

When Henry Kissinger Makes Sense

Exclusive: Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger disputes the mainstream U.S. media's view of the Ukraine crisis, noting that Russia's response was reactive to the West's actions, not the other way around. But the MSM keeps up the drumbeat about Russian "aggression," writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

The American public is faced with an information crisis as the New York Times and other mainstream U.S. media outlets have become little more than propaganda organs on behalf of the neoconservative agenda and particularly the rush into a new Cold War with Russia so much so that even ex-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has broken ranks.

MSM articles consistently reek of bias and in some cases make little sense. For instance, Times correspondent David M. Herszenhorn, one of the leading propagandists, wrote an alarmist story on Wednesday about a new Russian "invasion" of Ukraine but curiously he had the alleged Russian tank column heading east toward the Ukrainian city of Donetsk which would be back toward Russia, not westward into Ukraine.

According to Herszenhorn's article, "The full scope of the Russian incursion is not clear, [NATO Supreme Commander Gen. Philip M. Breedlove] said, though the convoys seemed to be heading east toward Donetsk, an O.S.C.E. spokesman, Michael Bociurkiw, said Wednesday."

Typical of his anti-Russian bias, Herszenhorn also cited Ukrainian government complaints that the Russians had been using a shaky cease-fire to bolster the ethnic Russian rebels in the east, but the reality is that both sides have been accusing the other of such maneuvering. Herszenhorn surely knows this but he wrote only:

"Ukrainian officials have complained all along that Russia was taking advantage of the so-called truce to reinforce the rebels in eastern Ukraine with more fighters and equipment."

The reality is that there has been widespread alarm among eastern Ukrainians that the Kiev regime was using the relative lull in the fighting to resupply and reposition its forces for a new offensive like the one that killed thousands over the summer. Though human rights organizations have criticized Kiev for indiscriminate shelling of cities and unleashing brutal militia forces on the population, the Times and other mainstream U.S. newspapers have either ignored or downplayed such facts.

On Wednesday, Herszenhorn also compared the alleged new Russian incursion with the “invasion” of Crimea, although there really was no “invasion” of Crimea since the Russian troops that were involved in supporting Crimea’s popular referendum to secede from Ukraine and rejoin Russia were already in Crimea under an agreement with the Ukrainian government regarding the Russian naval base at Sebastopol.

Herszenhorn’s use of the word “invasion” is just an exaggeration like the rest of the imbalanced reporting that has made a rational U.S. public response to the crisis in Ukraine nearly impossible.

Since the start of the crisis in February, the New York Times’ coverage has been remarkable in its refusal to present the Ukraine story in anything like an objective fashion. For example, the Times has largely ignored the substantial public evidence that U.S. government officials and agents helped orchestrate the Feb. 22 coup which overthrew the elected President Viktor Yanukovich. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“The Whys Behind the Ukraine Crisis.”](#)]

The Times also has buried evidence that extreme right-wing and neo-Nazi elements played key roles in firebombing police, forcing Yanukovich and other government officials to flee for their lives, and spearheading later attacks on ethnic Russians. When this reality is referenced, it is usually presented with little meaningful context or tacked on in the last few paragraphs of long articles on other topics.

Mocking Medvedev

Herszenhorn himself has been a leading violator of journalistic standards. For instance, in mid-April, early on in the crisis, he penned [a mocking story](#) from Moscow ridiculing Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev for predicting a possible civil war.

In the article entitled “Russia Is Quick To Bend Truth About Ukraine,” Herszenhorn accused Medvedev of posting an item on Facebook that “was bleak and full of dread,” including noting that “blood has been spilled in Ukraine again” and adding that “the threat of civil war looms.”

Herszenhorn continued, “He [Medvedev] pleaded with Ukrainians to decide their own future ‘without usurpers, nationalists and bandits, without tanks or armored vehicles and without secret visits by the C.I.A. director.’ And so began another day of bluster and hyperbole, of the misinformation, exaggerations, conspiracy theories, overheated rhetoric and, occasionally, outright lies about the political crisis in Ukraine that have emanated from the highest echelons of the Kremlin and reverberated on state-controlled Russian television, hour after

hour, day after day, week after week.”

This argumentative “news” story spilled from the front page to the top half of an inside page, but Herszenhorn never managed to mention that there was nothing false in what Medvedev wrote. Indeed, as the bloodshed soon grew worse and escalated into a civil war, you might say Medvedev was tragically prescient.

It was also the much-maligned Russian press that first reported the secret visit of CIA Director John Brennan to Kiev. Though the White House later confirmed that report, Herszenhorn still cited Medvedev’s reference to it in the context of “misinformation” and “conspiracy theories.” Nowhere in the long article did the Times inform its readers that, yes, the CIA director did make a secret visit to Ukraine.

In this upside-down world of MSM disinformation, there has been very little criticism of the glaring biases of the mainstream Western media but instead continued attacks on the professionalism of the Russian media, including an adverse finding this week by an official British agency that monitors alleged bias in news outlets operating in the UK. The agency, known as Ofcom, accused Russia’s RT network of failing to meet standards for “due impartiality” in early Ukraine coverage.

Interestingly, Ofcom did not judge any of the RT reports false in their description of neo-Nazi thugs participating in the Feb. 22 coup, a possible role of coup-related snipers in the slaughter of scores of people at the Maidan, and the unconstitutionality of the new government.

But Ofcom faulted RT for not meeting the fuzzy concept of “due impartiality” and threatened regulatory sanctions against RT if it didn’t shape up. Ofcom defined “due impartiality” as “impartiality adequate or appropriate to the subject and nature of the programme.”

The image of a British regulatory body threatening RT with sanctions for not toeing the pro-Western propaganda line that nearly all UK and U.S. news outlets do has an Orwellian feel to it, singling out one of the few sources of news that doesn’t accept the prevailing “group think.”

It would be one thing if the same standards were applied to Western media outlets for their one-sided reporting on Ukraine, but that apparently would ruffle too many important feathers.

Kissinger’s Dissent

Curiously, one of the few prominent Westerners who has dared question the prevailing wisdom on Ukraine is former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger who

said, in [an interview](#) with the German newsmagazine Der Spiegel, that the West was exaggerating the significance of the Crimean annexation given the peninsula's long historic ties to Russia.

"The annexation of Crimea was not a move toward global conquest," the 91-year-old Kissinger said. "It was not Hitler moving into Czechoslovakia" as former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and others have suggested.

Kissinger noted that Russian President Vladimir Putin had no intention of instigating a crisis in Ukraine: "Putin spent tens of billions of dollars on the Winter Olympics in Sochi. The theme of the Olympics was that Russia is a progressive state tied to the West through its culture and, therefore, it presumably wants to be part of it. So it doesn't make any sense that a week after the close of the Olympics, Putin would take Crimea and start a war over Ukraine."

Instead Kissinger argued that the West with its strategy of pulling Ukraine into the orbit of the European Union was responsible for the crisis by failing to understand Russian sensitivity over Ukraine and making the grave mistake of quickly pushing the confrontation beyond dialogue.

But Kissinger also faulted Putin for his reaction to the crisis. "This does not mean the Russian response was appropriate," Kissinger said.

Still, Kissinger told Der Spiegel that "a resumption of the Cold War would be a historic tragedy. If a conflict is avoidable, on a basis reflecting morality and security, one should try to avoid it. We have to remember that Russia is an important part of the international system, and therefore useful in solving all sorts of other crises, for example in the agreement on nuclear proliferation with Iran or over Syria. This has to have preference over a tactical escalation in a specific case."

When Henry Kissinger starts to sound like the voice of reason, it says a lot about how crazy the New York Times and the rest of the MSM have become.

[This story was updated on Nov. 14 with a link to Der Spiegel's interview and its official English-language transcript.]

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](#).

Plumbing the Depths of NSA's Spying

The complexity of the National Security Agency's spying programs has made some of its ex-technical experts the most dangerous critics since they are among the few who understand the potential totalitarian risks involved, as ex-NSA analyst William Binney showed in an interview with journalist Lars Schall.

By Lars Schall

William Binney, who spent 36 years in the National Security Agency rising to become the NSA's technical director for intelligence, has emerged as one of the most knowledgeable critics of excesses in the NSA's spying programs, some of which he says managed to both violate the U.S. Constitution and prove inefficient in tracking terrorists.

Binney has been described as one of the best analysts in NSA's history combining expertise in intelligence analysis, traffic analysis, systems analysis, knowledge management and mathematics (including set theory, number theory and probability). He resigned in October 2001 and has since criticized the NSA's massive monitoring programs. After leaving the NSA, he co-founded Entity Mapping, LLC, a private intelligence agency, together with fellow NSA whistleblower J. Kirk Wiebe.

Lars Schall: You were invited this year as a witness by the NSA commission of the German parliament, the Bundestag. How has it been to speak there and what did you try to get across?

William Binney: I was there for about six hours testifying with a half hour break in the middle. So it was quite intense. There were so many questions. Some of them I didn't have answers for because I didn't have knowledge about it, and I tried to make those clear and tried to give them information about things I knew personally. I didn't want to extrapolate beyond that.

Initially, they were asking questions about my background which was, I guess, setting the stage for the follow on questions, but in the long run they were interested in the relationships with the BND and the NSA. I think part of the break in the middle had to do with something that happened there and that a BND person was implicated in spying on the commission when it was investigating the relationship, and they were also passing that information to NSA, at least that was alleged at that time, I don't know if that's true or not.

Anyway, it was quite lengthy and very thorough, and my whole point was to try to get across to them that what NSA and the intelligence community in the Five Eyes, at least, and probably in some of the other countries (I don't know exactly which ones and I've made this clear, but I think they're not doing it alone) is the idea of collecting massive amounts of data is just like the STASI except this time I kind of tried to get across to them that it's like the STASI on super steroids.

As Wolfgang Schmidt, the former lieutenant colonel of East German STASI, commented about NSA's surveillance program: For us, this would have been a dream come true. Well, that's the whole point of it, it's so invasive, it's digital surveillance on a massive scale, and I tried to get that across to them. Because this is basically a fundamental threat to our democracy and every democracy around the world. You know, I call it over here in the United States the greatest threat to our democracy since our Civil War.

LS: Were there some questions that you would have expected that were not asked?

WB: No, I think they pretty much asked all the relevant questions, some of which I dealt with in close session, especially in dealing with the relationship between BND and NSA that I knew.

LS: What's your view on how Germany is treating Edward Snowden?

WB: I think for the most part he got a lot of popular support in Germany. I think the government there is a little bit sensitive to it simply because of the close and enduring relationship between the United States government and the German government. So I think they're trying to balance an act there between support from the general populace and also support for the US government from the existing agreements and cooperation with the German government.

LS: What's your overall view on how the German government behaved in the NSA scandal?

WB: My personal belief is that they only now are starting to get into it and only now they are beginning to realize, just as over here Congress is beginning to realize, how much they cannot trust our own intelligence agencies. This is evident, for example, last year when two representatives attempted to get a bill passed in the House of Representatives to un-fund the NSA activity.

Basically, they just found out through the Snowden releases that a lot of the information they were been fed by the intelligence agencies and the administration was not true. And so they finally began to realize what was going on and tried to get an initiative to stop it. That's when the President and the director at the time of NSA, Keith Alexander, lobbied the House of

Representatives very heavily to defeat that bill, which they did, but the bill only lost by 12 votes in the House of Representatives so that's not a bad deal, it was a fairly close vote.

The issues are still going on over here and politically people are still talking trying to resolve it and we are trying to help them with that by publishing articles and things that we send over to Germany, as well as the things that need to be done to ensure that these intelligence agencies are kept inline by their governments respecting the rights of their citizens.

LS: A few months ago it was revealed that the NSA could have had access via the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND) to data at the DE-CIX internet hub in Frankfurt. If this was the case the DE-CIX Management GmbH Frankfurt denies that this took place the BND would have violated German law. [See the [press release by the DE-CIX Management GmbH Frankfurt \(in German\)](#)] Can you tell us, please, how such arrangements between NSA and BND come about that are including breaches of law?

WB: The agencies like NSA and BND would set up a separate international agreement between the two agencies that would have to be passed and approved by at least some portion of the government. That is, your government would need to agree to it and so would ours, and that starts with the agencies agreeing on what to cooperate on and how to cooperate and what the ground rules are for that cooperation. That's then passed to the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, or very restricted numbers of people in administration would also be able to see that kind of agreement, and the same would be true I assume on the BND side and the German government.

There should be some small subset of the German government that's aware of these agreements and is monitoring them, though I don't know what the conditions are within the BND and how they do it. Within the United States it's the House and Senate intelligence committees and the FISA court that is supposed to oversee that these things don't violate U.S. law, but in fact, what they have been doing over here is advocating violation of U.S. law. They are enabling that it's not the question of them doing oversight, they aren't doing it.

And of course they are all doing it on the basis of fear-mongering of terrorism. They try to get everybody afraid so they will do whatever they want, that's the kind of leverage that they are trying to use not just against the public, but also against Congress. It's just all based on fear-mongering. The whole point is to get more money and build a bigger empire, which they have done. Over here, we've spent, for all the 16 agencies, close to a trillion dollars since 9/11. That's really been a money-making proposition for them, this fear-mongering. Now they are doing it with cyber security. It's how you control your population, how you manipulate them, and how you let them pay for things you want done.

LS: Is the BND merely a subsidiary or branch of the US intelligence apparatus?

WB: I wouldn't call them a branch, but they are certainly a cooperating partner. Again, it's all written out in agreements as to what the efforts are that they jointly share and work together on and approved again by their agency's heads and then it goes to certain parts of the governments for approval also. I wouldn't say that they're working totally for them, they have their own agenda and own priorities. The cooperation occurs where there's common interest and common concern about given activities, like terrorism or maybe dope smuggling and things like that.

LS: Is the NSA engaged in economic espionage related to Germany? And if this was the case, wouldn't it be the task for the BND to prevent this from happening?

WB: You would think so. I can only assume from what it's been printed that this is happening, but the question really becomes whether or not it is shared with U.S. companies to give them advantage in competition. I am sure that all governments around the world do this to some degree, depending on their capabilities and resources primarily. The question becomes whether or not it's shared outside of the government channels to industry, for example to gain advantage.

You would expect that government people are keeping it within, but the problem here is in NSA: a good many of the people who are managing all the data that would contain that kind of information are in fact contractors working for other industrial partners in the United States. Some of them like Boeing have many interests and so does Lockheed Martin and so on. These are corporations where people are running that data and managing that data for NSA, so they have access to it. What they are doing to it is another question, but it's a very risky situation in terms of industrial espionage.

LS: Your own career at NSA culminated as Technical Director for Intelligence in 2001. The very same year you retired. Why so?

WB: What happened after they wanted us to stop doing the ThinThread program, which was the one that solved the massive data problem related to the internet communications they had to get rid of us, so that's what they did. As part of that process they had to remove me from that rather high position and put me into a smaller position which was out of sight basically. They didn't want Congress or anybody else to be aware of what I was doing or have access to me. That's generally what they do when they don't want people doing things, they move them out of their way.

LS: What did NSA do wrong when it came to uncovering the 9/11 plot? Edward

Snowden “suggested that the United States had the proper intelligence ahead of 9/11 but failed to act.” [See “[Read Snowden’s comments on 9/11 that NBC didn’t broadcast](#)”, Russia Today, May 30, 2014.]

WB: Yes, that came out of Tom Drake’s use of ThinThread to go through the entire data base at NSA. He went through the data and analyzed it after the fact in early 2002, I believe. He found out that NSA had, in fact, in its data base prior to 9/11 all the information necessary to find out who was involved, where they were you know, to put the whole thing together and be able to stop it.

See, the problem with industry so involved in this and so inculcated inside of NSA I mean, they are inseparable, they work in the same spaces, and when you do that they have a vested interest in continuing to get the next contracts so that they can keep getting more and more money. So what happens is, they try to keep the problem going instead of solving it. So they only do incremental improvements over time that keeps them in the primary position to get the follow on contracts to keep working on it. That’s basically how they’ve been doing it, and they’ve been doing it for decades, by the way, it’s standard practice that they use.

LS: Do you think the expansion of various NSA programs in reaction to 9/11 is justified?

WB: Absolutely not! That’s what I opposed right away. They should have stopped it by using automation against a focused target set for acquisition of information. In other words, they knew the basic targets and people connected to them or those that were in close relationship with them, and they could define that and pull that data out and focus their analytic effort on that and solve that problem, but they didn’t. Instead they decided to build a bigger agency and that they wanted a much larger budget and a much larger set of contractors and contracting agents. That was the path they took. I called that sacrificing the security of the people of the United States and of the people of the free world for money.

LS: NSA whistleblower Thomas Drake stated also in an interview with me that the nexus 9/11 War on Terror is used as an excuse to expand programs that were existing pre-9/11. [See Tim Shorrock: “[Exposing Bush’s historic abuse of power](#)”, Salon, July 23, 2008.] One example, I think, would be Echelon. Could you tell us about the development of Echelon, please?

WB: I don’t know too much about what happened with Echelon, because that didn’t really deal with the fiber optic lines, and that’s really where the explosion occurred. The explosion in communications was occurring with the fiber optic lines. There are three types of attacks on it: Either they get corporate

cooperation with the telecom companies or the companies running the fiber lines, and if they have that with or without the government's knowledge (local government if it's foreign) then they can tap the lines there and do the acquisition there.

On the other hand, if they don't have a company doing that, then they can go to their counterpart in the government to try to get an agreement like in Frankfurt to try to get taps on that line or in other places. If that's agreed, then there's a governmental approval to do that, at least in part by the agency involved, if not by the government itself, too. I don't know that I mean, that would be the part that would have to be investigated.

And the other possibility, if they can't get a governmental cooperation or corporate cooperation, then they can unilaterally do it that means they have ways and means to get access to the fiber lines without the cooperation of the government or of the company involved. That's like the taps that they put on the lines between Google and all the major internet service providers when they are transferring data from their major storage centers back and forth without the knowledge of the companies. That's the kind of thing that they would do with anybody else that wouldn't cooperate. In other words, if you want to find out if your lines are tapped, you would need to trace the line all the way through.

LS: On Aug. 17, 1975 Senator Frank Church stated on NBC's "Meet the Press": "In the need to develop a capacity to know what potential enemies are doing, the United States government has perfected a technological capability that enables us to monitor the messages that go through the air. Now, that is necessary and important to the United States as we look abroad at enemies or potential enemies. We must know, at the same time, that capability at any time could be turned around on the American people, and no American would have any privacy left such is the capability to monitor everything, telephone conversations, telegrams, it doesn't matter.

"There would be no place to hide. If this government ever became a tyrant, if a dictator ever took charge in this country, the technological capacity that the intelligence community has given the government could enable it to impose total tyranny, and there would be no way to fight back because the most careful effort to combine together in resistance to the government, no matter how privately it was done, is within the reach of the government to know. Such is the capability of this technology.

"I don't want to see this country ever go across the bridge. I know the capacity that is there to make tyranny total in America, and we must see to it that this agency and all agencies that possess this technology operate within the law and under proper supervision so that we never cross over that abyss. That is the

abyss from which there is no return.”

How do those words sound today?

WB: They were right on the money. Frank Church captured it right away. The point is that they are in the process of perfecting this whole operation, and the point is that now that everybody has a greater capacity to communicate the invasion of privacy or the intrusion into what people's lives is all about is even worse than what Frank Church could have known. Back then he was only thinking about and looking at the landline telephone calls, where now it's not only that but also mobile phones, satellite phones, the internet, the computers, the tablets, and so on. All the networks people are carrying around.

There are at least over 3 ½ billion phones in the world, and something very similar in terms of computers. The explosion has been tremendous both in terms of volume and in terms of numbers. Frank Church couldn't have dreamt about that in his time; he was just talking about a smaller segment of what was available that time. And now the intrusion is even greater.

And I would also point out that those were part of the fundamental grounds for the impeachment of Richard Nixon. They were preparing to throw him out of office, when he resigned. But at that time under the programs MINARETTE at NSA and COINTELPRO at FBI and CHAOS at CIA, Nixon was only spying on a few thousands of people. Now they are doing hundreds of millions in the US, there are almost 300 million US citizens, not counting the billion plus in the rest of the world. If you're just talking about the US, they're now doing virtually everybody. If you use a phone or a computer or any kind of bank card or if you're writing a check or do any kind of that thing, you're being spied on. So the intrusion is so much greater and so much more encompassing today.

But we are not even thinking about impeaching people. We should have impeached George W. Bush and Richard Cheney for doing this to begin with, but we didn't. And that's why they kept it all in secret, by the way they knew that they were violating the U.S. Constitution and they knew they were also violating the laws. That's also why they had to give the telephone companies retroactive immunity, because they gave them access to the telephone lines and to the fiber optic lines that carried not only the telephone but also the internet. And they also gave them all the records of their customers, which all were violations of the laws and violations of constitutional rights of U.S. citizens in the First, Fourth and Fifth Amendment, at a minimum.

LS: Hearing that I have to ask: Are you disappointed from the reaction of your countrymen related to those NSA revelations?

WB: Yes, but I think that most of them still don't understand what that really means. I do have some hope here from some of the initial feedback to "CITIZENFOUR", the movie by Laura Poitras on Edward Snowden, and some of the whistleblowing that we did. That's been very positive, and I think it's helping to educate the population here as to what that really means. I think once they really understand what's going on and what their government is doing to them, that they will in fact react to that and react in a positive way and force the government to change, which they should.

LS: I would also like to discuss some questions related to PROMIS, a software for data mining, that was developed by Bill Hamilton's software firm INSLAW and stolen by the U.S. Justice Department / U.S. intelligence agencies. Dr. Norman Bailey was the Reagan National Security Council staff person in 1981 responsible for the new Signal Intelligence mission for NSA known as "Follow the Money."

According to my information, Dr. Bailey told INSLAW that NSA briefed him on the fact that it had obtained the PROMIS software from the U.S. Department of Justice and used it as the principal software installed on computers of wire transfer clearing houses, commercial banks, investment banks, credit card companies, and international financial institutions for real-time surveillance of electronic fund transfers through the banking sector. Dr. Bailey also confirmed the use of PROMIS as "the principal software element" of "Follow the Money" later on publicly in 2008. [For more information on NSA's "Follow the Money" SIGINT mission and PROMIS see Lars Schall: ["Follow the Money: The NSA's real-time electronic surveillance of bank transactions"](#), LarsSchall.com, Feb. 2, 2014.]

Were you aware, while an employee at NSA, of the use of PROMIS by NSA for its "Follow the Money" bank surveillance mission?

WB: I was not personally aware of the program PROMIS or how NSA used it. I did know that there was an effort to look at money transfers, it was a matter of following that for terrorism, for dope smuggling, just international crime. But I wasn't aware of the PROMIS program.

LS: In retrospective, what would you like to say about PROMIS? I mean, the whole case still isn't settled although it began in the 1980s and there's no doubt about it that the software was stolen by U.S. intelligence agencies like CIA and NSA

WB: I'm not surprised of that. I believe they tried to steal some of the intellectual capital we had after we had retired. The way they did it was to send the FBI to raid us, ultimately. I had expected them to actively attack our computers and try to find the information there. We knew these people and so we

never documented anything in a computer file anywhere, nothing was documented in the sense that it would be usable for them, either on paper or electronically so we were walking around with all this knowledge in our heads and not putting it down so that anybody could have it.

There was a large intelligence company in the United States, they tried a kind of forced takeover of us, but what they didn't realize was that all the intellectual capital was in our brains and they could not take that over from us. There was nothing they could do to get the information from us. So they failed. And also the government failed when they were trying to get it from us.

PROMIS was a different story. They went into an agreement and my understanding is that they broke the agreement with Bill Hamilton. I think this is a court issue that should have been resolved in the courts a long time ago.

LS: So PROMIS has never been a topic among your colleagues at NSA?

WB: No, we never talked about it, and I'd never heard about the program PROMIS at all while I was working at NSA.

LS: Is Wall Street a major player of the Deep State in the U.S.?

WB: I certainly think it is politically anyway, because they do contribute a lot of money to the political campaigns. And of course they have their own lobbyists and all that. I can't imagine them not having some input in the process somewhere. It only seems reasonable.

LS: Well, the CIA for example was formed and launched by investment bankers and lawyers from Wall Street.

WB: Yes, and they of course got billions from us. And if you take the case of Elliot Spitzer for example, he was in New York and going after the bankers for all the defrauding of people. He was going after them in a criminal way, and of course they get rid of him. They had the FBI look through all the data, I allege, because I don't know where else they get it, the FBI had direct access through the PRISM program, they go into the name data bases at NSA, all the emails, phone calls and financial transactions in those data bases for Elliot and find some evidence against him that they could use to leverage to get rid of him, which they did.

My question to begin with was what was their probable cause to do that in the beginning? I never really heard our government say anything about that, because they don't like the Fourth Amendment, because it constrains what they can and can't do. They want to have a free hand to get rid of anybody they want.

Like in my case, in the case of Kirk Wiebe, or also in Tom Drake's case, they tried to get rid of us by falsifying evidence and drawing up an indictment against us. I caught them at it, okay, so they finally dropped all that. But I mean, that's our Department of Justice; that's not justice, that's criminal. So, what they're doing, the House and Senate intelligence committees, the FISA court, the Department of Justice and the White House, they are trying to cover up any exposure of this, and that's why they were really after Snowden, and that's why they wanted to stop all those leaks. It's exposing them for the crimes they were committing against the people of United States and against the people of the world.

LS: Two other questions: Who are the largest private contractors who manage IT and telecommunication systems for the NSA, and what is their access and potential use of the data to serve their private interests?

WB: Well, you see, that's what I was talking about earlier: those who are managing the data for NSA are contractors and those are contracting organizations or companies that have many interests, not just in intelligence. They do have access there, and that's a real danger of whether or not they would use that for industrial espionage to give them leverage and advantage in a competitive bidding for contracts internationally. That's always a threat. I don't know how they are monitoring that, and I don't know what they are doing to ensure that that doesn't happen.

Also, I would point out that these kinds of data acquisitions are not just limited to NSA and BND, there are other countries involved that also have sharing agreements and have the ability, like through XKeyscore, to see these data sets. That just opens up an immense array of potential abuses. I don't know if they have agreements to monitor or prevent it or to stop it if they find it. I don't know what they're doing. (laughs.) They haven't made it clear. I mean, they are doing all of this in secret anyway.

LS: And it's quite a problem given the fact that roughly 70 percent of the U.S. intelligence budget is outsourced to corporate contractors. [See Tim Shorrock: "Spies for Hire: The Secret World of Intelligence Outsourcing", Simon & Schuster, New York, 2008, p. 6.] – One more question, and I know it's hard to answer, but I think it's crucial: Are NSA systems used to manage the financial markets, for example related to the NY Fed, the operative arm of the Federal Reserve System?

WB: I do not know that the Treasury or any part of the Federal Reserve System is using those programs. They probably get the benefit of it indirectly, but I don't know they are using them directly. They are part of the government, too, you know, they share knowledge across the government, how much of that I'm not

sure. But again, whatever agreements were made, would be made within the U.S. government as to what kind of sharing would go on and the level to get access to it.

LS: How would you think the indirect use of those systems looks like?

WB: Here is what I think they would do: I would think that they would have the Treasury and all the banks report transfers of money in and out of the country. Also, I would think they would take cooperatively under the business records transfer all kinds of financial transactions, including not just credit cards, but also bank transfers of money back and forth between banks around the world. Also, all personal check-writing and transfers of money from individuals inside the country as well as anywhere else they can get. Those are the kinds of transfers they would be looking for. They are looking for patterns of money transferring that would be indicative of payoff for dope or payoff for money laundering operations or things like that. I would think they are doing that.

LS: And as you know the Treasury Department has this Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence as a Counterterrorism Finance Unit. Do you think the NSA works with them?

WB: I assume they do. The level of cooperation would be laid out in agreements again.

Lars Schall is a German financial journalist.

Behind the USS Liberty Cover-up

For decades, Israel has exercised strong influence over U.S. policies in the Mideast via its highly effective Washington lobby, but that power was tested in 1967 when Israeli warplanes strafed the USS Liberty killing 34 American crewmen, an incident revisited in a new documentary reviewed by Maidhc Ó Cathail.

By Maidhc Ó Cathail

"The Day Israel Attacked America," an investigation into Israel's deadly June 8, 1967 attack on the USS Liberty at the height of the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War, was aired recently on Al Jazeera America.

Directed by British filmmaker Richard Belfield, the documentary confirms not only that the attack on the U.S. Navy spy ship was deliberate, an undisputed fact long accepted by all but the most shameless Israeli apologists, but

reveals, perhaps for the first time, how Tel Aviv was able to induce the U.S. government to cover up an attack that killed 34 and injured 171 of its own seamen by a supposed "ally."

"It was especially tough for Lyndon Johnson, to date the most pro-Israeli American president in history," the film's narrator observed. According to Tom Hughes, the State Department's director of intelligence and research at the time of the Liberty attack, "Johnson was in a very tough mood."

As an indication of Johnson's initial firm stance, Hughes recalled that Johnson briefed Newsweek magazine off the record that the Israelis had attacked the Liberty, suggesting that they may have done so because they believed that the naval intelligence-gathering ship had been intercepting Israeli as well as Egyptian communications.

A post-interview leak revealing that it was the President himself who had briefed the media about the attack on the Liberty alarmed the Israeli embassy in Washington and its friends in the major Jewish organizations, who intimated that Johnson's Newsweek briefing "practically amounted to blood libel."

The documentary's narrator said declassified Israeli documents now show that "they were going to threaten President Johnson with 'blood libel', gross anti-Semitism, and that would end his political career."

"Blackmail!" retired U.S. Navy admiral Bobby Ray Inman frankly summed up Israel's strategy to deal with Johnson. "[T]hey know if he is thinking about running again he's going to need money for his campaign," said Inman, who from 1977 to 1981 directed the National Security Agency, the U.S. intelligence agency under whose aegis the USS Liberty had been dispatched to the eastern Mediterranean. "So alleging that he's blood-libeling is going to arouse the Jewish donors."

The Israeli government hired teams of lawyers, including close friends of Johnson, the narrator added, and began an "all-out offensive" to influence media coverage of the attack, leaning on them "to kill critical stories" and slant others in Israel's favor.

"There was a campaign mounted to see what could be done about returning Johnson to his normal, predictable pro-Israeli position," Hughes said. "Efforts were to be made to remind the President of the delicacy of his own position, that he personally might lose support for his run for reelection in 1968."

Israelis Bearing Gifts

Noting the cleverness of Israel's tactics, the documentary revealed that after

having identified the Vietnam War as Johnson's "soft spot" it quietly provided him with "two extraordinary gifts."

The first addressed the President's bitterness toward many American Jewish organizations and community leaders over their opposition to his Vietnam policy. But as the Liberty crisis unfolded, Hughes said, "they were suddenly becoming more silent on Vietnam." Johnson was made to understand that taking a more "moderate" position toward Israel over the attack would benefit him politically.

The second gift was a vital military one. The U.S. military attaché in Tel Aviv received a surprise visit. "I think I have something you might be interested in," a senior Israeli intelligence officer told him. The Israelis had just crossed the Red Sea to capture the Egyptian military's Soviet-supplied surface-to-air missiles, the same ones the North Vietnamese were using to bring down American aircraft on a daily basis.

As a show of gratitude, the U.S. government gave the Israelis two gifts in return. The Johnson administration resupplied them with the weapons they had used in their six-day land grab of territory from Egypt, Jordan and Syria. The White House also decided to water down the Defense Department's inquiry into the attack on the Liberty.

As Hughes explained, "Soon Johnson did respond, and took a much more lenient line and wished that the whole incident could be put behind us as soon as possible."

Johnson's "softer approach" to Israel was reflected in the U.S. Navy inquiry then underway onboard the Liberty. As one of the survivors recalled, the Liberty's crew began to realize that "a cover-up was descending" upon them. Among key testimony ignored was the strafing of the Liberty's deck with napalm and the machine-gunning of the sinking ship's lifeboats.

Without interviewing any Israelis involved in the attack, the U.S. court of inquiry rushed out a report, hurriedly completed in a mere 20 days, exonerating Israel from blame. Tel Aviv quickly followed up with its own report that concluded that the whole incident was "a series of mistakes, and that no one was to blame."

Ignoring a secret telegram from its ambassador in Washington advising that Tel Aviv admit its guilt in light of America's possession of an incriminating audio tape of the attack, Israel instead shifted its focus to repairing the damage to its relationship with the U.S.

"The Israelis have always been very skillful at tracking what the U.S. government is doing, saying, thinking, and effort[s] to influence it," Inman

pointed out. "And the great advantage they have as compared to other countries is their influence on the Congress."

A timely Washington Post report noted that "the Jewish lobby could help determine the outcome of 169 of the 270 electoral votes needed to win the White House."

As Johnson considered his re-election prospects, Hughes said the "emotive" language used in earlier Pentagon press releases disappeared and was replaced by "a much more bland and neutral-sounding discourse."

"But whatever was said to journalists," the narrator added, "every U.S. intelligence head believed that the attack was intentional." As one of them colorfully wrote at the time, "a nice whitewash for a group of ignorant, stupid and inept xxxxxxxx." Though shown but not mentioned in the film, the next sentence of the intelligence chief's letter stated the obvious: "If the attackers had not been Hebrew there would have been quite a commotion."

"The Jewish community has always been more generous than many of their other counterparts in supporting financially elections, political causes," Inman observed. "In the process, that does translate into influence."

Israel's White House Friends

Israel's influence inside the White House was even more significant. "Many of Johnson's closest friends and advisors were pro-Israeli, and they reported back to Tel Aviv on his every move," the film asserted.

If anything, this understated Israeli influence. As Grace Halsell, a staff writer for Johnson, later wrote, "Everyone around me, without exception, was pro-Israel."

Thanks to its supporters surrounding Johnson, the narrator claimed that the Israeli government was able to constantly shift its story "to counter whatever new intelligence the White House received."

To protect their contacts' identity, the Israelis used codenames in their communications with them. "The Day Israel Attacked America," however, revealed for the first time the identities of four of these pro-Israeli eyes and ears inside the Johnson administration.

"Hamlet" was Abe Feinberg, one of the most influential fundraisers ever in Democratic Party politics, whose phone calls Johnson couldn't afford to ignore; "Menashe" was Arthur Goldberg, the U.S ambassador to the United Nations; "Harari" was David Ginsberg, a prominent Washington lawyer who represented the

Israeli embassy; and “Ilan” was Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas, a longtime Johnson confidant who had dined with the President on the eve of the Six-Day War.

It would hardly be an overstatement to say that the President owed his political career to “Ilan”/Fortas. As biographer Robert A. Caro has written, Johnson “largely through the legal genius of his ally Abe Fortas, managed, by a hairbreadth, to halt a federal court’s investigation into the stealing of the 1948 election,” in a reference to LBJ’s first Senate race.

According to the documentary, it was “Menashe”/Goldberg who supplied Israel with the key intelligence. Goldberg warned the Israelis that the U.S. had an audio tape that confirmed the Israeli pilots knew the Liberty was an American ship before they attacked.

“The strategy worked,” concluded Belfield’s documentary. “The U.S.-Israeli relationship proved to be stronger than the killing and injuring of more than 200 Americans.”

But it wasn’t always a foregone conclusion. As Hughes put it, “The American-Israeli relationship was very much at stake, and it was brought back from the precipice.”

“The Day Israel Attacked America” ends with a scene of surviving veterans of the USS Liberty laying a wreath on their murdered comrades’ memorial headstone and a prescient observation by the U.S. undersecretary of state at the time of the attack.

“It seemed clear to the Israelis that as American leaders did not have the courage to punish them for the blatant murder of American citizens,” George Ball noted, “they would let them get away with anything.”

Maidhc Ó Cathail is a widely published writer and political analyst. He is also the creator and editor of The Passionate Attachment blog, which focuses primarily on the U.S.-Israeli relationship.
