

The Surveillance State Behind Russia-gate

Exclusive: Amid the frenzy over the Trump team's talks with Russians, are we missing a darker story, how the Deep State's surveillance powers control the nation's leaders, ask U.S. intelligence veterans Ray McGovern and Bill Binney.

By Ray McGovern and Bill Binney

Although many details are still hazy because of secrecy – and further befogged by politics – it appears House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes was informed last week about invasive electronic surveillance of senior U.S. government officials and, in turn, passed that information onto President Trump.

This news presents Trump with an unwelcome but unavoidable choice: confront those who have kept him in the dark about such rogue activities or live fearfully in their shadow. (The latter was the path chosen by President Obama. Will Trump choose the road less traveled?)

What President Trump decides will largely determine the freedom of action he enjoys as president on many key security and other issues. But even more so, his choice may decide whether there is a future for this constitutional republic. Either he can acquiesce to or fight against a Deep State of intelligence officials who have a myriad of ways to spy on politicians (and other citizens) and thus amass derogatory material that can be easily transformed into blackmail.

This crisis (yes, "crisis" is an overused word, but in this highly unusual set of circumstances we believe it is appropriate) came to light mostly by accident after President Trump tweeted on March 4 that his team in New York City's Trump Towers had been "wiretapped" by President Obama.

Trump reportedly was relying on media reports regarding how conversations of aides, including his ill-starred National Security Advisor Michael Flynn, had been intercepted. Trump's tweet led to a fresh offensive by Democrats and the mainstream press to disparage Trump's "ridiculous" claims.

However, this concern about the dragnets that U.S. intelligence (or its foreign partners) can deploy to pick up communications by Trump's advisers and then "unmask" the names before leaking them to the news media was also highlighted at the Nunes-led House Intelligence Committee hearing on March 20, where Nunes appealed for anyone who had related knowledge to come forward with it.

That apparently happened on the evening of March 21 when Nunes received a call while riding with a staffer. After the call, Nunes switched to another car and went to a secure room at the Old Executive Office Building, next to the White House, where he was shown highly classified information apparently about how the intelligence community picked up communications by Trump's aides.

The next day, Nunes went to the White House to brief President Trump, who later said he felt "somewhat vindicated" by what Nunes had told him.

The 'Wiretap' Red Herring

But the corporate U.S. news media continued to heckle Trump over his use of the word "wiretap" and cite the insistence of FBI Director James Comey and other intelligence officials that President Obama had not issued a wiretap order aimed at Trump.

As those paying rudimentary attention to modern methods of surveillance know, "wiretapping" is passé. But Trump's use of the word allowed FBI and Department of Justice officials and their counterparts at the National Security Agency to swear on a stack of bibles that the FBI, DOJ, and NSA have been unable to uncover any evidence within their particular institutions of such "wiretapping."

At the House Intelligence Committee hearing on March 20, FBI Director Comey and NSA Director Michael Rogers firmly denied that their agencies had wiretapped Trump Towers on the orders of President Obama.

So, were Trump and his associates "wiretapped?" Of course not. Wiretapping went out of vogue decades ago, having been rendered obsolete by leaps in surveillance technology.

The real question is: Were Trump and his associates surveilled? Wake up, America. Was no one paying attention to the disclosures from NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden in 2013 when he exposed Director of National Intelligence James Clapper as a liar for denying that the NSA engaged in bulk collection of communications inside the United States.

The reality is that EVERYONE, including the President, is surveilled. The technology enabling bulk collection would have made the late demented FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover's mouth water.

Allegations about the intelligence community's abuse of its powers also did not begin with Snowden. For instance, several years earlier, former NSA worker and whistleblower Russell Tice warned about these "special access programs," citing first-hand knowledge, but his claims were brushed aside as coming from a disgruntled employee with psychological problems. His disclosures were soon

forgotten.

Intelligence Community's Payback

However, earlier this year, there was a stark reminder of how much fear these surveillance capacities have struck in the hearts of senior U.S. government officials. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York told MSNBC's Rachel Maddow that President Trump was "being really dumb" to take on the intelligence community, since "They have six ways from Sunday at getting back at you."

Maddow shied away from asking the logical follow-up: "Senator Schumer, are you actually saying that Trump should be afraid of the CIA?" Perhaps she didn't want to venture down a path that would raise more troubling questions about the surveillance of the Trump team than on their alleged contacts with the Russians.

Similarly, the U.S. corporate media is now focused on Nunes's alleged failure to follow protocol by not sharing his information first with Rep. Adam Schiff, the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee. Democrats promptly demanded that Nunes recuse himself from the Russia investigation.

On Tuesday morning, reporters for CNN and other news outlets peppered Nunes with similar demands as he walked down a corridor on Capitol Hill, prompting him to suggest that they should be more concerned about what he had learned than the procedures followed.

That's probably true because to quote Jack Nicholson's character in "A Few Good Men" in a slightly different context, the mainstream media "cannot handle the truth" – even if it's a no-brainer.

At his evening meeting on March 21 at the Old Executive Office Building, Nunes was likely informed that all telephones, emails, etc. – including his own and Trump's – are being monitored by what the Soviets used to call "the organs of state security."

By sharing that information with Trump the next day – rather than consulting with Schiff – Nunes may have sought to avoid the risk that Schiff or someone else would come up with a bureaucratic reason to keep the President in the dark.

A savvy politician, Nunes knew there would be high political cost in doing what he did. Inevitably, he would be called partisan; there would be more appeals to remove him from chairing the committee; and the character assassination of him already well under way – in The Washington Post, for example – might move him to the top of the unpopularity chart, displacing even *bête noire* Russian President Vladimir Putin.

But this episode was not the first time Nunes has shown some spine in the face of what the Establishment wants ignored. In a move setting this congressman apart from all his colleagues, Nunes had the courage to host an award ceremony for one of his constituents, retired sailor and member of the USS Liberty crew, Terry Halbardier.

On June 8, 1967, by repairing an antennae and thus enabling the USS Liberty to issue an SOS, Halbardier prevented Israeli aircraft and torpedo boats from sinking that Navy intelligence ship and ensuring that there would be no survivors to describe how the Israeli “allies” had strafed and bombed the ship. Still, 34 American seamen died and 171 were wounded.

At the time of the award ceremony in 2009, Nunes said, “The government has kept this quiet I think for too long, and I felt as my constituent, he [Halbardier] needed to get recognized for the services he made to his country.” (Ray McGovern took part in the ceremony in Nunes’s Visalia, California office.)

Now, we suspect that much more may be learned about the special compartmented surveillance program targeted against top U.S. national leaders if Rep. Nunes doesn’t back down and if Trump doesn’t choose the road most traveled – acquiescence to America’s Deep State actors.

Ray McGovern served as a CIA analyst for 27 years and conducted one-on-one briefings of the President’s Daily Brief under Ronald Reagan from 1981 to 1985.

Bill Binney was former Technical Director, World Geopolitical & Military Analysis, NSA and co-founder of NSA’s SIGINT Automation Research Center before he retired after 9/11.

Trump’s Incoherent Foreign Policy

President Trump’s foreign policy is sinking into incoherence from the Middle East to the Far East, with his promise of less interventionism and budget savings disappearing from view, as Ivan Eland reports.

By Ivan Eland

The recent North Korean missile tests raise questions about contradictions in President Donald Trump’s national security policies. During his campaign Trump implied that the United States should fight fewer wars overseas and demanded that U.S. dependents, Japan and South Korea, do more for their own defense,

perhaps even getting nuclear weapons.

Yet a recent article written by David Sanger, a national security reporter for the New York Times, noted that Trump had tweeted that North Korean acquisition of a long-range missile “won’t happen” and that his administration was considering preemptive military strikes on North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs or reintroducing U.S. tactical (short-range) nuclear missiles into South Korea, which were removed 25 years ago.

So which is it – demanding U.S. allies do more or ramping up America’s efforts to make them even more reliant on American power? And this is not the only Trump policy contradiction.

If Trump is demanding that wealthy allies – both East Asian and European – put out more of an effort for their own security and if Trump wants to fight fewer wars overseas, then why does the defense budget need to be increased by a whopping 10 percent? That proposed increase is roughly equivalent to the entire Russian annual defense budget. In fact, couldn’t U.S. defense spending be cut to help ameliorate the already humongous \$20-trillion-dollar national debt?

Moreover, the Department of Defense is the worst run agency in the federal government, as demonstrated by its being the only department to repeatedly fail to pass an audit ? thus not being able to pinpoint where many trillions of dollars over many years have been spent. In 2001, the department’s comptroller admitted to me that the department’s broken accounting system would not be able to pass such an audit for a long time to come. Sixteen years later it still can’t.

How does the American taxpayer know that the already almost \$600 billion defense budget each year is spent wisely or even not stolen outright? Despite this niggling elephant in the room, the Congress regularly gives the department, and the military services within it, almost a free pass, because of “patriotism,” political pressure from defense industries, and the aura of secrecy surrounding this bureaucracy.

Because the nation’s founders were almost universally suspicious of large standing militaries – in the late 1770s, European monarchs used them for external conquest and plunder and internal repression of their own peoples – militarism covered by the veneer of “patriotism” is as inauthentic and vile as it is prevalent in Twenty-first Century America.

Also, much of the shroud of secrecy surrounding the military is overdone; many employees of the security bureaucracies admit that much information is over-classified. That includes threat information, which the department has a

conflict of interest in hyping, because it justifies more spending on research, weapons, operations, maintenance, and all other things military.

The Terrorist Hype

Trump is also hyping terrorist threats to justify stanching foreign travel and immigration to the United States, as well as indirectly his higher defense budgets. Yet leaked documents from his own Department of Homeland Security say that discrimination by national background is a poor way of identifying potential terrorists and that most people who have committed recent terrorist acts in the United States were radicalized long after coming here.

Despite all the media hype, terrorism is still a rare phenomenon, and North America has always had fewer foreign terrorists than most other places, because it is a long way away from the world's centers of conflict – for example, the Middle East. So much for the value of “extreme vetting” of arriving individuals from selected Muslim countries and increasing defense spending to combat terrorism.

Pressure by the military-industrial-complex (MIC) is another major driver of excessive defense spending. MIC lobbying has led to monumental wasting of taxpayer dollars over the years. For example, according to David Sanger, efforts to develop and field a limited national missile defense system to protect against the likes of relatively primitive North Korean missiles has cost taxpayers about \$300 billion since the days of Eisenhower but has given them a system that, even under perfect conditions, can only hit an incoming missile 44 percent of the time. And most analysts say real world conditions will rarely be perfect. This effort should have been abandoned long ago, but the MIC uses “the legacy of Ronald Reagan” to win conservative support in seeming perpetuity, no matter the poor results of the program.

There are countless other weapons programs in the Department of Defense that are underperforming, vastly exceeding original cost estimates, and are way behind schedule. Thus, taxpayers and their members of Congress need to cast a jaundiced eye on Trump's desired military spending increase.

Ivan Eland is Senior Fellow and Director of the Center on Peace & Liberty at the Independent Institute. [This article first appeared as a blog post at [HuffingtonPost.](#)]

Life and Death in Vietnam's 'Television War'

Exclusive: During the Vietnam War, American TV executives wanted the most graphic “bang bang” for their nightly news so they pushed their camera crews into danger, a culture described in a new book reviewed by Don North.

By Don North

In February 1967, Japanese cameraman Tony Hirashiki along with a Vietnamese soundman and myself – then an ABC News correspondent – jumped from a hovering Huey helicopter onto Landing Zone C for Operation Junction City. We were with 25,000 1st Infantry troops for what was billed as the largest search-and-destroy operation since American forces took up a combat role in Vietnam.

Amid the smoke of earlier bombardments, we did the required “standupper” as an introduction to our story. In those days, I was connected by a wire umbilical cord to my colleagues. We were a team bound together and acting in silent accord to document the day’s battle. But it often was Hirashiki’s footage that told the story more eloquently and dramatically than any words that I or other correspondents could muster.

In his 10 years of work in Vietnam, Yasutsune “Tony” Hirashiki would become a legend among the news media covering the war. He thought little of his own safety and had a burning desire to show war as it was. His filmic brilliance helped turn a reporter’s work into vivid and striking stories about a complex conflict.

While cameramen had recorded conflicts for generations – Matthew Brady revolutionized the public’s perception of warfare by capturing grisly Civil War scenes on his still camera a century earlier – the work of Hirashiki and others in Vietnam produced an intimacy and immediacy to the Vietnam War that had a similarly profound impact.

The Vietnam War was called “The Living Room War” because it was delivered to the televisions of Americans on a nightly basis – and the work of cameramen like Hirashiki was crucial to that extraordinary experience.

As ABC News president Elmer Lower said, “The television news cameraman is rather a new breed. There is no exact profile of the man. First of all, he is an artist, a craftsman, not just a picture taker. The camera is an extension of the man himself. ... like his bravery, his patience is congenital. Hours of waiting for something to break. The location is immaterial. A battlefield? He’ll go.

“Gunfire? Well, that makes it a little tougher for him to take his time on production values but he’s the first man in. He is really most comfortable in a place where the action is. He has a seventh sense about impending movement. He’ll tell you he lucked into a sequence, but I often feel he knew it was coming.”

Now, Tony Hirashiki has written a memoir of his years in Vietnam that is one of the most insightful tales of working for television news in Vietnam. His *On the Frontlines of the Television War* should take a place on library shelves with the best accounts of journalists working the war, like John Laurence’s *The Cat from Hue*.

Ted Koppel, who was another veteran ABC News correspondent in Vietnam, writes an introduction that is an accurate profile of the Tony his friends knew.

“Tony Hirashiki was simply the best cameraman to cover the Vietnam war. His soaring video, often acquired at great personal risk, gave wings to even the most mundane narration. For those of us who worked with him he was also a source of gentleness and joy in a place where both were in terribly short supply.”

A Personal Saga

Yet, Hirashiki’s personal saga of the Vietnam War began uncertainly as he arrived at Saigon airport in 1966 direct from Tokyo. He spoke little English and had a note pinned to his jacket addressed to the ABC Bureau in Saigon, like a child on his first day at summer camp.

But his personal courage and his commitment to his craft soon made him a seasoned veteran at plunging into dangerous assignments and returning with stunning footage. One day when I was working with Tony, we were advancing up a rocky cliff with a company of U.S. Marines when he disappeared for a short time. Apparently he had found a better angle from which to film the risky ascent of the Marines.

It wasn’t until many months later when I viewed our finished story in a New York studio, that I was amazed to see Tony’s artful film of the Marines climbing past colorful arrangements of wild flowers and orchids as Tony pulled focus on the flowers and climbing Marines, a surprising reminder during a lull in battle that a world of beauty still prevailed.

As ABC correspondent Ned Potter once wrote of Hirashiki’s work, “Beautifully composed pictures, even in the most chaotic of circumstances, came naturally to him. Some of that is a matter of instinct, but more of it comes from having the soul of a poet.”

During his 10 years in Vietnam, Hirashiki saved every script and dope sheet and kept a careful dairy. He never studied English, but from foul-mouthed G.I.'s and stressed-out colleagues, he amassed an impressive vocabulary of swear words.

Over his decade in Vietnam, Hirashiki worked with 35 correspondents of varied experience and temperament. The Vietnam bureau was a revolving door for journalists, with many reluctant to sign up for more than six months or a year. Tony outlasted them all and, in his book, charitably describes them, even the prima donnas or the correspondents who shirked combat assignments when their turn came.

A Favorite Correspondent

One of Hirashiki's favorite reporters to team up with was Roger Peterson, a 6-foot-4-inch former U.S. Marine who worked the war like the backstreets of his hometown, Chicago. Peterson was a very fair and thorough journalist who carried a 50-pound pack into battle and two canteens, one for water and the other for Jack Daniels to help relax when the day's struggles were over.

One day covering a U.S. Marine operation near Con Thien, Peterson heard gunfire and – out of habit – rushed toward the sound with a hot mike. Loud and clear on the tape was the sound of a bullet smashing into his arm.

“Roger, are you interested in doing a standupper,” asked Tony to which Peterson responded with an ad-libbed description of his wound and the precarious position of the U.S. Marine unit they had accompanied into battle – until the morphine and pain overwhelmed him and he was carried unconscious onto a “Dust off” chopper.

Meanwhile, in New York at the ABC news bureau, Peterson's bravery and tenacity were cited to me, a new reporter, as how to behave, “this is how to be an ABC correspondent.”

“Did you see Peterson's report tonight, Don,” asked one of the ABC executives. “That was the ultimate on-scene report.”

My God, I thought, is that what we are expected to do to report the war? Yes, it seems it was. Roger and Tony set the bar high for those of us who followed into the dangerous rice paddies. When the bullets got close most of our ABC reporters thought about what to say on camera if they took a hit, always wondering if we would be cool enough to do it like Roger did.

Hirashiki admits in his book that although covering combat was more dangerous it was often simpler to shoot, more exciting and sure to make the air promptly. However, if a news crew missed the “bang bang” that some rival crew got, angry

news executives back in New York would fire off a complaint, known ironically as a "rocket."

Meanwhile, feature stories, although thoughtful on a complex war, without the "bang bang," would often sit on the shelf in New York and be forgotten.

Looking for Angles

In his memoir, Tony Hirashiki describes correspondent Bill Brannigan as one who always looked for unique angles on stories even without intense combat. In the village of Quon Loi one day, the 1st Division was gathering for a major push. Young soldiers just out of basic training were nervous as they lined up to board helicopters for the landing zone, known as an LZ.

"Bill picked out one soldier, PFC Ronnie Compton from Pinsonfork, a small Kentucky coal town, and told me to stay with him," Hirashiki writes.

"Every once in a while Bill would ask him a question. 'What are you thinking about or are you scared?' Compton answered, 'Honestly I'm scared. It's my first combat. I want to make sure I don't make any mistakes.'"

Hirashiki continues, "I had my doubts. Going into combat with an entirely green unit seemed dangerous. I sat next to the door so I could jump out first and kept on filming the faces of these grim and determined young men. There was gunfire at the drop zone. The pilot wasn't going to touch down, just hover. We would all have to jump. A hot LZ is both deadly serious and often amusing at the same time. Our Kentucky boy fell on his butt, but stood up quickly and moved out briskly.

"We caught up as he reached a rubber plantation and the fire fight began. Brannigan: 'How do you feel now?' ... Compton stopped firing for a moment and when he answered, it was as if the young boy had somehow disappeared, and been replaced by a soldier."

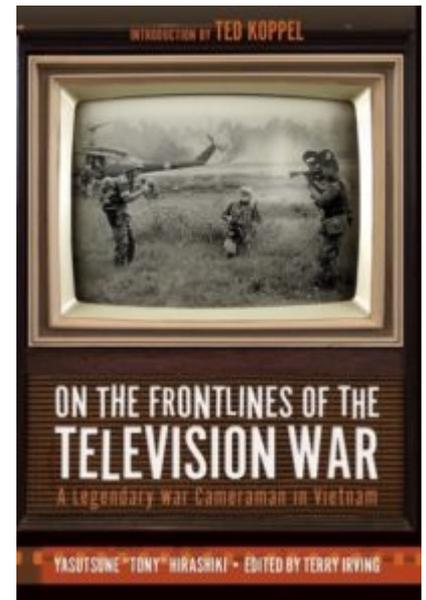
Compton: "I was tense when the helicopter landed, but I'm not scared anymore."

Then, Hirashiki writes, the young soldier "moved forward into the trees. He walked confidently, all his training coming back to him, as step by step he disappeared into the forest. Bill said that through the story of this one boy, we could tell the story of thousands of American soldiers."

Rocket for Tony

Con Thien was known to local missionaries as "the Hill of Angels," but to occupying U.S. Marines it was a little piece of hell. Just two miles south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), it became a duel between North Vietnamese long-

range artillery and U.S. airpower. In one week, over 3,000 rounds of mortar, artillery and rockets landed at Con Thien.



It became the top story in Vietnam, but the U.S. military declared that TV crews had to take turns at the base, shoot for two hours and pull out as a new crew came in.

“The two hours I was in Con Thien, the North Vietnamese must have been taking a break because no shells came in,” Hirashiki writes. “It was good footage but it wasn’t ‘bang bang.’ When we left a CBS crew came in and they got slammed. The artillery barrage was intense, and they got great footage of explosions and men scrambling for cover. The next day I got my first rocket from New York.”

“Why did CBS have exciting incoming scenes at Con Thien, but ABC had only outgoing scenes? Nick Archer”

Dick Rosenbaum, our young Saigon bureau chief, wasn’t intimidated and shot back an immediate reply by telex to New York: “We can’t force our cameraman to wait and cover incoming scenes at besieged outpost Con Thien. Dick Rosenbaum.”

Rosenbaum later described his attitude, writing: “If our crew goes out the right side of a chopper, they may get no action. If the competition goes out the left side and find action how does your crew get over to that side under fire? Sometimes you can best describe getting good combat footage as luck.”

Hirashiki writes, “I appreciated Dick’s support but I was even more determined to get better footage.” The danger of pushing crews in the field was realized by most of the bosses at ABC News and they often flew in to experience the war with their employees.

Even the President of ABC News, Elmer Lower, took his turn. As he arrived in

Saigon a few days after Tet, he discovered the bureau was short soundmen.

Bureau chief Rosenbaum jokingly suggested he help out as a soundman, which Lower took seriously and became a soundman for several days of dangerous street demonstrations.

Lower even agreed to fly into the U.S. Marine base at Khe Sahn, which was under siege. But as the C-123 was about to land incoming rounds hit the runway and the pilot aborted the flight. While refuelling, Rosenbaum asked if Lower was ready to try again.

"Nope, " he said. "I'll try anything once."

Most weeks the "herograms" for exceptional work outnumbered the "rockets" and many of the "rockets" were fired off for more prosaic reasons. I managed to collect a file of nasty "rockets" for being late accounting for my expenses.

But after producing a heart-breaking story at Con Thien about Marines striving to save another Marine critically wounded by an incoming North Vietnamese rocket (the real kind that explode), my cameraman Nguyen Van Qui and I received the following telex from New York:

"I would like to state that I have covered the news as a reporter and screened a great amount of film in the past twenty one years but never have I been moved as I was when I screened your marine dying in Con Thien. You all displayed great courage and great pride in your work. Nick Archer"

The Pressures

Tony Hirashiki and the other crews would often work 24-hour days in the field and when on standby play non-stop poker. Hirashiki recalls a favorite telex about that pastime:

"There were days in 1973 we had no assignments and a number of us from all three networks would gather occasionally for a friendly game of poker. A young administrator recently arrived from New York was scandalized and sent a letter to Nick Archer exposing us for our supposed transgression.

On the open telex that all bureaus could read, Archer answered: "Re your letter. When you have been where they've been, and done what they've done, you too may play poker. Regards Archer."

Regarding the dangers, there were several cases of correspondents refusing combat assignments that confronted the bosses with a dilemma. A veteran war correspondent Sam Jaffe, who had experienced both Korea and Vietnam, after three weeks in Vietnam following the Tet offensive wrote: "I won't cover Khe Sahn, and

I refuse to go back to Hue. The longer you stay here, the more inevitable it is that you're going to be hurt, maimed or killed."

In his memoir, Hirashiki writes, "What did that mean for the rest of us? Could we refuse a dangerous assignment? I had almost never said no, so I really couldn't be certain. It was always a confusing situation. New York was very concerned for our safety, but at the same time, they expected us to deliver the goods – in many ways a bit like soldiers on the frontlines.

"In the course of the Vietnam war, according to the Newseum in Washington there were sixty-seven journalists killed or missing. Our ABC News bureau suffered six wounded. Two were killed during the war and two believed experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) committed suicide after the war."

The End

Hirashiki's best friend was fellow ABC cameraman Terry Khoo, a Singaporean Chinese who had been covering the war since 1962. He was considered the doyen of cameramen, spoke four languages and was highly respected for his dignified character.

Terry Khoo was as competitive as anyone, but shared his judgments to keep friends safe. In late 1972, it was Terry's judgment that the war was ending and was no longer meaningful for him or Tony to risk everything.

In his memoir, Hirashiki writes: "What Terry said was similar to the feeling the remaining American troops had. Don't be the last to die in Vietnam for a mistake. Terry had found his true love, Winnie Ing, the Hong Kong ABC office secretary. They would be married and Terry would accept a new job with ABC News at the new bureau in Bonn, West Germany"

After finishing his last assignment, Khoo was at the Huong Giang hotel in Hue. He was packed and was briefing his replacement, a friend of his from Singapore, Sam Kai Faye. A rumor circulated that a North Vietnamese tank had been spotted west of Highway One. Terry Khoo wanted to check it out and give Sam a final lesson in the field. All his friends urged him not to go, his flight back to Saigon would leave in a few hours.

As the pair drove off amid warnings to be careful, Terry Khoo's last words were "It's all fate anyway, baby, so play it cool."

Arriving at the scene of a reported skirmish, they spotted a line of South Vietnamese troops moving into the tall grass west of the road and ran to catch up. An enemy soldier firing from ambush hit Sam Kai Faye and Terry Khoo went to aid him, but they were pinned down as the firing continued.

Troops couldn't recover their bodies for three days. Their coffins were flown back together to Singapore with a grieving Tony Hirashiki and many colleagues of the ABC bureau. They asked if it was possible to bury Terry and Sam side by side, the way they died, but Sam was a Christian and Terry a Buddhist so they were given separate funerals and buried in different cemeteries. Terry Khoo bequeathed enough of his life insurance so that today, 50 years later, medical students are still receiving scholarships.

Hirashiki remembers. "That day, it became my war. Even though I had been covering the war for many years, I had always kept a distance from it, trying to be neutral and unbiased. Whoever killed my brothers, Terry and Sam, was my enemy. I shouted and cried out for the loss of my best friends and cursed at the top of my lungs those who had taken away my hopes and dreams of the future."

On April 30, 1975, Tony Hirashiki shot his last story as Saigon fell to the advancing North Vietnamese Army. He took off in a U.S. Marine helicopter from the roof of the U.S. Embassy heading for the USS Blue Ridge in the South China Sea. He recalls:

"While our helicopter was rising I could see the airport was burning. We flew out over Saigon. I had flown over and filmed the city many times and thought it was beautiful. But now I had changed and the country had changed. I finally took the camera off my shoulder. I realized I was crying and that had been why it was so hard to focus my shots.

"I cried quietly, not as loud as I did when Terry died. Finally this was my war. As we flew I cursed silently with every swear word I knew. And cried."

As Tony Hirashiki worked on his memoir for eight years, writing first in Japanese and then in English, he enlisted the help of our ABC News colleagues to recall what he didn't have in his notes. Terry Irving, who started his career at ABC News as a motorcycle courier before becoming a producer on "Nightline," helped edit and hone Tony's tale with panache.

Don North is a veteran war correspondent who covered the Vietnam War and many other conflicts around the world. He is the author of *Inappropriate Conduct*, the story of a World War II correspondent whose career was crushed by the intrigue he uncovered.

The Unwinnable Vietnam War

The Vietnam War was a historical turning point for the U.S., a moment when

political leaders plunged the military into an unwinnable colonial struggle that killed millions and bred distrust of Washington's word, as Fred Donner explains.

By Fred Donner

Although the Vietnamese had been rebelling against the French since their arrival in S.E. Asia, World War I was the initial catalyst for Vietnam's independence. Vietnamese and other Indochinese troops, notably Cambodians, in the French colonial forces went to Europe and the Middle East in World War I to serve in both combat and support roles.

French estimates vary as to the numbers killed and wounded. However, the surviving veterans were exposed to western literature and political views that they took home. Simply put, the "independence genie" was out of the bottle not to be recorked.

Having already promised the Philippines independence, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) did not want the French, British, or Dutch back in their previous S.E. Asia colonies after World War II. FDR's postwar plan for Indochina was a three-power high commission somewhat like the Allied partition of Berlin with a 25-year duration to work out independence. The Chinese would get the northern sector, the British the central, and the Americans the south approximating the three regional divisions of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin China.

But with FDR dead, the 1945 Potsdam Conference divided Vietnam along the 16th parallel just south of Danang with the Chinese Nationalists to the north and the British to the south. The Chinese Nationalists promptly proceeded to loot the north fueling centuries of traditional Chinese-Vietnamese animosities while the British used surrendered Japanese troops to chase Viet Minh in the south before returning French forces arrived in late 1945 and early 1946.

U.S. military aid began flowing to the French shortly after VJ Day thus turning the French colonial restoration effort into an anti-communist war that in Western thinking trumped anti-colonialism. In the 1950s the U.S. assumed an ever-expanding role in the Vietnam conflict to help keep France in the newly-formed NATO alliance. Predictably the Vietnamese simply took the U.S. as French replacements to be battled likewise.

In reality World War II marked the fast-approaching end of European colonialism worldwide. Ho Chi Minh, Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, and other anti-colonialists were at the Versailles Treaty negotiations in 1919 seeking at least token recognition for colonial subjects. Spurned, they never gave up but after the independence stimuli of two World Wars future Vietnam independence was effectively unstoppable regardless of what France or the U.S. might do to

contain it.

The only U.S. option that might have worked, at least temporarily, would have been a full-fledged military invasion of the north or perhaps a North Vietnamese rebellion. The U.S. and South Vietnamese commando raids and psychological and propaganda warfare against the north were hampered from all-out efforts to prepare an invasion or stimulate a rebellion for two reasons.

First, after encouraging Hungary to rebellion in 1956 against their Soviet-backed government and failing to back them up, it would not be U.S. policy to do so again, although there has been a notable exception or two.

The Hungarian rationale is explained in *The Secret War Against Hanoi* by professor Richard H. Shultz, Jr. of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. And second, an invasion of North Vietnam was an automatic war with China that would have violated Gen. Maxwell Taylor's well-known dictum of no more land wars in Asia.

Incremental Escalations

The only "secrets" the Pentagon Papers revealed in 1971 were that U.S. policy makers made continuing small incremental escalations of the war desperately hoping each one would mysteriously negate the need for another. This was simply wishful thinking that Vietnam resistance would weaken and the nightmare would disappear. Finally, there was no defined "end state" describing what specific conditions would constitute a U.S. victory in Vietnam.

The logical question is what other policy might have produced a different outcome. Obviously FDR's three-power plan could have been tried. Could Ho Chi Minh have been the Tito of Indochina? Could Charles DeGaulle have taken a different tack? Could the U.S. have found a way to work with a Ho Chi Minh government? The U.S. has worked with all manner of undesirable governments around the world never demanding perfection so we will never know what a theoretical different outcome for Vietnam might have been.

In April 1964 I was an Air Force lieutenant on Taiwan when I volunteered to go directly to Vietnam to command a unit at Bien Hoa Air Base. (Lieutenants as commanders were a rarity in the Air Force.) It didn't take me long to realize that Vietnam was a lost cause when I heard how some Americans were speaking about or, worse yet, to some Vietnamese.

I realized "this turkey ain't gonna fly" if this is what we think of our alleged allies. I was in Vietnam a combined seven years in the Air Force, as an Air America manager, and later a church group staffer, but nothing changed my mind as to the eventual outcome.

Many bemoaned the fact that the U.S. Congress did not fulfill its Paris Peace Accord obligations to support the South Vietnamese, specifically ignoring President Ford's pleas to do so in April 1975. The Case-Church Amendment of June 1973 prohibited any further U.S. military activity in Vietnam. Rarely mentioned is that in 1973 President Nixon wrote a secret letter in carefully couched language offering the North Vietnamese \$3.25 billion in reconstruction aid.

In the atmosphere of 1975 Congress was not about to send money to North or South Vietnam. Whatever anyone may think of how it happened, Vietnam was finally and fully independent as Ho Chi Minh declared it on September 2, 1945, the same day the Japanese surrendered on board the *U.S.S. Missouri*. Unfortunately for 58,000 American families who later lost loved ones in Vietnam, only the latter event was newsworthy at the time.

Fred Donner holds two degrees in East Asian studies. In addition to his seven years in Vietnam, he was five years a Foreign Service officer in Manila and Washington, DC, and ten years a S.E. Asia intelligence analyst at the Defense Intelligence Agency. [This article first appeared at Counterpunch and is republished with the author's permission, <http://www.counterpunch.org/2017/02/10/vietnam-war-lost-to-vietnamese-independence-before-an-american-soldier-set-foot-there/>]

Another Journalist Killed in Mexico

Doing journalism right – reporting on abuses of power with care and honesty – is never easy, but it requires a special courage in physically dangerous circumstances such as exist in Mexico, reports Dennis J Bernstein.

By Dennis J Bernstein

Mexico has earned the reputation of a dangerous place for journalists, a grim reality underscored by the murder last week of Miroslava Breach Velducea, a correspondent for the national newspaper *La Jornada* from the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua.

“We are shocked by the brutal killing of Miroslava Breach,” said Carlos Lauría, of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). “This wave of violence threatens citizens’ right to access vital information, and harms Mexico’s democracy by limiting public debate. We urge the Mexican federal government to put an end to this violence by bringing the perpetrators of this crime to justice.”

Breach was shot eight times by heavily armed gunman as she was leaving home in her car, accompanied by one of her three children, shortly after 7 a.m., according to published reports. The child was not injured, but Breach died in transport. Breach was the third journalist to be murdered in Mexico this month, according to CPJ.

I spoke late Friday with Molly Goss, Special Correspondent for Flashpoints on Pacifica Radio, from Mexico City, as she was beginning her investigation in the murder.

Dennis Bernstein: There is a very serious situation unfolding there with the assassination of Miroslava Breach Velducea, a correspondent for the national newspaper La Jornada, an important progressive newspaper coming out of Mexico City. ... Tell us about the reporter ... Tell us something about what happened here, what led up to this killing?

Molly Goss: This is a reporter named Miroslava Breach Velducea. And she had been a reporter for La Jornada, as you said, a progressive newspaper. It was founded in Mexico City in the mid 80's. She'd been a correspondent in the north of Mexico for over twenty years. And previous to that she worked for some other publications in the north of the country. She was a really important correspondent, basically reporting on the situation in the State of Chihuahua. That's where she was based. And recently she'd done a lot of really fearless reporting around the situation with the narco-trafficker, with the drug trafficking situation, particularly in the north of the country.

So, this was a really highly respected reporter, a highly respected correspondent who had done a lot of really courageous work. And, what happened, was ... on Thursday, the 23rd, she was leaving her home in Chihuahua, in the capital of the State of Chihuahua, around 7 in the morning, and I've heard different reports, but what is clear is at least one gunman, as she was taking her car out of the garage, one gunman shot about 8 times, and killed her on the scene, I believe. There's some reports of other people being seen around that area.

But, there was definitely one armed man that shot at her, and killed her. It was really awful circumstances. She had her son in the car with her, she was taking him to school. And she was shot down in front of him. So, the other thing is being reported is that ... we're not sure who, but someone left some kind of pasteboard or cardboard note saying something which basically means this is for having a big mouth, or saying too much, for bringing things out into the light that you shouldn't.

So what's being investigated at this point, and is... a lot of the research and

the articles that she's written recently for La Jornada in particular, they are around the drug trafficking situation. And a particular area in Chihuahua which is called the Sierra Tarahumara where there's a lot of people being expelled from their homes, having their land taken away from them, and being taken over by drug traffickers. So that's according to the governor of the State of Chihuahua, Javier Corral, that is one of the lines of investigation that they are looking at right now is basically, her reporting and the drug trafficking that is a huge problem in the north part of the country.

DB: I know, Molly, you are just beginning to investigate this story, to do a little reporting on it. But do we know... can we trust law enforcement that's supposed to be investigating now? What can we expect? Will there really be an investigation, based on past experience?

MG: That's a great question. I know we talked about, a couple years ago, the disappearance of the 43 students, and all of the distrust that exists in the country around investigations, around criminal investigations. So, yes, I... based on that experience I definitely have my doubts about how much we can trust these investigations. For example, the governor of the state who I just talked about, Javier Corral, is already being kind of looked at as somewhat of a shady character. He's being criticized for having this past week-end been out golfing and not attending to the really difficult situation in his state, in terms of violence.

So, absolutely there's been murders of three journalists in the last month, in the month of March. There was Miroslava Breach who was just murdered yesterday, and there were two others, one I believe was in Veracruz and another in Guerrero. So, it is very difficult for journalists themselves and for any in the country to trust these investigations. because almost... very, very seldom is anyone brought to justice. People who are supposedly brought to justice, are often questioned... in terms of the 43 students, there's questions about people being tortured, and getting false confessions.

And, I'm sure it's been reported on Flashpoints, Mexico is the most dangerous place in Latin America for journalists. There have been three, only, in the month of March. And no one has been brought to justice in any of those cases. So, yes, it is highly questionable how this investigation will take place. I was just reading that it can be investigated by the federal authorities, but at this point it's just state and local. And there's lots of talk about corruption, within the state and local police departments. So, it's definitely something that has to be followed. I know that the Commission on Human Rights, here in Mexico is already on the case. And will be looking at if the investigation is being done in the correct way. But that is a very difficult question whenever

there are journalists murdered or human rights workers murdered in Mexico, because unfortunately the authorities... most people here do not believe what the authorities say, and, again, the perpetrators are very seldom brought to justice.

DB: I guess the Committee to Protect Journalist actually came out with an official report, was released yesterday or today that said that that Mexico is the most dangerous country in the hemisphere to be reporting on, at this time, in history. And, I guess, we're going to keep a very close eye on this. Francisco Herrera is here with us Molly and he has a question for you.

Francisco Herrera: As I understand Miroslava, quite a veteran journalist. Actually, she wrote much of the work, and especially when my wife was doing human rights work there in the 80's and 90's. So, she was quite a hard worker. Right now, what we are hearing of the State of Chihuahua, and some of the other states, people in the north don't realize what a state of war Mexico is in right now, Molly. And that's precisely part, as we talk about immigration, this is precisely the kind of information that people in this country, and in Mexico, in fact, are not getting, as to why people are crossing the borders so desperately.

When my brother-in-law was murdered in 2010 there was at least thirty bodies a day being discovered, thrown in the side of the roads. And now people are saying it's not so bad because they're only finding sixteen bodies a day. Could you speak a little bit to the state of war that Mexico is living through, whether anybody wants to admit it or not?

MG: Sure. Yeah, that's a huge topic. I just moved back from living in the State of Michoacan, for about a year and a half. So, I can speak to this because previous to that I've been living in Mexico City. And Mexico City is like any big city, it has its problems, but it's probably the safest place to live in the country. And so for those first few years I was here, I was reporting on different things. I was reporting on the 43 missing students. But you can kind of get into a state of "well, it's not that bad here. It can't possibly be quite as awful as they're reporting in the states, in the provinces."

And then I did move to Michoacan. I was in a safe part of the state, however, I did some traveling... Michoacan is one of the states where there is a lot of drug trafficking activity going on. And, so, I was able to talk to people. I remember in particular, I was on a bus going from Michoacan to Mexico City, and I had a woman sitting next to me who told me very nonchalantly, nonchalantly in the sense that this was just normal life for her, at this point. That both her brother and one of her cousins had been disappeared, had disappeared three years ago and they have no idea where they were, and they had no hope of going to anyone, or going to the police to find out where they were because the police

are... there's so much collusion between the police and drug traffickers.

So, I have the experience of being outside of Mexico City, being outside of kind of what is the bubble, where things are pretty safe here. And, yes, going out to places like Michoacan... for example, Veracruz they just found, I believe, two different mass graves in the State of Veracruz. I mean the situation is incredibly, incredibly dangerous, for many people. People who don't have the resources to move to Mexico City and get away from the violence, and as you said, in terms of immigration, this is a really important issue because there are people at the border trying to ask for asylum from Mexico.

And, some of these we've reported on in the past on Flashpoints, being turned away. Being turned away, and being told that people from Mexico can't receive asylum, when there's this incredibly dangerous, and awful situation that many people are going through, where, if they don't leave, the state where their from, where their families is from, they very likely could be murdered. So, it's such an interesting situation in that you can be in Mexico City, and feel completely safe, and kind of be protected, or ignore what's going on in the rest of the country. But, if you leave the city, there are many people living there, many people living their lives, normally as well. But there's a lot of violence going on that causes people to flee, and often flee to the United States. So, it's a very complicated situation.

DB: Before we let you go, just want to sort of get your... just sort of your Rorschach on life in Mexico, after Trump. Is there a noticeable difference? Is there a noticeable reaction on the street? Stuff like that.

MG: Yeah, I, before the election I went out of my way to ask people what they thought about... because I worked in immigration, immigration cases. I'm interested in Latin American, U.S. policy, foreign policy. And, so I had lots of conversations, particularly in Michoacan where I lived. And, people were, I think in some ways, people were more realistic about the possibility of him winning and what that would do for their compatriots in the U.S. Many people I talked to thought it very possible, he could win, and were very worried about their family members, and their friends in the U.S. After the election, in these last two months, again, I think because people here are very cynical about politics, and very cynical about politicians, they're not surprised by Trump's actions. I feel like a lot of people say well, the president we have, the current president of Mexico, [Enrique] Pena Nieto, who we've talked about on your show before, is also not liked at all. He's done lots of awful things, that we could talk about for hours.

But, again, people are not surprised by Trump. People are not surprised by his actions. I think people are much more realistic about the possibility of him

winning, here than in the United States. And, of course, people here are very sad for their family members who are in the U.S. and are afraid of deportation. So, there are some people that look at possible positive outcomes, of Trump being president in the U.S. And what I mean by that is, if people are deported, if people are forced to come back to Mexico then possibly it can work towards changing the system here, politically. There are some people who have that kind of point of view. But, in general, I think they have a much more realistic kind of viewpoint on how politicians work, than many kind of more idealistic people in the United States.

Dennis J Bernstein is a host of “Flashpoints” on the Pacifica radio network and the author of Special Ed: Voices from a Hidden Classroom. You can access the audio archives at www.flashpoints.net.

How US Flooded the World with Psyops

Special Report: The mainstream U.S. media obsesses over Russian “propaganda” yet the U.S. government created a “psyops” bureaucracy three decades ago to flood the world with dubious information, reports Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Newly declassified documents from the Reagan presidential library help explain how the U.S. government developed its sophisticated psychological operations capabilities that – over the past three decades – have created an alternative reality both for people in targeted countries and for American citizens, a structure that expanded U.S. influence abroad and quieted dissent at home.

The documents reveal the formation of a psyops bureaucracy under the direction of Walter Raymond Jr., a senior CIA covert operations specialist who was assigned to President Reagan’s National Security Council staff to enhance the importance of propaganda and psyops in undermining U.S. adversaries around the world and ensuring sufficient public support for foreign policies inside the United States.

Raymond, who has been compared to a character from a John LeCarré novel slipping easily into the woodwork, spent his years inside Reagan’s White House as a shadowy puppet master who tried his best to avoid public attention or – it seems – even having his picture taken. From the tens of thousands of photographs from meetings at Reagan’s White House, I found only a couple showing Raymond – and he is seated in groups, partially concealed by other officials.

But Raymond appears to have grasped his true importance. In his NSC files, I found a doodle of an organizational chart that had Raymond at the top holding what looks like the crossed handles used by puppeteers to control the puppets below them. Although it's impossible to know exactly what the doodler had in mind, the drawing fits the reality of Raymond as the behind-the-curtains operative who was controlling the various inter-agency task forces that were responsible for implementing various propaganda and psyops strategies.

Until the 1980s, psyops were normally regarded as a military technique for undermining the will of an enemy force by spreading lies, confusion and terror. A classic case was Gen. Edward Lansdale – considered the father of modern psyops – draining the blood from a dead Filipino rebel in such a way so the dead rebel's superstitious comrades would think that a vampire-like creature was on the prowl. In Vietnam, Lansdale's psyops team supplied fake and dire astrological predictions for the fate of North Vietnamese and Vietcong leaders.

Essentially, the psyops idea was to play on the cultural weaknesses of a target population so they could be more easily manipulated and controlled. But the challenges facing the Reagan administration in the 1980s led to its determination that peacetime psyops were also needed and that the target populations had to include the American public.

The Reagan administration was obsessed with the problems left behind by the 1970s' disclosures of government lying about the Vietnam War and revelations about CIA abuses both in overthrowing democratically elected governments and spying on American dissidents. This so-called "Vietnam Syndrome" produced profound skepticism from regular American citizens as well as journalists and politicians when President Reagan tried to sell his plans for intervention in the civil wars then underway in Central America, Africa and elsewhere.

While Reagan saw Central America as a "Soviet beachhead," many Americans saw brutal Central American oligarchs and their bloody security forces slaughtering priests, nuns, labor activists, students, peasants and indigenous populations. Reagan and his advisers realized that they had to turn those perceptions around if they hoped to get sustained funding for the militaries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras as well as for the Nicaraguan Contra rebels, the CIA-organized paramilitary force marauding around leftist-ruled Nicaragua.

So, it became a high priority to reshape public perceptions to gain support for Reagan's Central American military operations both inside those targeted countries and among Americans.

A 'Psyops Totality'

As Col. Alfred R. Paddock Jr. wrote in an influential November 1983 paper, entitled "Military Psychological Operations and US Strategy," "the planned use of communications to influence attitudes or behavior should, if properly used, precede, accompany, and follow all applications of force. Put another way, psychological operations is the one weapons system which has an important role to play in peacetime, throughout the spectrum of conflict, and during the aftermath of conflict."

Paddock continued, "Military psychological operations are an important part of the 'PSYOP Totality,' both in peace and war. ... We need a program of psychological operations as an integral part of our national security policies and programs. ... The continuity of a standing interagency board or committee to provide the necessary coordinating mechanism for development of a coherent, worldwide psychological operations strategy is badly needed."

Some of Raymond's recently available handwritten notes show a focus on El Salvador with the implementation of "Nation wide multi-media psyops" spread through rallies and electronic media. "Radio + TV also carried Psyops messages," Raymond wrote. (Emphasis in original.) Though Raymond's cramped handwriting is often hard to decipher, the notes make clear that psyops programs also were directed at Honduras, Guatemala and Peru.

One declassified "top secret" document in Raymond's file – dated Feb. 4, 1985, from Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger – urged the fuller implementation of President Reagan's National Security Decision Directive 130, which was signed on March 6, 1984, and which authorized peacetime psyops by expanding psyops beyond its traditional boundaries of active military operations into peacetime situations in which the U.S. government could claim some threat to national interests.

"This approval can provide the impetus to the rebuilding of a necessary strategic capability, focus attention on psychological operations as a national – not solely military – instrument, and ensure that psychological operations are fully coordinated with public diplomacy and other international information activities," Weinberger's document said.

This broader commitment to psyops led to the creation of a Psychological Operations Committee (POC) that was to be chaired by a representative of Reagan's National Security Council with a vice chairman from the Pentagon and with representatives from the Central Intelligence Agency, the State Department and the U.S. Information Agency.

"This group will be responsible for planning, coordinating and implementing psychological operations activities in support of United States policies and

interests relative to national security,” according to a “secret” addendum to a memo, dated March 25, 1986, from Col. Paddock, the psyops advocate who had become the U.S. Army’s Director for Psychological Operations.

“The committee will provide the focal point for interagency coordination of detailed contingency planning for the management of national information assets during war, and for the transition from peace to war,” the addendum added. “The POC shall seek to ensure that in wartime or during crises (which may be defined as periods of acute tension involving a threat to the lives of American citizens or the imminence of war between the U.S. and other nations), U.S. international information elements are ready to initiate special procedures to ensure policy consistency, timely response and rapid feedback from the intended audience.”

Taking Shape

The Psychological Operations Committee took formal shape with a “secret” memo from Reagan’s National Security Advisor John Poindexter on July 31, 1986. Its first meeting was called on Sept. 2, 1986, with an agenda that focused on Central America and “How can other POC agencies support and complement DOD programs in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama.” The POC was also tasked with “Developing National PSYOPS Guidelines” for “formulating and implementing a national PSYOPS program.” (Underlining in original)

Raymond was named a co-chair of the POC along with CIA officer Vincent Cannistraro, who was then Deputy Director for Intelligence Programs on the NSC staff, according to a “secret” memo from Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Craig Alderman Jr. The memo also noted that future POC meetings would be briefed on psyops projects for the Philippines and Nicaragua, with the latter project codenamed “Niagara Falls.” The memo also references a “Project Touchstone,” but it is unclear where that psyops program was targeted.

Another “secret” memo dated Oct. 1, 1986, co-authored by Raymond, reported on the POC’s first meeting on Sept. 10, 1986, and noted that “The POC will, at each meeting, focus on an area of operations (e.g., Central America, Afghanistan, Philippines).”

The POC’s second meeting on Oct. 24, 1986, concentrated on the Philippines, according to a Nov. 4, 1986 memo also co-authored by Raymond. “The next step will be a tightly drafted outline for a PSYOPS Plan which we will send to that Embassy for its comment,” the memo said. The plan “largely focused on a range of civic actions supportive of the overall effort to overcome the insurgency,” an addendum noted. “There is considerable concern about the sensitivities of any type of a PSYOPS program given the political situation in the Philippines today.”

Earlier in 1986, the Philippines had undergone the so-called "People Power Revolution," which drove longtime dictator Ferdinand Marcos into exile, and the Reagan administration, which belatedly pulled its support from Marcos, was trying to stabilize the political situation to prevent more populist elements from gaining the upper hand.

But the Reagan administration's primary attention continued to go back to Central America, including "Project Niagara Falls," the psyops program aimed at Nicaragua. A "secret" Pentagon memo from Deputy Under Secretary Alderman on Nov. 20, 1986, outlined the work of the 4th Psychological Operations Group on this psyops plan "to help bring about democratization of Nicaragua," by which the Reagan administration meant a "regime change." The precise details of "Project Niagara Falls" were not disclosed in the declassified documents but the choice of codename suggested a cascade of psyops.

Other documents from Raymond's NSC file shed light on who other key operatives in the psyops and propaganda programs were. For instance, in undated notes on efforts to influence the Socialist International, including securing support for U.S. foreign policies from Socialist and Social Democratic parties in Europe, Raymond cited the efforts of "Ledeen, Gershman," a reference to neoconservative operative Michael Ledeen and Carl Gershman, another neocon who has served as president of the U.S.-government-funded National Endowment for Democracy (NED), from 1983 to the present. (Underlining in original.)

Although NED is technically independent of the U.S. government, it receives the bulk of its funding (now about \$100 million a year) from Congress. Documents from the Reagan archives also make clear that NED was organized as a way to replace some of the CIA's political and propaganda covert operations, which had fallen into disrepute in the 1970s. Earlier released documents from Raymond's file show CIA Director William Casey pushing for NED's creation and Raymond, Casey's handpicked man on the NSC, giving frequent advice and direction to Gershman. [See Consortiumnews.com's "CIA's Hidden Hand in 'Democracy' Groups."]

Another figure in Raymond's constellation of propaganda assets was media mogul Rupert Murdoch, who was viewed as both a key political ally of President Reagan and a valuable source of funding for private groups that were coordinating with White House propaganda operations. [See Consortiumnews.com's "Rupert Murdoch: Propaganda Recruit."]

In a Nov. 1, 1985 letter to Raymond, Charles R. Tanguy of the "Committees for a Community of Democracies – USA" asked Raymond to intervene in efforts to secure Murdoch's funding for the group. "We would be grateful ... if you could find the time to telephone Mr. Murdoch and encourage him to give us a positive response," the letter said.

Another document, entitled "Project Truth Enhancement," described how \$24 million would be spent on upgrading the telecommunications infrastructure to arm "Project Truth, with the technical capability to provide the most efficient and productive media support for major USG policy initiatives like Political Democracy." Project Truth was the overarching name of the Reagan administration's propaganda operation. For the outside world, the program was billed as "public diplomacy," but administration insiders privately called it "perception management." [See Consortiumnews.com's "The Victory of Perception Management."]

The Early Years

The original priority of "Project Truth" was to clean up the images of the Guatemalan and Salvadoran security forces and the Nicaraguan Contras, who were led by ousted dictator Anastasio Somoza's ex-National Guard officers. To ensure steady military funding for these notorious forces, Reagan's team knew it had to defuse the negative publicity and somehow rally the American people's support.

At first, the effort focused on weeding out American reporters who uncovered facts that undercut the desired public images. As part of that effort, the administration denounced New York Times correspondent Raymond Bonner for disclosing the Salvadoran regime's massacre of about 800 men, women and children in the village of El Mozote in northeast El Salvador in December 1981. Accuracy in Media and conservative news organizations, such as The Wall Street Journal's editorial page, joined in pummeling Bonner, who was soon ousted from his job. But such efforts were largely ad hoc and disorganized.

CIA Director Casey, from his years crisscrossing the interlocking worlds of business and intelligence, had important contacts for creating a more systematic propaganda network. He recognized the value of using established groups known for advocating "human rights," such as Freedom House.

One document from the Reagan library showed senior Freedom House official Leo Cherne running a draft manuscript on political conditions in El Salvador past Casey and promising that Freedom House would make requested editorial "corrections and changes" – and even send over the editor for consultation with whomever Casey assigned to review the paper.

In a "Dear Bill" letter dated June 24, 1981, Cherne, who was chairman of the Freedom House's executive committee, wrote: "I am enclosing a copy of the draft manuscript by Bruce McColm, Freedom House's resident specialist on Central America and the Caribbean. This manuscript on El Salvador was the one I had urged be prepared and in the haste to do so as rapidly as possible, it is quite rough. You had mentioned that the facts could be checked for meticulous accuracy

within the government and this would be very helpful. ...

“If there are any questions about the McColm manuscript, I suggest that whomever is working on it contact Richard Salzman at the Research Institute [an organization where Cherne was executive director]. He is Editor-in-Chief at the Institute and the Chairman of the Freedom House’s Salvador Committee. He will make sure that the corrections and changes get to Rita Freedman who will also be working with him. If there is any benefit to be gained from Salzman’s coming down at any point to talk to that person, he is available to do so.”

By 1982, Casey also was lining up some powerful right-wing ideologues to help fund the “perception management” project both with money and their own media outlets. Richard Mellon Scaife was the scion of the Mellon banking, oil and aluminum fortune who financed a variety of right-wing family foundations – such as Sarah Scaife and Carthage – that were financial benefactors to right-wing journalists and think tanks. Scaife also published the Tribune Review in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

A more comprehensive “public diplomacy” operation began to take shape in 1982 when Raymond, a 30-year veteran of CIA clandestine services, was transferred to the NSC. Raymond became the sparkplug for this high-powered propaganda network, according to an unpublished draft chapter of the congressional Iran-Contra investigation that was suppressed as part of the deal to get three moderate Republican senators to sign on to the final report and give the inquiry a patina of bipartisanship.

Though the draft chapter didn’t use Raymond’s name in its opening pages, apparently because some of the information came from classified depositions, Raymond’s name was used later in the chapter and the earlier citations matched Raymond’s known role. According to the draft report, the CIA officer who was recruited for the NSC job had served as Director of the Covert Action Staff at the CIA from 1978 to 1982 and was a “specialist in propaganda and disinformation.”

“The CIA official [Raymond] discussed the transfer with [CIA Director] Casey and NSC Advisor William Clark that he be assigned to the NSC as [Donald] Gregg’s successor [as coordinator of intelligence operations in June 1982] and received approval for his involvement in setting up the public diplomacy program along with his intelligence responsibilities,” the chapter said. Gregg was another senior CIA official who was assigned to the NSC before becoming Vice President George H.W. Bush’s national security adviser.

“In the early part of 1983, documents obtained by the Select [Iran-Contra] Committees indicate that the Director of the Intelligence Staff of the NSC

[Raymond] successfully recommended the establishment of an inter-governmental network to promote and manage a public diplomacy plan designed to create support for Reagan Administration policies at home and abroad.”

War of Ideas

During his Iran-Contra deposition, Raymond explained the need for this propaganda structure, saying: “We were not configured effectively to deal with the war of ideas.”

One reason for this shortcoming was that federal law forbade taxpayers’ money from being spent on domestic propaganda or grassroots lobbying to pressure congressional representatives. Of course, every president and his team had vast resources to make their case in public, but by tradition and law, they were restricted to speeches, testimony and one-on-one persuasion of lawmakers. But President Reagan saw the American public’s “Vietnam Syndrome” as an obstacle to his more aggressive policies.

Along with Raymond’s government-based organization, there were outside groups eager to cooperate and cash in. Back at Freedom House, Cherne and his associates were angling for financial support.

In an Aug. 9, 1982 letter to Raymond, Freedom House executive director Leonard R. Sussman wrote that “Leo Cherne has asked me to send these copies of Freedom Appeals. He has probably told you we have had to cut back this project to meet financial realities. ... We would, of course, want to expand the project once again when, as and if the funds become available. Offshoots of that project appear in newspapers, magazines, books and on broadcast services here and abroad. It’s a significant, unique channel of communication” – precisely the focus of Raymond’s work.

On Nov. 4, 1982, Raymond, after his transfer from the CIA to the NSC staff but while still a CIA officer, wrote to NSC Advisor Clark about the “Democracy Initiative and Information Programs,” stating that “Bill Casey asked me to pass on the following thought concerning your meeting with [right-wing billionaire] Dick Scaife, Dave Abshire [then a member of the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board], and Co. Casey had lunch with them today and discussed the need to get moving in the general area of supporting our friends around the world.

“By this definition he is including both ‘building democracy’ ... and helping invigorate international media programs. The DCI [Casey] is also concerned about strengthening public information organizations in the United States such as Freedom House. ... A critical piece of the puzzle is a serious effort to raise private funds to generate momentum. Casey’s talk with Scaife and Co. suggests

they would be very willing to cooperate. ... Suggest that you note White House interest in private support for the Democracy initiative.”

The importance of the CIA and White House secretly arranging private funds was that these supposedly independent voices would then reinforce and validate the administration’s foreign policy arguments with a public that would assume the endorsements were based on the merits of the White House positions, not influenced by money changing hands. Like snake-oil salesmen who plant a few cohorts in the crowd to whip up excitement for the cure-all elixir, Reagan administration propagandists salted some well-paid “private” individuals around Washington to echo White House propaganda “themes.”

The role of the CIA in these initiatives was concealed but never far from the surface. A Dec. 2, 1982 note addressed to “Bud,” a reference to senior NSC official Robert “Bud” McFarlane, described a request from Raymond for a brief meeting. “When he [Raymond] returned from Langley [CIA headquarters], he had a proposed draft letter ... re \$100 M democ[racy] proj[ect],” the note said.

While Casey pulled the strings on this project, the CIA director instructed White House officials to hide the CIA’s hand. “Obviously we here [at CIA] should not get out front in the development of such an organization, nor should we appear to be a sponsor or advocate,” Casey said in one undated letter to then-White House counselor Edwin Meese III as Casey urged creation of a “National Endowment.”

But the formation of the National Endowment for Democracy, with its hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. government money, was still months down the road. In the meantime, the Reagan administration would have to line up private donors to advance the propaganda cause.

“We will develop a scenario for obtaining private funding,” NSC Advisor Clark wrote to Reagan in a Jan. 13, 1983 memo, adding that U.S. Information Agency Director “Charlie Wick has offered to take the lead. We may have to call on you to meet with a group of potential donors.”

Despite Casey’s and Raymond’s success in bringing onboard wealthy conservatives to provide private funding for the propaganda operations, Raymond worried about whether a scandal could erupt over the CIA’s involvement. Raymond formally resigned from the CIA in April 1983, so, he said, “there would be no question whatsoever of any contamination of this.” But Raymond continued to act toward the U.S. public much like a CIA officer would in directing a propaganda operation in a hostile foreign country.

Raymond fretted, too, about the legality of Casey’s ongoing role. Raymond

confided in one memo that it was important “to get [Casey] out of the loop,” but Casey never backed off and Raymond continued to send progress reports to his old boss well into 1986.

It was “the kind of thing which [Casey] had a broad catholic interest in,” Raymond shrugged during his Iran-Contra deposition. He then offered the excuse that Casey undertook this apparently illegal interference in domestic politics “not so much in his CIA hat, but in his adviser to the president hat.”

Peacetime Propaganda

Meanwhile, Reagan began laying out the formal authority for this unprecedented peacetime propaganda bureaucracy. On Jan. 14, 1983, Reagan signed National Security Decision Directive 77, entitled “Management of Public Diplomacy Relative to National Security.” In NSDD-77, Reagan deemed it “necessary to strengthen the organization, planning and coordination of the various aspects of public diplomacy of the United States Government.”

Reagan ordered the creation of a special planning group within the National Security Council to direct these “public diplomacy” campaigns. The planning group would be headed by Walter Raymond and one of its principal outposts would be a new Office of Public Diplomacy for Latin America, housed at the State Department but under the control of the NSC. (One of the directors of the Latin American public diplomacy office was neoconservative Robert Kagan, who would later co-found the Project for the New American Century in 1998 and become a chief promoter of President George W. Bush’s 2003 invasion of Iraq.)

On May 20, 1983, Raymond recounted in a memo that \$400,000 had been raised from private donors brought to the White House Situation Room by U.S. Information Agency Director Charles Wick. According to that memo, the money was divided among several organizations, including Freedom House and Accuracy in Media, a right-wing media attack organization.

When I wrote about that memo in my 1992 book, *Fooling America*, Freedom House denied receiving any White House money or collaborating with any CIA/NSC propaganda campaign. In a letter, Freedom House’s Sussman called Raymond “a second-hand source” and insisted that “this organization did not need any special funding to take positions ... on any foreign-policy issues.”

But it made little sense that Raymond would have lied to a superior in an internal memo. And clearly, Freedom House remained central to the Reagan administration’s schemes for aiding groups supportive of its Central American policies, particularly the CIA-organized Contra war against the leftist Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. Plus, White House documents released later

revealed that Freedom House kept its hand out for funding.

On Sept. 15, 1984, Bruce McColm – writing from Freedom House’s Center for Caribbean and Central American Studies – sent Raymond “a short proposal for the Center’s Nicaragua project 1984-85. The project combines elements of the oral history proposal with the publication of The Nicaraguan Papers,” a book that would disparage Sandinista ideology and practices.

“Maintaining the oral history part of the project adds to the overall costs; but preliminary discussions with film makers have given me the idea that an Improper Conduct-type of documentary could be made based on these materials,” McColm wrote, referring to a 1984 film that offered a scathing critique of Fidel Castro’s Cuba. “Such a film would have to be the work of a respected Latin American filmmaker or a European. American-made films on Central America are simply too abrasive ideologically and artistically poor.”

McColm’s three-page letter reads much like a book or movie pitch, trying to interest Raymond in financing the project: “The Nicaraguan Papers will also be readily accessible to the general reader, the journalist, opinion-maker, the academic and the like. The book would be distributed fairly broadly to these sectors and I am sure will be extremely useful. They already constitute a form of Freedom House samizdat, since I’ve been distributing them to journalists for the past two years as I’ve received them from disaffected Nicaraguans.”

McColm proposed a face-to-face meeting with Raymond in Washington and attached a six-page grant proposal seeking \$134,100. According to the grant proposal, the project would include “free distribution to members of Congress and key public officials; distribution of galleys in advance of publication for maximum publicity and timely reviews in newspapers and current affairs magazines; press conferences at Freedom House in New York and at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.; op-ed circulation to more than 100 newspapers ...; distribution of a Spanish-language edition through Hispanic organizations in the United States and in Latin America; arrangement of European distribution through Freedom House contacts.”

The documents that I found at the Reagan library did not indicate what subsequently happened to this specific proposal. McColm did not respond to an email request for comment about the Nicaraguan Papers plan or the earlier letter from Cherne (who died in 1999) to Casey about editing McComb’s manuscript. Freedom House did emerge as a leading critic of Nicaragua’s Sandinista government and also became a major recipient of money from the U.S.-funded National Endowment for Democracy, which was founded in 1983 under the umbrella of the Casey-Raymond project.

The more recently released documents – declassified between 2013 and 2017 – show how these earlier Casey-Raymond efforts merged with the creation of a formal psyop bureaucracy in 1986 also under the control of Raymond’s NSC operation. The combination of the propaganda and psyop programs underscored the powerful capability that the U.S. government developed more than three decades ago for planting slanted, distorted or fake news. (Casey died in 1987; Raymond died in 2003.)

Over those several decades, even as the White House changed hands from Republicans to Democrats to Republicans to Democrats, the momentum created by William Casey and Walter Raymond continued to push these “perception management/psyops” strategies forward. In more recent years, the wording has changed, giving way to more pleasing euphemisms, like “smart power” and “strategic communications.” But the idea is still the same: how you can use propaganda to sell U.S. government policies abroad and at home.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).

America Digs Its Own Afghan Grave

Afghanistan has long been called the “graveyard of empires,” the site of failed invasions. But the U.S. – in its 15-plus-year endeavor – seems determined to dig its own grave there, as ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar describes.

By Paul R. Pillar

Fifteen years and counting. America’s longest war keeps getting longer. The very duration of the expedition, with an end no more in sight now than it had been at any of several points one could have chosen over the last several years, ought to indicate the need for a fundamental redirection of policy. And yet there continue to be calls, including [from influential members of Congress](#), to sustain and even enlarge the U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan.

That campaign has now continued under three U.S. presidents, two Afghan presidents, too many U.S. military commanders to count, and a variety of operational strategies associated with the different generals. Different levels of U.S. troops also have been tried, with the peak of just over 100,000 American troops reached in 2011.

Something approaching peace and stability will come to Afghanistan the only way it ever has come to Afghanistan in the past: through deals reached among the different factions, power centers, and ethnic groups within Afghanistan. External military intervention does not negate or obviate that process, and instead becomes the object of Afghan resistance to outside interference. It is not for nothing that the place is called the graveyard of empires.

The shape of any deals reached among Afghan factions matters relatively little to the United States. One need make no apologies for borrowing from old speeches in describing the current conflict in Afghanistan as a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing. Unlike the circumstances in which that phrase was first used, there is no hostile and threatening power poised to exploit passivity on our part.

The U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan in the fall of 2001 was, at that time, a just response to an attack on the U.S. homeland by a group that was enjoying the hospitality of the Afghan Taliban, which constituted the de facto regime ruling most of Afghanistan. One of the fundamental mistakes in how Americans have viewed Afghanistan ever since – in addition to the mistake of treating as an investment the sunk costs, including 2,400 American dead – is to think that the circumstances of 2001 still prevail. They don't.

The Afghan Taliban never have been interested in international terrorism. Their focus always has been on the social and political structure of Afghanistan. The past alliance with al-Qa'ida was one of convenience, in which the payoff for the Taliban was assistance in prosecuting their civil war against Afghan opponents.

There is nothing special about Afghanistan, distinguishing it from many other strife-ridden places such as Yemen or Somalia, that connects it today with a terrorist threat against U.S. interests. 9/11 itself was the work of Arabs, not Afghans. And with the gloves having been taken off after 9/11, the Taliban know, as everyone else does, that if anything at all like the 2001 al-Qa'ida presence were to begin being re-established in Afghanistan, the United States would promptly bomb the heck out of it.

Breeding Terrorism

The United States had an earlier experience injecting armed force into Afghanistan, with its provision of lethal aid – most notably Stinger anti-aircraft missiles – to mujahedin fighting against the Soviets in the 1980s. During that effort, U.S. policymakers showed little or no concern with the political nature and direction of the forces they were aiding, which included what we would today quickly label as violent Islamists. Those forces

were used as a tool to bleed the Soviets, who got themselves stuck in a military expedition that reached a strength just slightly bigger (about 115,000 troops) than the later U.S. expedition.

Russians noticed what the United States was doing, and they remember it today. And maybe roles are reversing and the bleeding is coming full circle. U.S. General Curtis Scaparrotti, who is the top NATO commander in Europe, told a Congressional committee this week that Russia appears to be increasing its role in Afghanistan and may be providing material support to the Taliban. The situation is unclear; a spokesman for the Russian foreign ministry strongly denied the accusation, and a careful tally of other relevant Russian interests would not argue in favor of aiding the Taliban.

Nonetheless, it would not be surprising if Moscow – with irony and with what many Russians probably would consider just deserts – took a page from the U.S. playbook of the 1980s. The underlying idea would be that Afghanistan has become for America today what it was for the USSR back then.

The Soviets did get out of the graveyard of empires, even with no more claim to victory than the United States would have today. The last Soviet soldier to leave Afghanistan was the commander, Lieutenant General Boris Gromov, who walked across a bridge spanning the Amu Darya River into Soviet Uzbekistan on Feb. 16, 1989. His departure marked nine years and 50 days since the initial Soviet intervention. The United States exceeded that mark years ago.

Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is author most recently of Why America Misunderstands the World. (This article first appeared as a blog post at The National Interest's Web site. Reprinted with author's permission.)

Risks to US from War on North Korea

Exclusive: The murders of Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi – after they surrendered their WMD – taught North Korea's Kim Jong-un not to give up his, setting the stage for a dangerous crisis, explains Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

When a hostile government, armed with atomic and chemical weapons and the world's fourth largest army, declares "the situation is already on the brink of nuclear war," Americans should sit up and take notice. Compared to North Korea,

ISIS and Al Qaeda terrorists are insignificant threats to U.S. security.

Experts agree that within a few years, at most, North Korea will have mastered the ballistic missile technology needed to destroy U.S. cities with nuclear warheads. It recently demonstrated the use of solid-fuel technology in intermediate-range missiles, and earlier this month the regime tested a sophisticated new rocket engine that even South Korea called a technical breakthrough.

The Trump administration did take notice. Although North Korea has never threatened to use nuclear weapons except in self-defense, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson warned this month that the regime must “abandon its development of nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, and other weapons of mass destruction,” or face the threat of the United States and its allies using military force to stop it.

More than a few elite pundits have endorsed preemptive war as an option. A recent *Washington Post* editorial conceded that striking North Korea’s nuclear and missile facilities could trigger “a potentially catastrophic war,” but declared nonetheless that “further steps by North Korea toward deploying nuclear-armed ICBMs might compel such action.”

Last fall, the influential Council on Foreign Relations issued a major white paper calling North Korea’s weapons program “a grave and expanding threat” and asserting that Washington may have no choice but to “consider more assertive military and political actions, including those that directly threaten the existence of the [North Korean] regime and its nuclear and missile capabilities.”

Such threats are foolhardy and counterproductive. As many analysts point out, a pre-emptive attack by the United States cannot guarantee to destroy all of North Korea’s hidden nuclear weapons or mobile missile launchers. Missing even a handful would guarantee the incineration of Seoul, Tokyo, and other nearby cities in radioactive fireballs. Even in the best case, North Korea could respond by flattening Seoul with artillery barrages, and killing tens of thousands of Koreans and Japanese with chemical weapons.

How North Korea Could Hit U.S.

An America-First madman in the White House might view such casualties as an acceptable price to pay for eliminating a latent threat against the U.S. homeland. But hardly anyone has pointed out that North Korea can and almost certainly would retaliate against U.S. cities as well.

Even without long-range missiles, they can simply float atomic bombs into U.S.

harbors aboard innocuous-looking commercial freighters. No anti-missile shield can stop them from wiping out big parts of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, or Houston in response to a U.S. attack.

Back in 2000, reporter Sydney Freedberg, Jr., called attention to the near impossibility of detecting a shielded bomb packed into one of the 45,000 shipping containers that enter the United States every day. "Hiding a bomb there would be a lethal needle in a huge haystack," he remarked.

Although major U.S. ports have since installed radiation detectors to prevent bombs from being smuggled into their waters, "if there is highly enriched uranium metal that's shielded and below the water line, it's going to be really tough to detect at long range," said Matthew Bunn, an expert on nuclear terrorism at Harvard University.

Even a small bomb detonation would do immense damage. A 2003 study by Abt Associates for the U.S. Department of Transportation concluded that "The economic impact of even a single nuclear terrorist attack on a major U.S. seaport would be very great . . . A successful attack would create disruption of U.S. trade valued at \$100-\$200 billion, property damage of \$50-\$500 billion, and 50,000 to 1,000,000 lives could be lost. Global and long-term effects, including the economic impacts of the pervasive national and international responses to the nuclear attack . . . are believed to be substantially greater."

Three years later, experts at the RAND Corporation conducted an even deeper analysis of a simulated terrorist attack on the Port of Long Beach with a 10-kiloton nuclear bomb, which is well within the yield of North Korea's current weapons. Among the plausible outcomes it described:

—"Sixty thousand people might die instantly from the blast itself or quickly thereafter from radiation poisoning.

—"One-hundred-fifty thousand more might be exposed to hazardous levels of radioactive water and sediment from the port, requiring emergency medical treatment.

— "The blast and subsequent fires might completely destroy the entire infrastructure and all ships in the Port of Long Beach and the adjoining Port of Los Angeles.

— "Six million people might try to evacuate the Los Angeles region.

— "Two to three million people might need relocation because fallout will have contaminated a 500-km² area.

– “Gasoline supplies might run critically short across the entire region because of the loss of Long Beach’s refineries – responsible for one-third of the gas west of the Rockies.

– “The early costs of the Long Beach scenario could exceed \$1 trillion, driven by outlay(s) for medical care, insurance claims, workers’ compensation, evacuation, and construction.”

Cascading Dangers

And that’s only the beginning. Insurers might stop writing commercial policies. Workers at other ports might flee to avoid a similar attack.

“Given these conditions, all U.S. ports would likely close indefinitely or operate at a substantially reduced level following the attack,” the report noted. “This would severely disrupt the availability of basic goods and petroleum throughout the country.”

Bottom line: a preemptive attack on North Korea’s real WMD would make the Bush administration’s disastrous attack on Iraq’s non-existent WMD look like a cake walk. Millions of people would almost certainly die in South Korea and Japan. Millions more Americans might die from nuclear retaliation against U.S. port cities and infrastructure. Every American would suffer the staggering economic and moral consequences.

That’s why we should all be concerned with Secretary Tillerson’s recent – and entirely unwarranted – rejection of efforts to find a peaceful political and diplomatic solution with North Korea.

The Trump administration appears to hope that stepping up economic sanctions, and bullying China, will miraculously convince North Korea to disarm. But strong-arm measures, which reinforce Pyongyang’s conviction that Washington wants nothing less than regime change, will ensure that war becomes not just one of many options on the table, but the only option.

Someday soon, the only question left may be whether it is North Korea or the United States that initiates all-out war in an insanely reckless attempt at self-preservation.

Jonathan Marshall previously authored “North Korea Fears ‘Regime Change’ Strike,” “Behind the North Korean Nuke Crisis” and “The Negotiation Option With North Korea.”

Pretending Israel Is Innocent of Apartheid

Without doubt Israel practices apartheid toward Palestinians who are broadly denied human rights, but Israel's political clout is such that the reality must be denied at the U.N. and in the U.S., as Lawrence Davidson explains.

By Lawrence Davidson

On March 15, the United Nations' Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) published a report on Israeli practices and policies toward the Palestinians. Using international law as its comparative criterion, the report came to a "definitive conclusion" that "Israel is guilty of Apartheid practices."

The term *Apartheid* was not used in the report merely in a "pejorative" way. It was used as a descriptor of fact based on the evidence and the accepted legal meaning of the term.

Such was the immediate uproar from the United States and Israel that U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres, in a moment of moral failure, ordered the report's withdrawal. The head of ESCWA, the Jordanian diplomat Rima Khalaf, decided that she could not, in good conscience, do so and so tendered her resignation.

The initial New York Times coverage of the incident paid little attention to the accuracy of the report, an approach which, if pursued, would have at least educated the *Times'* readers as to the real conditions of Palestinians under Israeli domination. Instead it called the report, and those involved in producing it, into question.

For instance, the *NYT* told us that "the report provoked outrage from Israel and the United States." The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki R. Haley, was quoted as declaring that, "when someone issues a false and defamatory report in the name of the U.N. it is appropriate that the person resign." At no point in the *NYT* story was it noted that Ms. Haley's charge that the report was false, was itself false. Other coverage by the *NYT* improved only slightly.

The *NYT* did pay attention to the fact that, among the authors of the report, was former U.N. human rights investigator Richard Falk. Falk served six years as U.N. Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Territories. According to the *NYT*, his presence "gall[ed] many Israeli supporters who regard him as an anti-Semite."

There is something troubling about a newspaper that claims to represent the epitome of professional journalism reporting such slurs without properly evaluating them.

Richard Falk, who is Jewish, has an impeccable record of both academic achievement and public service. His reputation for honesty and dedication to the cause of human rights exemplifies *the best practice of Jewish values*. Thus, he has every right to say, "I have been smeared in this effort to discredit the report" – a study which "tries its best to look at the evidence and analyze the applicable law in a professional manner."

Israel's Behavior

An objective consideration of Israel's behavior makes it hard to escape the brutal reality of its officially condoned practices.

On March 17, at the same time as the forced withdrawal of the ESCWA report, the U.S. State Department released a report on "grave violations against Palestinian children living under Israeli military occupation." This was part of the department's annual "country reports on human rights practices." Among the problems cited were Israel's practice of unlawful detention, coerced confessions and excessive use of force, including torture and killings.

Usually, these annual human rights reports are made public by the Secretary of State. This year Rex Tillerson, who presently holds the office, was nowhere in sight. And, of course, President Trump failed to issue any of his characteristic tweets in reference to the Israel's barbaric behavior.

Earlier, on Feb. 8, it was reported that "Israel has banned anesthesia gas from entering the Gaza Strip." There is a current backlog of some 200 patients in Gaza requiring surgical care, and some will die due to Israel's ban.

A week later, on Feb. 14, it was reported that Israeli officials were blackmailing Palestinian patients seeking permission to enter Israel for necessary medical treatment. A 17-year-old Gazan boy who suffered from congenital heart disease and needed a heart valve replacement "was explicitly told that in order to [leave the Gaza Strip and] have his operation, he would have to cooperate with the security forces and spy for Israel." He refused and subsequently died. This is not a new or unusual tactic for the Israelis.

Blackmail All Around

The moral failure at the U.N., represented by the withdrawal of the ESCWA report, is the result of Secretary General Guterres's decision to acquiesce in a denial of reality – the reality of Israel's practice of Apartheid.

On the other hand, it probably also stems from Guterres's acceptance of the reality of U.S. financial leverage along with the apparent threat to bankrupt the United Nations. This is, of course, a form of blackmail. Significantly, U.S. use of its financial clout at the U.N. mimics the same practice by the Zionist lobby in the halls of Congress.

Obviously the United Nations, to say nothing of U.S. politicians, needs alternate sources of income. My wife Janet once suggested that the UN be awarded the right to exploit and profit from all undersea resources. Not a bad idea. Likewise, U.S. politicians should agree to, or be forced to rely upon, government-based campaign funding rather than be pressed into putting themselves up for sale.

However, such changes do not appear imminent. As it stands now, reality in Palestine is what the Americans and Israelis say it is because politicians and international leaders literally can't afford to challenge their corrupted views.

Lawrence Davidson is a history professor at West Chester University in Pennsylvania. He is the author of Foreign Policy Inc.: Privatizing America's National Interest; America's Palestine: Popular and Official Perceptions from Balfour to Israeli Statehood; and Islamic Fundamentalism. He blogs at www.tothepointanalyses.com.

Surveillance State Goes After Trump

Democrats are so eager to take down President Trump that they are joining forces with the Surveillance State to trample the privacy rights of people close to Trump, ex-FBI agent Coleen Rowley tells Dennis J Bernstein.

By Dennis J Bernstein

Since Donald Trump's election, former Special FBI Agent Coleen Rowley has been alarmed over how Democratic hawks, neocons and other associates in the "deep state" have obsessed over "resurrecting the ghost of Joseph McCarthy" and have built political support for a permanent war policy around hatred of Russia.

Rowley, whose 2002 memo to the FBI Director exposed some of the FBI's pre-9/11 failures, compared the current anti-Russia hysteria to "the

'Red Scare' fear of Communism" famously associated with legendary FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover who collaborated with Sen. Joe McCarthy's hunt for disloyal

Americans in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

In an interview, Rowley told me that while Trump was wrong about his claim that President Obama ordered a surveillance "tapp" of Trump Tower, the broader point may have been correct as explained by House Intelligence Chairman Devin Nunes, R-California, who described how U.S. intelligence apparently picked up conversations by Trump associates while monitoring other targets.

Dennis Bernstein: A former high-level FBI whistleblower says Trump is vindicated on his claims of being surveilled by the previous administration. Joining us to take a close look at what's been going on, what's been unfolding in Washington, D.C. is Coleen Rowley. She's a former FBI special agent and division council. She wrote a May 2002 memo to the FBI director that exposed some of the FBI's pre-9/11 failures, major failures. She was Time magazine's person of the year in 2002. ... Help us explain what chairman Nunes reported in terms of the collecting process and Trumps innocence or guilt?

Coleen Rowley: I think the Chairman Nunes said [Wednesday] that Trump was monitored instead of wiretapped. And these are terms of art that for three weeks or so, no one has fully understood and so there's been all this confusion. Trump, himself, did not understand, and was clumsy in saying "my campaign was wiretapped." Wiretapping itself is almost obsolete. It means tapping into a wire, that's the old way, when the way communications used to go over wires and now they're digital and they... Snowden, if you remember, all of the disclosures from Edward Snowden, and other NSA whistleblowers, there's something going on now called collect it all, massive surveillance. And that is done, there are some targets, but then lots and lots of Americans are incidentally monitored... they aren't monitored but their conversations, and their phone numbers that they're dialing and their e-mails that they're e-mailing are collected.

And, of course, when Trump was under investigation it would be natural that they would have some... not his... not necessarily him personally, but his campaign staff obviously, that's going to mean surveillance of those people.

DB: Now, monitoring, does that mean that Obama was in fact, surveilling? Is that a good word? Was Trump being surveilled? Were his claims essentially correct?

CR: I think Trump is vindicated, again he didn't understand the terms that he was using. And he did misuse the term, so when Comey said "No"... that that tweet about being wiretapped, we have found no evidence of that." Comey was able to be honest because a wiretap has a specific meaning. But, you notice, in five hours Comey never said that there's been no surveillance of anyone connected to the Trump campaign. In fact, he implied the opposite. He implied that the Trump campaign, some persons, he didn't mention names, but some of them have been

investigated since this summer.

And, so, obviously that does mean that, for starters, if you think... remember all of the disclosures from Edward Snowden and the other NSA whistleblowers, they can access all of the communications that have already been collected. That's for starters, so if you have somebody that you are now investigating, you can go back into these NSA databases and say pull up everything on so-and-so. And I've just got to add one more thing, the NSA whistleblowers including Edward Snowden all warned for really now for two or three years, we have been warning the American public that this "collect it all" is really a recipe for, not only a lack of privacy, but even for hurting our own democracy.

If you go back to Frank Church, for instance, the reason the Church committee... well it was because Frank Church, Senator Frank Church was, himself, under surveillance by the NSA. And we warned now for two or three years, that they tell the public "Don't worry, you have nothing to hide. Why would you worry about any of these NSA... they're helping us catch terrorists. And you don't have anything to hide."

But, of course, the politicians in Washington are the ones that have things to hide. They could have conflicts of interests, there's all kinds of things going on, certainly just political opposition, partisanship. So this is always an ongoing game in Washington, to try to find out dirt about your opponent, etc. So, they are the ones, actually, who should have been more aware of how this could be used against themselves. And yet, they just disregarded these warnings and told the public "Oh, don't worry you have nothing to hide."

DB: We've got Donald Trump vindicated about, in essence, being monitored, surveilled. without his own knowledge although I would imagine he should have known, or assumed. But now that tells us that there has been a lot of information collected and we can now assume, I guess, that all the... a lot of the communications from the Trump people, in Washington, also, at Trump Tower, so even though it wasn't wiretapped, it was monitored.

CR: It was collected. And, again, this isn't necessarily about Trump personally, just cause it's not about Obama, personally ordering. What this is about is if there are even members of Trump's campaign staff, or even associates, that could even be a little bit distant from the actual campaign, but just associates. It may be that they were the actual targets. And, still, might be the targets. But, then incidentally Trump could have ended up being, himself, intercepted.

I'm going to go back to Martin Luther King, Jr.. Martin Luther King, Jr., if you understand the microphones in his hotels. And he was the subject of Title 3 orders. This was all based on guilt by association. And I think it was simply a

paragraph or two, there was very little probable cause. It was a paragraph or two alleging that an associate or a cousin of an associate was a communist. That's what it amounted to. And that's how, then, J. Edgar Hoover was allowed to go and do all these things in hotel rooms. And, in the same era, the NSA was actually monitoring Senator Frank Church.

We think after all these years that we've grown up and we've understood the problems that occurred back then. And, obviously, history is totally repeating. It may well be there's a legitimate investigation of somebody in the periphery of the Trump campaign, a staffer or somebody connected, that's legitimate.

But when they have a "collect it all" motto which they've had now since 9/11. They've turned on these monitoring things, Hayden and others turned them right on, illegally, I should say, for starters, illegally. And now they have all this database. And, so, there's only a couple of ways to try to protect privacy. And they are supposed to be on their honor to minimize Americans.

And you now see that this has completely failed in the case of Flynn and others, because, again, that's all they have is on their honor, they say they won't leak out identities of Americans if they are "incidentally" collected. And, now, that doesn't even apply. And, I would say that the people who have leaked are not – I've said this many times now – are not what I would term a good whistleblower.

These are leakers who seem to be high level, as opposed to somebody like Edward Snowden or Chelsea Manning, at a lower level, who is motivated for the public good. I think that the leaks that you've seen in the past couple of months, or three months, have actually come from high levels, top appointees, and political partisanship are the motivations. They're not saying this is for the public good. And, again, this is something we all warned about, the NSA and our veteran intelligence professionals for sanity probably have written half a dozen times, about these problems. And, now it's just really all happened the way we predicted and warned about.

DB: Now, we have, sort of, a hundred, almost smoking guns. I want to ask you Coleen Rowley, as somebody who has been... worked for the FBI, evaluated information, collected information, you're an attorney in this context. In terms of what we know. Do they got Donald Trump? Is he owned by the Russians? What have you been able to confirm?

CR: Well, I don't think there has... and it's not just myself, it's really most of our veteran intelligence professionals, retired CIA, retired NSA, we've all been conferring for a while on this. And we have asked, we actually put out a...memo asking for evidence. Because it's just been assertions and innuendoes, and demonization...

We see a lot of demonization of the Russian T.V. channel. But we have not seen any actual evidence of Russians... and there's a lot of reasons to think that this would be illogical. Even if, and I would grant that Comey mentioned this in his testimony, that Putin and other top Russians hated Hillary Clinton. Well, even if you assume that, that they didn't like Hillary Clinton, as much as Donald Trump. They considered Donald Trump their lesser evil, or whatever. Even if you think that, why would they take the risk? Because, at the time Hillary Clinton surprised everyone by... everyone thought she was going to win. So it would have been completely illogical for them to have done these things, to take that kind of a risk, when it was presumed that she was going to be the next president. There's just so many things here that don't add up, and don't make sense.

And yet, and yet, because our mainstream media is owned by what?...half a dozen big conglomerates, all connected to the military industrial complex, they continue with the scenario of that old movie... the Russians are coming!...the Russians are coming! And unfortunately the Democrat Party has become the war party, very clearly. They're the ones that don't see the dangers in ginning up this very dangerous narrative of going after Russia, as meddling, or whatever. And they should ask for, we all should ask for the full evidence of this. If this is case, then we deserve to know the truth about it. And, so far, we haven't seen anything. Look at that report. There's nothing in it.

DB: And, this is the same media who for the last... ever since Trump claimed that he was wiretapped using the wrong terminology, these

journalists they couldn't stop saying "if he did lie, this is a felony. He did lie. He did accuse the former president of the United States..." So, you're saying, based on your long experience and information this was just a confusion of a term of art, and the idea of the possibility of Trump Towers being under investigation, this was all incredibly not strange, not crazy, and totally normal in the context of an investigation.

CR: Yes, and I again, there could be grounds for legitimate investigation of the periphery of the Trump campaign, certain staffers. And you know what, corruption in Washington, D.C. is quite rampant. And I think many, many of the politicians if they actually put them under the microscope they could find... just as you look at foreign leaders, Netanyahu was indicted for corruption, whatever. It's not uncommon to have conflicts of interests, and under the table deals. That's very possible.

So, that's not what our news is saying. Our mainstream news is saying that, what you said at the beginning, the Russians own Trump, and basically that this has undermined our democracy and our electoral process. That part of it we have seen no evidence of. And, Trump is partially vindicated, because obviously whether he

was personally targeted, his campaign at least seems to have been monitored, at least in part.

DB: Were you amazed that, for instance, the FBI director raised the issue of the Clinton investigation, but not the Trump investigation?

CR: Well, I've been trying to figure that out. Because back, during ... when he went public, he was put into the spot because Loretta Lynch should have been the one to be public on these things. But she was tainted because of having met with Bill Clinton on the tarmac. And so my explanation was that that Comey shouldered the burden from Loretta Lynch. He was doing her a favor in a way because he thought it would look like this is more independent and more professional coming from the FBI. Because at the time Loretta Lynch was under a cloud. And I think that is the explanation for why he was so public at the time.

And, of course, things have developed... the summer, if any investigation started during the summer, again, it was not known. It was probably legitimate if they got some information in about some act of corruption, or whatever, it was certainly legitimate. But since this summer what has happened is this whole narrative has just gone on steroids, because of the leaks about the Russians, etc. And the fact that they put out this report, the FBI, the NSA, and the director of National Intelligence. And I think that that's the problem right now is the public just is so confused because there has been so much wrong information out there in the media. And no one knows what to believe.

Actually, to Comey's credit he did say this a couple of times that these media accounts are not accurate. And, I think that, again, we... there's been a lot of "sources" anonymous sources which I do not think are whistleblowers. But these anonymous sources seem to have come from political operatives, and even higher level people. I'm guessing some of this came from the Obama administration appointees, not Obama, of course, personally.

And, who knows if he knew anything about this, but some of those prior appointees, I think, when all is said and done will be seen as the ones, if they can ever uncover this. It's hard with anonymous sources. But I think they were probably the ones leading this. And maybe over time we can get back to some sanity here without so much of this planted information, and wrongful leaks. And I, again, I'm all for whistle blowing. But, I don't agree with leaks like Scooter Libby's where they were actually using the media to plant false info.

Dennis J Bernstein is a host of "Flashpoints" on the Pacifica radio network and the author of Special Ed: Voices from a Hidden Classroom. You can access the audio archives at www.flashpoints.net.
