgment that the “evil” Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had launched a barrage of missiles tipped with Sarin gas to slaughter hundreds of civilians in rebel-held neighborhoods near Damascus.

It was inconceivable to virtually every person who “mattered” in Washington that there was any other interpretation of the events on Aug. 21, 2013. Washington Post national security columnist David Ignatius even explained the “big picture” reason why President Barack Obama needed to launch punitive bomb strikes against Assad’s government for crossing Obama’s “red line” against using chemical weapons.

“What does the world look like when people begin to doubt the credibility of U.S. power?” Ignatius wrote a week after the Sarin incident. “Unfortunately, we’re finding that out in Syria and other nations where leaders have concluded they can defy a war-weary United States without paying a price.

“Using military power to maintain a nation’s credibility may sound like an antiquated idea, but it’s all too relevant in the real world we inhabit. It has become obvious in recent weeks that President Obama needs to demonstrate that there are consequences for crossing a U.S. ‘red line.’ Otherwise, the coherence of the global system begins to dissolve.”

At the time, there were only a few of us raising questions about Official Washington’s Sarin-attack “group think,” partly because it made no sense for Assad to have invited United Nations inspectors into Syria to examine chemical weapons attacks that he was blaming on the opposition and then to launch a major Sarin attack just miles from where the inspectors were unpacking at their hotel.

I also was hearing from inside U.S. intelligence that some CIA analysts shared those doubts, suspecting that the supposedly high number of Sarin-laden rockets (which represented the strongest evidence against Assad’s forces) was wildly overstated and that public panic might have exaggerated the scope of the attack.

But perhaps the strongest reason to doubt Official Washington’s hasty conclusion

blaming Assad was what had been occurring inside the Syrian rebel movement over the prior two years, i.e., its radicalization into a hyper-violent Sunni jihadist force that was prepared to inflict any brutality on civilians to achieve its goal of ousting the secular Assad and establishing an Islamist state in Damascus.

### **Blinded by Propaganda**

Most Washington's pols and pundits had not noticed this change because of a geopolitical blindness inflicted by neoconservative propaganda, which insisted that the only acceptable way to view the Syrian civil war was to see Assad as the "bad guy" and the rebels as the "good guys."

After all, "regime change" in Syria had long been near the top of the neocon agenda as it was for Israel, which wanted Assad out because he was allied with Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah. Early in the civil war, Assad's harsh response to what he termed rebel "terrorism" had also rallied the Obama administration's "liberal interventionists" to the side of "regime change."

Thus, the notion that some vicious Syrian rebel group might willfully kill innocent civilians as a provocation to get the U.S. military to attack Assad's defenses and thus pave the way for a rebel victory was outside Official Washington's accepted frame of reference. In August 2013, the rebels were wearing the white hats, as far as U.S. mainstream opinion was concerned.

Over the past year, however, reality has reasserted itself, at least somewhat. The Sarin case against Assad has largely crumbled with a UN report finding Sarin on only one rocket and independent scientists concluding that the one Sarin-laden rocket had a maximum range of only about two kilometers, meaning it could not have come from the suspected Syrian base about nine kilometers away.

Investigative reporter Seymour Hersh also learned from his well-placed sources that inside the U.S. intelligence community suspicion had shifted toward rebel extremists working with hardliners in Turkish intelligence. [See Consortiumnews.com's "Was Turkey Behind Syria-Sarin Attack?"]

But most "important people" in U.S. officialdom, including New York Times and Washington Post editors, still insisted that Assad must have done the Sarin attack. They even report it as flat fact. They are, after all, not the sort of folks who easily admit error.

### **A Shift in the Paradigm**

However, over the past year, the paradigm for understanding the Syrian conflict has begun shifting. In September 2013, many Syrian rebel forces repudiated the

political opposition that the Obama administration had organized and instead embraced al-Qaeda's al-Nusra Front, an aggressive jihadist force which had emerged as the most effective fighters against Assad.

Then, in February 2014, al-Qaeda's leadership disavowed an even more brutal jihadist force known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS. The Islamic State promoted a strategy of unspeakable brutality as a way of intimidating its rivals and driving Westerners from the Middle East.

ISIS got its start after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 when Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi organized "al-Qaeda in Iraq," a hyper-violent Sunni militia that targeted Iraq's Shiites and destroyed their mosques, touching off a vicious sectarian war across Iraq.

After Zarqawi's death in 2006 and the alienation of less-extreme Iraqi Sunnis al-Qaeda in Iraq faded from view before reemerging in Syria's civil war, refashioned as the Islamic State and crossing back into Iraq with a major offensive last summer.

Amid reports of the Islamic State massacring captives and beheading American and British hostages, it no longer seemed so far-fetched that some Syrian rebel group would be ruthless enough to obtain Sarin and launch an attack near Damascus, killing innocents and hoping that the Assad regime would be blamed.

Even the Post's Ignatius is looking more skeptically at the Syrian rebel movement and the various U.S.-allied intelligence agencies that have been supplying money, weapons and training even to fighters associated with the most extreme militias.

### **Opening the Door**

In a column on Friday, Ignatius faulted not only Syria's squabbling "moderate opposition" but "the foreign nations, such as the United States, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, that have been funding the chaotic melange of fighters inside Syria. These foreign machinations helped open the door for the terrorist Islamic State group to threaten the region."

Ignatius acknowledged that the earlier depiction of the Syrian opposition as simply an indigenous movement of idealistic reformers was misleading. He wrote: "From the beginning of the revolt against President Bashar al-Assad in 2011, Syria has been the scene of a proxy war involving regional powers: Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar all wanted to topple Assad, but they competed with each other as regional rivals, too.

"At various points, all three nations provided Sunni rebel groups with money and

weapons that ended up in the hands of extremists. The United States, Saudi Arabia and Jordan joined forces in 2013 to train and arm moderate rebels at a CIA-backed camp in Jordan. But this program was never strong enough to unify the nearly 1,000 brigades scattered across the country. The resulting disorganization helped discredit the rebel alliance known as the Free Syrian Army.

“Syrian rebel commanders deserve some blame for this ragged structure. But the chaos was worsened by foreign powers that treated Syria as a playground for their intelligence services. This cynical intervention recalled similar meddling that helped ravage Lebanon, Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq and Libya during their civil wars.

“The story of how Syria became a cockpit for rival intelligence services was explained to me by sources here [in Istanbul] and in Reyhanli, a rebel staging area on the Turkey-Syria border. Outside efforts to arm and train the Syrian rebels began more than two years ago in Istanbul, where a ‘military operations center’ was created, first in a hotel near the airport.

“A leading figure was a Qatari operative who had helped arm the Libyan rebels who deposed Moammar Gaddafi. Working with the Qataris were senior figures representing Turkish and Saudi intelligence. But unity within the Istanbul operations room frayed when the Turks and Qataris began to support Islamist fighters they thought would be more aggressive.

“These jihadists did emerge as braver, bolder fighters, and their success was a magnet for more support. The Turks and Qataris insist they didn’t intentionally support the extremist group Jabhat al-Nusra or the Islamic State. But weapons and money sent to more moderate Islamist brigades made their way to these terrorist groups, and the Turks and Qataris turned a blind eye.”

Regarding the rise of these radicals, Ignatius quoted one Arab intelligence source who claimed to have “warned a Qatari officer, who answered: ‘I will send weapons to al-Qaeda if it will help’ topple Assad. This determination to remove Assad by any means necessary proved dangerous. ‘The Islamist groups got bigger and stronger, and the FSA day by day got weaker,’ recalls the Arab intelligence source.”

### **Selling the Sarin Story**

Based on such information, the idea of anti-Assad extremists securing Sarin possibly with the help of Turkish intelligence, as Hersh reported and launching a provocative attack with the goal of getting the U.S. military to devastate Assad’s army and clear a path for a rebel victory begins to make sense.

After all, back in Washington, the propaganda strategy of blaming Assad could count on the ever-influential neocons who in August 2013 did start pushing the rush-to-war bandwagon and shoved aside any doubters of the Assad-did-it conventional wisdom.

Israel took a similar position on Syria, favoring even the victory of al-Qaeda extremists if necessary to oust Assad and hurt his Iranian allies.

In September 2013, then-Israeli Ambassador to the United States Michael Oren told the Jerusalem Post in [an interview](#) that “The greatest danger to Israel is by the strategic arc that extends from Tehran, to Damascus to Beirut. And we saw the Assad regime as the keystone in that arc. We always wanted Bashar Assad to go, we always preferred the bad guys who weren’t backed by Iran to the bad guys who were backed by Iran.” He said this was the case even if the other “bad guys” were affiliated with al-Qaeda.

So, the danger from the Sunni extremists was played down and the focus remained on ousting Assad. No wonder there was such “surprise” among Official Washington’s “group thinkers” when the Islamic State opened a new front inside Iraq and routed the U.S.-trained Iraqi army. Once again, the neocons had made sure that American eyes stayed wide shut to an inconvenient truth.

But the neocons are not through with the Syrian fiasco that they helped create. They are now busy reshaping the narrative accusing Obama of waiting too long to arm the Syrian rebels and insisting that he switch from bombing Islamic State targets inside Syria to destroying the Syrian air force and creating a no-fly zone so the rebels can march on Damascus.

The recklessness of that strategy should now be obvious. Indeed, if Obama had succumbed to the interventionist demands in summer 2013 and devastated Assad’s military, we could now be seeing either al-Qaeda or the Islamic State in control of Damascus. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Neocons’ Noses into the Syrian Tent.”](#)]

Obama might be wiser to take this opportunity to declassify the U.S. intelligence on the Sarin gas attack of Aug. 21, 2013, including the dissents from CIA analysts who doubted Assad’s responsibility. That information might shed substantial new light on how Turkish and Arab intelligence services – with the help of the neocons – enabled the rise of the Islamic State.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). For a limited time, you also can order Robert Parry’s trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives**

for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).

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## Who's to Blame for ISIS 'Surprise'?

For several years, Official Washington blinded itself to the growing radicalism of the Syrian opposition, all the better to portray the Assad regime as the “bad guys” and the rebels as the “good guys.” Now, everyone is pointing fingers about the ISIS “surprise,” as ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar explains.

By Paul R. Pillar

The recent burst of recriminations about what the U.S. intelligence community did or did not tell the President of the United States in advance about the rise of the extremist group sometimes called ISIS, and about associated events in Iraq, is only a variation on some well-established tendencies in Washington discourse. The tendency that in recent years has, of course, become especially strongly entrenched is that of couching any issue in the way that is best designed to bash one's political opponents.

For those determined to bash and frustrate Barack Obama at every turn, it is a tendency that trumps everything else. Thus we now have the curious circumstance of some of Mr. Obama's Republican critics, who in other contexts would be at least as quick as anyone else to come down on U.S. intelligence agencies (and most other parts of the federal bureaucracy) like a ton of bricks, saying that the President got good information but failed to act on it. (Some critics, however, have tried to lower their cognitive dissonance by saying that “everyone” could see what was coming with ISIS.)

Relationships between the intelligence community and presidential administrations over the past few decades have not fallen into any particular pattern distinguishable by party. One of the best relationships was with the administration of the elder George Bush, perhaps not surprisingly, given that president's prior experience as a Director of Central Intelligence under President Gerald Ford. Probably the worst was during the presidency of the younger George Bush, whose administration, in [the course of selling the Iraq War](#), strove to discredit the intelligence community's judgments that contradicted the administration's assertions about an alliance between Iraq and al-Qaeda, pushed for public use of reporting about alleged weapons programs that the community did not consider credible, and ignored the community's judgments about the likely mess in Iraq that would follow the ouster of Saddam Hussein's

regime.

Relations also have varied under Democratic presidents. Mr. Obama, given the evidently deliberate and methodical way he weighs input, including from the civilian and military bureaucracy, before major national security decisions, probably has been one of the better users of intelligence, at least in the sense of paying attention to it. His remark on 60 Minutes that led to the accusations about ISIS, however, did sound like gratuitous blame-shifting.

One very longstanding and bipartisan tendency that this recent imbroglio has diluted (because the political motive to attack Obama is even stronger than political motives to attack intelligence agencies) is to assume that any apparently insufficient U.S. reaction to an untoward development overseas must be due to policymakers not being sufficiently informed, and this must be because intelligence services failed.

It is remarkable how, when anything disturbing goes bump in the night overseas, the label "intelligence failure" gets quickly and automatically applied by those who have no basis whatever for knowing what the intelligence community did or did not say, in classified, intra-governmental channels, to policymakers.

The current case does demonstrate in undiluted form, however, several other recurrent tendencies, one of which is to affix the label "surprise" to certain events not so much because of the state of knowledge or understanding of those who make national security policy but more because we, the public, and the press and chattering class, were surprised.

Or to be even more accurate, this often happens because those of us outside government weren't paying much attention to the developments in question until something especially dramatic seized our attention, even though we actually had enough information about the possibilities that we should not have been surprised. Thus the dramatic gains by ISIS earlier this year have been labeled a "surprise" because a swift territorial advance and gruesome videotaped killings grabbed public attention.

Another tendency is to believe that if government is working properly, surprises shouldn't happen. This belief disregards how much that is relevant to foreign policy and national security is unknowable, no matter how brilliant either an intelligence service or a policymaker may be.

This is partly because of other countries and entities keeping secrets but even more so because some future events are inherently unpredictable, given that they involve decisions that others have not yet made, or social processes too complex or psychological mechanisms too fickle to model.

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper was referring to this epistemological reality in the comment that he made recently about the Iraqi army's collapse and that the President erroneously characterized in his *60 Minutes* interview. Clapper was not saying that the intelligence community messed up on this question; he instead was observing that this type of sudden loss of will in the heat of battle has always been unpredictable.

Yet another recurring tendency is to think that proper policy responses always flow from a good empirical understanding of the problem at hand, including the sort of information, analysis, and predictions that a well-functioning intelligence service might be expected to provide. In fact, proper responses often do not flow that way from an understanding of the problem. Often there are conflicting national interests at stake, there are serious costs and risks to possible responses, and the likely benefits of responses may not outweigh the likely costs.

No matter how accurate a picture of ISIS the intelligence community may be providing to the President and his policy advisers, that picture is not likely to constitute a case for the United States to take more, rather than less, forceful action in Syria or Iraq. If President Obama is now taking more forceful measures in those places than he was earlier, it is neither because he is belatedly reacting to good intelligence nor because the intelligence community is belatedly getting its judgments right, but instead because he is responding to how the rest of us have decided that we are not just surprised but alarmed by ISIS.

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## The Why of Obama's Failed Hope

The election of Barack Obama in 2008 brought hope and optimism to Americans and non-Americans alike. But after one and a half terms, the reality is sinking in that for all the promised change, it's the "same old, same old." The big question is why, writes Australian Greg Maybury.

By Greg Maybury

For folks who were fans of the late, great comedian Bill Hicks, they likely will



be familiar with one of his more memorable routines wherein he is “riffing” on about a Global Power Elite that rules the world. In this routine, Hicks unveils a secret induction ritual of sorts, a rite of passage that takes place once new presidents are ensconced in the White House.

In order to keep each president properly briefed on who actually wields power in the home of the brave and beyond, and discourage any altruistic notions about changing Washington and the world for the better via the power of the Oval Office, a cabal of dark-suited people representing the Powers that Be (or PTBs) of the New World Order sit him down in the darkened, smoke-filled, windowless Situation Room in the White House bunker and show him hitherto unseen film footage of the actual JFK assassination.

In Hicks’ not-so-fevered, conspiratorial imagination, this unique piece of historical *cinéma verité* vividly reveals the Crime of the Century from a completely different angle than seen in the famous Zapruder footage. Only this time the fatal projectiles (plural) can be clearly identified as coming from behind the white picket fence atop a certain grassy knoll to the right and in front of the presidential motorcade, the scene replete with a rifle-packing assassin fleeing the area pronto.

After the presentation finishes, the lights turned on, and the smoke clears, the PTBs have only one thing to say to the by-now ashen-faced, freshman POTUS: “Any questions, Mr President?”

Once the look of abject fear, shock and horror subsides and the blood drains back into his face, accompanied by the sudden realization that being president isn’t going to be quite what he expected, his composure regained, his response goes something like this: “Nah shit man, Arrhmm down with that, let’s go bomb Basra!”

The cigar-chomping PTBs, who by now are all smiles and bonhomie, slap the freshly minted Prez on the back and say in unison: “That’s our boy. Great to have you on board!”

As darkly amusing as Hicks’s bit is, there can be no doubt that for many of us, the scenario may be uncomfortably close to the truth, and you don’t need to be a paid-up member of the “tin foil hat brigade” to think that.

## **High Hopes**

With this opening in mind, it is now time to ask the following question about the incumbent POTUS. To wit: What happened, Mr. President? Like many folks, this writer had high hopes for Number 44, and vividly recalls the night of the election win in 2008 wherein Obama’s speech to the nation was as electrifying

and as inspiring as anything I can remember in the annals of U.S. politics. And I'm not even American! (Did we see a tear in Colin Powell's eye?)

Such was the nature and character of Obama's ascendancy to the highest office in the home of the brave that it seemed even for the most jaded, nay cynical, of political observers that America had taken a turn for the better, and not just for America! Like many of my fellow Australians and doubtless many other non-Americans, it was hard not to feel excited about the prospect this Sometimes Great Nation had turned the corner.

America had woken up to the reality that it actually could be a genuine force for good in the world, and it finally had someone in the Oval Office who could bring that change about.

Such a reaction was, of course, not unexpected after the Bush years. By any measure his was the most disastrous presidential "experiment" up to that time, and we will return to George II's reign shortly. But sadly it seems the buoyant expectations of the future ushered in by Barack Obama's election were misplaced after all.

The big question is this: Was Obama co-opted by the PTBs after he was elected a la the Bill Hicks scenario? Or was he a Judas-Goat from the off? For those unfamiliar with the term and the intent of the metaphor, it's enough to know that the Judas-goat was used to lead the animals up the ramps of the early slaughterhouses before they became all "assembly-lined" and mechanized. You get the drift.

This is hard to know for certain of course, and in seeking some clues all we can do is reflect on Obama's rise to high office and his record. There are plenty of people who have done that and continue to do so, and this is not my main purpose herein. But we can at the same time look at the Office of the President, and the actual power and authority that the Oval One (to use Gore Vidal's priceless phrase) is capable of exercising. This hopefully might give us some useful additional insights.

But as always, a little dose of history is in order. After 9/11, Bush's *Pax Americana* morphed very quickly into (a) Pox Americana, an unprecedented, raging, out-of-control geopolitical pandemic for the zeitgeist, and again, the consequences and outcomes of which will be with us forever and a day. That is unless the next generation beyond Obama can find and administer a cure before it is too late, because it appears even six years after Bush this virulent strain of empire-mired hubris and overreach will not croak of its own accord.

Truth be known, even *pre*-“Dubya,” the American Empire was probably already something of a *Pox Americana*. It had, in fact, been heading in that direction at a rate of knots. This was especially since the Fall of the Wall, when it could be argued the rot of triumphalism really took hold. Bush II’s true “genius” his one lasting achievement and the one that almost certainly will define his legacy may have been bringing America’s particular and peculiar malaise out into the open for us all to see. Which is not to suggest that “all” of us are “seeing” even now, as a nod is as good as a wink to a blind nation as it were.

Now the spread, virulence and mortality rate of the Bush “Pox” may not have been foreseen at the time by most. But this is surely one case where even a little objective hindsight confers great clarity, although any such “clarity” now one both expects *and* fears may be of the “too little, too late” variety as distinct from “better late than never” kind. Which brings us back to the incumbent president.

### **Obama’s Performance**

Judging by his performance thus far, it would appear that the person who might have taken such “insights” on board brought about by such “clarity” and done something with them to substantively change the status quo has in many ways, gone back to the future.

Whereas Bush under-promised and over-delivered as it were, Obama has over-promised and under-delivered, and it’s difficult to say which is the lesser of the two “evils.”. To take just one measure by which we might assess his presidential leadership (and one for which his administration can hardly put any blame to his predecessor), we only need to look at the current situation in Ukraine, and America’s aggressive and geopolitically destabilizing stance towards the Russian Federation.

Much the same can be said of Obama’s performance closer to home. His record here thus far underscores the contention that the presidency is no longer relevant in mapping out a secure, equitable future for Americans, and in articulating an achievable vision for the nation as a whole.

Exhibit A in this respect is his failure to bring the Wall Street Cowboys to heel so as to rein in upon pain of them doing serious jail time a la Bernie Madoff their most reckless impulses. And the presidency appears no longer powerful enough even with a *popular* mandate to re-gear the machinery of the National Security State towards something more *simpatico* with the spirit and letter of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Yet the next presidential candidates will tell us they can achieve the latter

and more, and people will vote for either/or candidate *en masse* in the fervent hope that they will make good on their word. Or they won't vote at all. Other than the names on the high-security clearance ID's of the champions of the National Security State and the dog-tags of the front-line defenders of freedom and democracy in the U.S. military though, very little is likely change.

### **Rethinking the Imperium**

In an informal interview with journalist and author Chris Hedges not long after the beginning of Obama's first term, U.S. political philosopher Sheldon Wolin indicated that he did not expect much from the new Administration and that "the basic systems" [of power and influence] in the U.S. are going to "stay in place" unchallenged. But Wolin had this to say about the new president who it has to be recalled at this point got into that position promising more change than you could poke a stick at in a month of election Tuesdays:

"This [view] is shown by the [Wall Street] bailout. It [the Obama administration] does not bother with [changing] the structure at all. I don't think he can take on the establishment we have developed. ... [Obama] is probably the most intelligent president we have had in decades. I think he is well meaning, but he inherits a system of constraints that makes it very difficult to take on these major power configurations. I do not think he has any appetite for it [ideologically]. The corporate structure is not going to be challenged. There has not been a word from him that would suggest an attempt to rethink the American imperium."

With this in mind, and in view of the fact that we're now well into his second term, with Obama then, it appears to be *Pox Americana* redux, *dã©jã vu* all over again. In short, Obama has spent little time "rethinking" the "imperium."

If Obama promised change, then his first term tenure appeared to have underscored that hoary old platitude that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Whether he instinctively knew that before he was elected is open to debate, but it is difficult to escape the conclusion he did. This would especially be the case if he was/is *that* "intelligent."

On the other hand, it may just be that Obama recognizes as Wolin has reinforced above that as president he represents, embodies and acts in the interests of forces that are larger, more powerful and much more immutable than the Office itself and the person who holds the Office. And catering to these forces is more important than any attempts to cater to the electorate at large, over whom it would appear certain that these forces take precedence.

In the intriguing 2010 book *The Next Hundred Years A Forecast for the 21<sup>st</sup>*

Century, George Friedman underscored this premise. After noting that in the long-term at least, presidents are not especially “important or powerful” people anymore, he added the following about Obama, and by extrapolation one expects, *future* presidents:

“[He has to] govern within the realities and constraints that [have] defined previous presidencies, and whilst he may or may not be popular, his ability to redefine anything as massive as the United States and the global system [is] severely limited”.

Obama may even acknowledge privately that to be “successful” and “effective” he needs to recognize the above reality or not harbor any *illusions* about it (or any *ambitions* of his own at odds with these forces), even if he doesn’t always feel comfortable with such “recognition” and constraints.

That being the case, there is at present disturbingly little sign especially with the lame-duck period of his second term looming that Obama is showing any discomfort with that recognition. No doubt there are numerous folk Stateside and beyond who believed in his message of audacity combined with his shill of hope would be saying “more’s the pity.”

Interestingly, Obama has apparently received many more death threats than Bush ever did; with that in mind, it’s quite possible he realizes that demonstrating too much audacity and offering too much hope could to use the popular contemporary vernacular get his “skinny black ass capped.” Just like JFK did as one supposes in the Bill Hicks scenario, and of whom it is generally considered demonstrated a little too much audacity and propensity for change and in doing so, paid the ultimate price for it?

And when we consider the current state of play with the Secret Service, this would be neither an unreasonable concern for the President himself nor an outlandish proposition for the rest of us.

Either way, when we place all this in context, and take on the perspective doing so provides, Obama may turn out to be a bigger disappointment than his predecessor. Who’d have thought *that* on the night of the first Tuesday in November in 2008?

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