

Mystery of the Civil War's Camp Casey

From the Archive: U.S. history is distorted by the prism of race, even the Civil War, which was fought over slavery but then enshrined white heroes when Jim Crow racism quickly asserted itself, a reality relevant to Black History Month and to Chelsea Gilmour's investigation into the mystery of Camp Casey.

By Chelsea Gilmour (Originally published on Feb. 26, 2015)

As much as Virginia loves its Civil War history, chronicling and commemorating almost every detail, Camp Casey isn't one of the places that gets glorified or even remembered. Located somewhere in what's now Arlington County, just miles from the White House and U.S. Capitol, Camp Casey was where regiments of African-American troops were trained to fight the Confederacy to end slavery.

While not the largest Union base for training U.S. Colored Troops (USCT), Camp Casey was one of the few located within the boundaries of a Confederate state. Yet, despite its historical significance, or perhaps because of it, Camp Casey has been largely lost to history.

In the decades after the war, as the white power structure reasserted itself across the South including in Virginia, the narrative of the Blue and the Grey took hold, two white armies battling heroically over conflicting interpretations of federal authority, brother against brother. Though slavery was surely an issue, African-Americans were pushed into the background, almost as bystanders.

In Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy, statues of Southern heroes were erected seemingly everywhere. One city street called Monument Avenue is lined with statues starting with one to Gen. Robert E. Lee (erected in 1890) and then (between 1900 and 1925) others to Gen. J.E.B. Stuart, Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, Navy Lt. Matthew Fontaine Maury and President Jefferson Davis.

If you drive north toward Washington along I-95, you see a gigantic Confederate battle flag flying next to the highway near Fredericksburg, the site of a Confederate victory in 1862, as well as frequent historical markers remembering not only battles but skirmishes. Across Virginia, there are eight national parks dedicated to Civil War battles and events.

The honors bestowed on Confederate leaders reach even into Arlington and Alexandria, though Union forces maintained control of those areas throughout the war. In 1920, at the height of Jim Crow segregation, parts of Route One, including stretches through or near black neighborhoods, were named in honor of Jefferson Davis, an avowed white supremacist who wanted to continue slavery forever. (In 1964, during the Civil Rights era, Davis's name was added to an

adjacent part of Route 110 near the Pentagon.)

Throughout Arlington itself, there are markers designating where Union forts and battlements were located. But there are no markers remembering Camp Casey, where the 23rd USCT regiment was trained and outfitted to go south to fight for African-American freedom, and where other USCT units bivouacked and drilled on their marches south. Even Camp Casey's precise location has become something of a mystery with county historians offering conflicting accounts.

That haziness itself raises troubling questions, since Camp Casey arguably was the most historically significant Civil War site in Arlington. It was not just some static fort that never was attacked but an active training ground for hundreds of African-Americans to take up arms against the historic crime of black enslavement.

Camp Casey's Role

Named after Major General Silas Casey, who oversaw the training of new recruits near Washington, Camp Casey was in operation from 1862-1865 and served as an important rendezvous point for Union troops, accommodating some 1,800 soldiers. It also housed prisoners of war and included a hospital.

General Casey wrote the *Infantry Tactics for Colored Troops* in 1863, differentiating the training procedures for colored troops based on the racist notion that black soldiers were not as well equipped for combat or to follow orders, and would need to be spurred in order to fight as valiantly as whites.

To give an idea of Camp Casey's significance as a USCT base, a letter from the camp dated Aug. 2, 1864, directs Colonel Bowman of the 84th Pennsylvania volunteers to forward all recruits for the colored regiments in the Army of the Potomac to the recruiting rendezvous at Camp Casey instead of Camp Distribution as previously directed.

There were 138 African-American units serving in the Union Army during the Civil War, making up about one-tenth of the federal forces by the war's end in April 1865, and at least 16 of those USCT regiments spent time at Camp Casey from 1864-1865, including the 6th, the 29th, and the 31st.

Camp Casey was the recruiting and training camp for the 23rd Regiment U.S. Colored Infantry with many recruits coming from Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania, Virginia, slave country about halfway between Washington and Richmond. In line with the standards of the time, USCT soldiers were not as well trained as white troops, were not given the best equipment, and were not paid as well.

USCT soldiers also faced hostility and mistrust from some white Northern troops,

meaning that they often were not placed on the front lines but got assigned to “fatigue duty,” such as accompanying wagons and moving supplies. Nevertheless, USCT regiments battled heroically in several major clashes near the war’s end and faced special dangers not shared by their white Northern comrades.

When blacks were admitted into the Union Army, Confederate President Jefferson Davis instituted a policy that refused to treat them as soldiers but rather as slaves in a state of insurrection, so they could be murdered upon capture or sold into slavery. The USCT soldiers were trained to expect no mercy and no quarter if wounded or captured.

In accordance with that Confederate policy, U.S. Colored Troops did face summary executions when captured in battle. When a Union garrison at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, was overrun by Confederate forces on April 12, 1864, black soldiers were shot down as they surrendered. Similar atrocities occurred at the Battle of Poison Springs, Arkansas, on April 18, 1864, and the Battle of the Crater in Petersburg, Virginia, on July 30, 1864. In one of the most notorious massacres of black Union soldiers, scores were executed in Saltville, Virginia, on Oct. 2, 1864.

Bravery Under Fire

When the 23rd USCT was dispatched to join the battle against General Robert E. Lee’s vaunted Army of Northern Virginia, one of Union General George Meade’s staff officers wrote in a demeaning letter about them: “As I looked at them my soul was troubled and I would gladly have seen them marched back to Washington. We do not dare trust them in battle. Ah, you may make speeches at home, but here, where it is life or death, we dare not risk it.”

However, on May 15, 1864, the 23rd USCT engaged in what may have been the first clash between Lee’s army and black troops. A chronology of the 23rd’s history cites Noel Harrison at Mysteries & Conundrums describing how the 23rd came to the support of an Ohio cavalry unit confronting a Confederate force southeast of Chancellorsville.

According to an account uncovered by historian Gordon C. Rhea, one of the Ohio cavalrymen wrote, “It did us good to see the long line of glittering bayonets approach, although those who bore them were Blacks, and as they came nearer they were greeted by loud cheers.” The 23rd charged toward the Confederate position causing the Southern troops to withdraw, suffering several dead.

But the lack of faith in the African-American soldiers’ commitment and skill would play a decisive role in the disastrous Battle of the Crater. The 23rd and 29th USCT regiments, both of which spent time at Camp Casey, were part of Union

General Ambrose Burnside's Fourth Division, which was comprised of nine USCT regiments.

These regiments (the 23rd, the 29th, the 31st, the 43rd, the 30th, the 39th, the 28th, the 27th, and the 19th) were to lead the charge against Confederate defenses after a Union-crafted mine explosion blew an enormous crater under Confederate lines. Plans were changed, however, at the last minute when General Meade refused to allow the USCT to lead the advance.

Instead, the war-weary white troops commanded by General James Ledlie (a notorious drunk, whose lack of presence, much less leadership, during the battle was notable) led the way. Instead of charging around the crater, as the U.S. Colored Troops had been trained to do, the unprepared white replacements surged into the crater and were unable to get out. Union troops piled in on top of each other and were completely stuck, serving as easy targets for the Confederate soldiers above.

Finally, the USCT were called forth and served as a last stand against Confederate troops. Since they had initially been trained for the operation, they knew to avoid the crater and search for higher ground. But by that point, the botched attempt to take Petersburg had deteriorated into a massacre.

Lt. Robert K. Beecham, who had helped organize the USCT 23rd regiment, wrote about the soldiers' bravery: "The black boys formed up promptly. There was no flinching on their part. They came to the shoulder like true soldiers, as ready to face the enemy and meet death on the field as the bravest and best soldiers that ever lived."

According to the National Park Service, 209 USCT soldiers were killed in the battle with 697 wounded and 421 missing. The 23rd USCT from Camp Casey suffered the heaviest losses, with 74 killed, 115 wounded, and 121 missing. Confederate troops murdered a number of the USCT soldiers as they sought to surrender.

After the Battle of the Crater, soldiers from the 23rd were among the Union troops to enter the Confederate capital of Richmond after it fell and were present for General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865.

The Mystery of Camp Casey

Arlington historians have various takes on why the history of Camp Casey has been so neglected with even its precise location a mystery. The Arlington Historical Society's stance is that it is not unusual to have lost a camp's location, since Arlington and Alexandria were both heavily fortified during the Civil War and there were many camps located throughout the area.

Further, unlike a fort, which would consist of a large physical construction, most training camps had tents pitched in a field with only a few solid wood-framed buildings.

But Franco Brown, a historian with the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington, had a different take on why its location has been mostly lost to history. Calling Camp Casey “one of the biggest mysteries of the Civil War,” he has spent the past eight years researching Camp Casey and had encountered many of the same difficulties that I did in finding definitive information.

While acknowledging that Camp Casey was not the biggest USCT base (Camp Penn in Pennsylvania and Camp Nelson in Kentucky were more important training locations), Brown said Camp Casey was largely lost to history because it wasn’t significant to the state’s dominant historians. They favored the conventional narrative of the Civil War, the storyline of two white armies, brothers fighting brothers.

“This information [about Camp Casey] does not want to be out, it is part of their power,” Brown said.

Brown said a key factor to consider when questioning how Camp Casey could have been ignored is to look at the attitudes of Virginians and the South after the war. At the war’s conclusion, resentments ran high, and it would have been particularly galling to Southerners loyal to the Confederacy to acknowledge that there were African-American soldiers actively training on Virginian soil to fight for the North.

“After the war you get things like the KKK, which was started by five Confederate generals,” Brown said, “and they don’t want mixing of the races. The South is still mad about the Civil War. The South is still mad at the black man, because he helped win the Civil War.”

This explanation takes into account the realities of Virginia’s society and culture following the war and, in many ways, continuing to today. While there may be some truth to the argument that the story of Camp Casey was simply lost in the chaos following the war, it isn’t hard to imagine a concerted effort by resentful whites to diminish the role of black soldiers during the war.

Where Was It?

There even remains the question: where was Camp Casey? When I set out to try to solve that mystery, I found remarkably little information and some of it was conflicting. The National Archives in Washington had little about the camp, mostly letters and muster rolls, and it wasn’t until I asked the Arlington Historical Society’s official historians that they seemed to give the matter

much thought.

As far as the exact location of Camp Casey, there are a couple of conclusions. One thing seems certain, that it was located on or near Columbia Pike, then the main thoroughfare from Northern Virginia to Washington D.C.

Some letters from the time suggest that the camp was within sight of the Custis-Lee Mansion overlooking the Potomac River (now known as Arlington House above Arlington National Cemetery). That and other references to landmarks, including its supposed proximity to Freedman's Village, led some historical investigators to place Camp Casey on the south side of Columbia Pike, not far from the Long Bridge which crossed into Washington.

An advertisement on Sept. 5, 1865, from the *Daily National Republican*, a Washington, D.C. newspaper in circulation from 1862-1866, announced the sale of government buildings at Camp Casey situated "about one and one-half miles from Long Bridge."

Jim Murphy of the Historical Society explained, "We think it [Camp Casey] would have been between the Long Bridge and Fort Albany, in a field in what is currently the [south] parking lot of the Pentagon. [...] We concluded it was located there after going through letters and dispatches from the camp that discuss the colored troops training next to a field." (Long Bridge was located near today's I-395's 14th St. Bridge across the Potomac, and Fort Albany was just south of the current Air Force Memorial on Columbia Pike.) [To see a Civil War-era map of the area with some of the landmarks, [click here.](#)]

The Pentagon-parking-lot location would likely have put it within sight of the Custis-Lee mansion and would place it close to Freedman's Village, a semi-permanent community for African-Americans freed by President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation who escaped the Confederacy and were settled on a portion of Lee's plantation on the north side of Columbia Pike.

But Franco Brown cites other evidence in letters from the soldiers placing Camp Casey in the vicinity of Hunter's Chapel, which no longer exists but was then located at the intersection of Glebe Road and Columbia Pike, about two miles further southwest from the location cited in the newspaper ad.

Brown also has a contemporaneous lithographic depiction that puts Camp Casey on a bluff near an area that looks to be around the intersection of what is now Glebe Road and Walter Reed Drive. "This area is at the highest apex of the surrounding land," □ Brown said.

Brown also noted that the lithograph shows a tall tower in the distant left-hand background, the Fairfax Seminary, which still stands today as the Virginia

Theological Seminary, about four miles further south in Alexandria.

Thus, he concluded that “the general vicinity [of Camp Casey] is likely between the present day locations of Glebe Road, Walter Reed Drive, Columbia Pike, and Route 50 [Arlington Boulevard].” Brown said he is confident in this conclusion saying, “I’ve got it within 500 yards of the original location.”

Brown’s location would place Camp Casey about three miles from the Long Bridge, among Fort Albany, Fort Berry and Fort Craig. There is also the possibility that Camp Casey involved several military way stations stretching along Columbia Pike, all known collectively as Camp Casey, which might explain the disparate descriptions of its location. [For an overview map of the forts in the Washington area, [click here.](#)]

Though Arlington County has no plans to honor Camp Casey (or even work to ascertain its exact location), county officials have responded to public pressure to acknowledge Freedman’s Village, where Sojourner Truth lived and worked for a time.

Freedman’s Village gave freed slaves refuge both during the Civil War and for decades later (until it was razed in 1900). In 2015, Arlington dedicated a new bridge on Washington Boulevard that crosses over Columbia Pike as “Freedman’s Village Bridge.”

It is a much deserved (albeit meager) recognition of the historic area which became a Freedom Trail for African-Americans, both those escaping slavery by heading northward and those marching southward as soldiers to end it.

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Behind FBI’s Data-Access Fight with Apple

FBI Director James Comey gained his reputation for integrity by standing up to George W. Bush’s White House on a domestic spying issue but the fight was more tactical than principled, raising doubts about his current dispute with Apple over government accessing encrypted phone data, writes ex-FBI official Coleen Rowley.

By Coleen Rowley

Knowing even a little of James Comey's post 9/11 background, it becomes rather hard to believe the FBI Director is sincerely leveling with the American public in his latest quest to compel Apple (and other encrypted communication companies) to create a mechanism for government access, that he is solely motivated by his desire to "look the (San Bernardino) survivors in the eye" and tell them the FBI has followed up on all investigative leads.

It should be recalled that Comey gained his reputation for legal integrity based on one dramatic night (in March 2004), during his 20 months as deputy attorney general, confronting Bush Administration officials in Attorney General John Ashcroft's hospital room. Even though almost no one understood "what the Ashcroft 'hospital showdown' on NSA spying was all about" until a couple weeks after Comey was confirmed as FBI Director in July 2013 – see this article that seems to finally piece it all together – it was known that no Justice Department official, including Comey, generally opposed the illegal warrantless monitoring program that went into effect just days after the 9/11 attacks.

Except for a few whistleblowers, the only internal debate that developed was **how** to do it. In addition to the illegal "Presidential Program" monitoring of Americans, Comey supported and signed off on the George W. Bush Administration's torture tactics as well as years-long indefinite detentions that denied some American citizens their right to counsel and other constitutional rights.

But Comey's reputation as a man of law, albeit mostly false, preceded him. Other than some grilling about the torture he had approved of, almost none of the hard questions I suggested in this New York Times opinion piece for Judiciary Committee senators were asked of Comey during his Senate confirmation hearings. Maybe Apple could still ask him some of them!

If the FBI Director is truly concerned about the "proper balance" in upholding the law as well as effectively investigating crimes, reducing terrorism and helping crime victims, how could he let himself fall so far off balance after 9/11? What integrity exists in going along with the Bush Administration when it "went to the (lawless) dark side" and when it ginned up war on Iraq, a country that had nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks and which has only served to increase worldwide terrorism that led to the terrible creation of ISIS, all of which served to inspire the San Bernardino shooters?

Don't Comey and his colleagues who shilled for war on Iraq, who support the other "regime changes" and aerial bombing campaigns targeting Syria, Libya, Yemen, Pakistan and other countries of the Mideast, understand how blowback works?!

I would think it would indeed be hard for any official who went along with the

architects of the illegal wars and the Middle East destabilization plans to face the poor victims of the ensuing blowback whether or not able to get into terrorists' phones after an attack.

Maybe most disingenuous of all is Comey's new assertion that he is not trying to set a precedent. Does he not know that the government's "Plan B" secret agenda to create "work-a-rounds" to defeat encryption recently came to light? Does he expect us to believe that he was not part of the secret White House meeting last fall where senior national security officials ordered agencies to find ways to counter encryption software and gain access to the most heavily protected user data on the most secure consumer devices, including Apple Inc.'s?

If it's only a "narrow" legal issue at play, then why has the FBI Director spent so much time lately giving scary speeches that law enforcement is "going dark," arguing that encrypted private communications are inherently dangerous, that the government needs ways to counter such privacy?

The truth is that there is little likelihood, from everything we already know about the San Bernardino couple's lack of actual connectedness to Islamic extremist groups, that the Apple iPhone of one of the San Bernardino shooters holds any real clues to future attacks. Comey is good to mention, in his *Lawfare* piece, this potential for nothing of value residing on this particular Apple phone. Yet he disingenuously claims the legal issue is a narrow one when the only reason the case has been seized upon is due to the public relations impact of the San Bernardino shootings as the best example to open the door.

FBI and Justice Department Dspeakers were previously more honest pointing to the wider danger of child predators, serial killers, members of criminal organizations along with terrorists all potentially able to freely communicate via secure encryption, to justify the need to establish a wider precedent.

Speaking of opening the door to wider applications, we should recall what was said after National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden's disclosures informed Americans about the massive data collection taking place and after the subsequent discovery that key intelligence officials lied when they tried to justify their illegal monitoring by claiming that the bulk collection of mostly non-relevant data had proven effective in preventing terrorist attacks.

Officials ultimately could only come up with one flimsy example showing how their bulk collection, despite being able to defeat privacy worldwide and despite billions of dollars spent, had detected a taxi driver sending \$8,500 in "material support" to Somalia. Some of us have tried for years to refute the notion that adding more hay to the haystack somehow helps to find the needle but nothing has deterred the FBI from its haystack mindset.

It sent a Deputy Assistant Director to inform the Judiciary Committee of just the opposite, that in that one Somalian case, “In order to find the needle, ... we needed the haystack.” Some Senators then seized upon this upside-down logic to justify the NSA’s massive data collection.

So I cannot help be skeptical that, instead of a narrow focus to get phone companies to help the government in discrete terrorism investigations where probable cause exists, it’s actually their admitted mindset of wanting to create ever bigger haystacks, by vacuuming up more and more communication data, that fuels the government’s drive to defeat communication privacy. In fact it was exactly that mindset behind the extension (beyond any common sense interpretation) of Section 215 of the Patriot Act, which Comey and others supported and helped engineer, just a few months after the famous hospital room standoff.

Although the Patriot Act section on its face permitted only the collection of records deemed “relevant” to an “authorized” national security case, these government officials secretly decided and were able to get the FISA court’s secret approval, to stretch that narrow language to mean collection of all phone records, whether relevant or not.

Despite the above reasons for skepticism, I would nonetheless agree that unbreakable encrypted criminal communications do pose serious problems for law enforcement and serious issues for society as a whole. Since he’s leading the charge, I only wish the current FBI Director could be more honest about his past and current actions some of which were egregiously illegal and counterproductive, helping increase the level of terrorism in the world.

For James Comey is undoubtedly correct when he writes, “It should be resolved by the American people deciding how we want to govern ourselves in a world we have never seen before. We shouldn’t drift to a place – or be pushed to a place by the loudest voices – because finding the right place, the right balance, will matter to every American for a very long time.”

He should know.

Coleen Rowley is a retired FBI agent and former chief division counsel in Minneapolis. [This item first appeared at HuffingtonPost.]

Sanders the ‘Realist’; Hillary the

'Neocon'

Exclusive: Sen. Sanders finds himself on the defensive in his uphill primary fight against Hillary Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination in part because he shies away from defining himself as a “realist” and asking if she is a “neocon,” writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Hillary Clinton has scored points against Bernie Sanders by tagging him as a “single-issue candidate” who harps again and again on income inequality. Though the “single-issue” charge is false the Vermont Senator actually addresses a wide range of topics from global warming to health care to college costs Clinton’s attack line has been effective nonetheless

It works, in part, because Sanders shies away from thorough discussions about his views on foreign policy while Clinton can tout her résumé as a globetrotter both as First Lady and Secretary of State.

Sanders also has left himself open to attacks from neoconservatives and liberal interventionists that he is a “closet realist.” For instance, The Washington Post’s David Ignatius wrote recently: “Is Bernie Sanders a closet foreign policy ‘realist’? Reading his few pronouncements on foreign policy, you sense that he embraces the realists’ deep skepticism about U.S. military intervention.”

But what if Sanders came out of the closet and “confessed” to being a “realist” while posing the alternative question: Is Hillary Clinton a “closet neocon” who is seen by key neocons as “the vessel” in which they have placed their hopes for extending their power and expanding their policies? Might that question reenergize Sanders’s suddenly flagging campaign and force Clinton to venture beyond a few talking points on foreign policy?

Rather than largely ceding the field to Clinton except in noting her Iraq War vote while he opposed that disastrous war of choice Sanders could say, “yes, I’m a realist when it comes to foreign policy. I’m in line with early presidents Washington, Adams, Jefferson who warned about the dangers of foreign entanglements. While I believe America should lead in the world, it should not go ‘abroad in search of monsters to destroy,’ as John Quincy Adams wisely noted.

“I’m also in agreement with Dwight Eisenhower who warned about the dangers to the Republic from the Military-Industrial Complex and I agree with John Kennedy who recognized the many legitimate concerns of Third World countries emerging from colonialism. I have learned from my own years in Congress that there’s no

faster way to destroy a Republic than to behave as an Empire.”

Hiding Facts

Sanders could note, too, that the other way to destroy a Republic is to use the secrecy stamp too liberally, to hide too many key facts from the American people, not because of legitimate national security concerns but because it's easier to manipulate a public that is fed a steady diet of propaganda. The American people, he might say, are citizens deserving respect, not mushrooms kept in the dark and fertilized.

On that point, Sanders might even note that he and Hillary Clinton may be in agreement, since the former Secretary of State's team has complained that some of her infamous emails are now being classified retroactively in what her aides complain is an exercise in over-classification. Of course, the key reason for Clinton using a private server was to keep her communications hidden from later public scrutiny.

If Sanders is asked about specifics regarding where the line is between legitimate secrets and propagandistic manipulation, he could cite how President George W. Bush played games with intelligence by hyping claims about Iraq's WMD and Saddam Hussein's ties to Al Qaeda.

Or Sanders could note the case of the sarin-gas attack outside Damascus on Aug. 21, 2013, which almost drew President Barack Obama into a full-scale war in Syria.

If indeed Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was responsible as the Obama administration claimed and the mainstream U.S. news media repeats endlessly then the U.S. government should present the evidence to the American people. Or, if one of the jihadist rebel groups was behind the attack trying to trick the U.S. into joining the war on the jihadist side lay that evidence out even if it means admitting to a rush-to-judgment against Assad's forces. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[The Collapsing Syria-Sarin Case.](#)"]

Similarly, on the issue of Ukraine: if the former government of President Viktor Yanukovich was at fault for the Maidan sniper attacks on Feb. 20, 2014, as was widely alleged at the time, put forward the evidence. If [the snipers were extremists](#) among the Maidan protesters trying to create a provocation as more recent evidence suggests give those facts to the American people.

The same applies to the shoot-down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014. Yes, the suggestion that Russia was responsible has proved to be an effective propaganda club to beat Vladimir Putin over the head, but if the tragedy was really the fault of some element of the U.S.-backed

Ukrainian regime and if U.S. intelligence knows that fess up. Stop the game-playing.

Who's in Charge?

It should not be the job of the U.S. government to mislead and confuse the American people. That reverses the proper order of a Republic in which "We the People" are the sovereigns and government officials are the servants.

Sanders might say, too, that he realizes neoconservatives believe in tricking the American people to support preordained policies that the neocons have cooked up in one of their think tanks, as happened with the Iraq War and the Project for the New American Century.

But a Sanders administration, he might say, would show respect for the citizenry, putting the people back in charge and putting the think tanks which live off the largesse of the Military-Industrial Complex back in their subordinate place.

Yes, it's true that such a call for democracy, truth and pragmatism would infuriate the mainstream media, which has largely accepted its role as a propaganda organ for the neocons. But Sanders could take on that fight, much as Donald Trump has on the Republican side.

It was Trump who finally confronted the Republican Party with the reality about George W. Bush's negligence prior to the 9/11 attacks and his deceptions about Iraq's WMD. So far, it appears that the Republican base can handle the truth.

The GOP establishment's frantic efforts to sustain the fictions that Bush "kept us safe" and his supposed sincerity in believing his WMD falsehoods fell flat in South Carolina where Trump trounced the Republican field and forced Bush's brother Jeb to drop out of the race.

Does Sanders have the courage to believe that the Democratic base is at least as ready for the truth about Hillary Clinton's entanglement in the serial deceptions that have justified a host of U.S. imperial wars, including the current ones in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria? Sanders might even respond to the accusations that he is a "closet realist" by not just admitting to his foreign policy pragmatism but asking whether Hillary Clinton is a "closet neocon."

After all, Robert Kagan, who co-founded the neocon Project for the American Century, told The New York Times in 2014 that he hoped that his neocon views which he now prefers to call "liberal interventionist" would prevail in a possible Hillary Clinton administration.

Secretary of State Clinton named Kagan to one of her State Department advisory boards and promoted his wife, neocon Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland, who oversaw the provocative “regime change” in Ukraine in 2014.

The Times reported that Clinton “remains the vessel into which many interventionists are pouring their hopes” and quoted Kagan as saying: “I feel comfortable with her on foreign policy. If she pursues a policy which we think she will pursue it’s something that might have been called neocon, but clearly her supporters are not going to call it that; they are going to call it something else.”

Indeed, with populist billionaire Donald Trump seizing control of the Republican race with victories in New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada, the neocons may find themselves fully siding with Hillary Clinton’s campaign as it becomes the last hope for their interventionist strategies. Ironically, too, many “realists” and anti-war activists may find Trump’s rejection of neocon orthodoxy and readiness to cooperate with Moscow to resolve conflicts more appealing than Clinton’s hopped-up belligerence.

Obviously, many anti-war Democrats would prefer that Sanders step forward as their champion and offer a cogent explanation about how the neocons and liberal hawks have harmed U.S. and world interests by spreading chaos across the Middle East and now into North Africa and Europe. But that would require Sanders embracing the word “realist” and asking whether his rival is a “neocon.”

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).

Hillary Clinton’s Hypocrisy on Dissent

Exclusive: Hillary Clinton says she’s a great defender of American veterans, but when Army vet (and ex-CIA analyst) Ray McGovern was assaulted for silently protesting one of her speeches, she did nothing and newly released emails show she rebuffed an adviser’s proposal to apologize, reports Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Five years ago, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s personal adviser Sidney Blumenthal urged her to apologize to former Army officer (and ex-CIA analyst)

Ray McGovern after he was roughly arrested when he stood silently with his back turned in protest against a Clinton speech, ironically condemning foreign leaders who show intolerance of dissent.

According to an internal email recently released from former Secretary Clinton's private email server, Blumenthal cited "an unfortunate incident" that occurred at her speech at George Washington University in Washington on Feb. 15, 2011. Blumenthal wrote that "something bad happened" and urged Clinton to have someone reach out and apologize to McGovern.

Instead, Clinton, who has declared that "supporting veterans is a sacred responsibility," denied any responsibility for McGovern's brutal arrest, which left the 71-year-old who was wearing a "Veterans for Peace" T-shirt, bloodied and bruised. She also offered no explanation for why she failed to stop the police when the arrest was occurring right in front of her; instead she just continued on with her speech about the need for leaders to respect the rights of dissidents.

In the email, Clinton did tell Blumenthal, "I'll see what else can be done," but it's not clear what that may have been. Afterwards, McGovern became a government target because of what the State Department called his "political activism, primarily anti-war."

Though the criminal charges against McGovern were dropped, he was placed on the State Department's "Be On the Look-out" or BOLO alert list, instructing police to "USE CAUTION, stop" and question him and also contact the State Department's Diplomatic Security Command Center.

After learning of the BOLO alert, the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund (PCJF), which is representing McGovern in connection with the 2011 incident, interceded to have the warning lifted. But McGovern wondered if the warning played a role in 2014 when he was aggressively arrested by New York City police at the entrance to the 92nd Street Y where he had hoped to pose a question to a speaker there, one of Clinton's friendly colleagues, former CIA Director and retired General David Petraeus.

After that arrest on Oct. 30, 2014, McGovern wrote, "God only knows (and then only if God has the proper clearances) what other organs of state security had entered the 'derogatory' information about the danger of my 'political activism' into their data bases. Had my 'derog' been shared, perhaps, with the ever-proliferating number of 'fusion centers' that were so effective in sharing information to track and thwart the activists of Occupy including subversives like Quakers and Catholic Workers?"

Clinton's Speech

On Feb. 15, 2011, McGovern attended Clinton GWU speech, deciding on the spur of the moment after feeling revulsion at the "enthusiastic applause" that welcomed the Secretary of State "to dissociate myself from the obsequious adulation of a person responsible for so much death, suffering and destruction.

"The fulsome praise for Clinton from GW's president and the loud, sustained applause also brought to mind a phrase that as a former Soviet analyst at CIA I often read in *Pravda*. When reprinting the text of speeches by high Soviet officials, the Communist Party newspaper would regularly insert, in italicized parentheses: '*Burniye applaudismenti; vce stoyat*' , *Stormy applause; all rise*.

"With the others at Clinton's talk, I stood. I even clapped politely. But as the applause dragged on, I began to feel like a real phony. So, when the others finally sat down, I remained standing silently, motionless, wearing my 'Veterans for Peace' T-shirt, with my eyes fixed narrowly on the rear of the auditorium and my back to the Secretary.

"I did not expect what followed: a violent assault in full view of Madam Secretary by what we Soviet analysts used to call the 'organs of state security.' The rest is history, as they say. A short account of the incident can be [found here](#).

"As the video of the event shows, Secretary Clinton did not miss a beat in her speech as she called for authoritarian governments to show respect for dissent and to refrain from violence. She spoke with what seemed to be an especially chilly *sang froid*, as she ignored my silent protest and the violent assault which took place right in front of her.

"The experience gave me personal confirmation of the impression that I reluctantly had drawn from watching her behavior and its consequences over the past decade. The incident was a kind of metaphor of the much worse violence that Secretary Clinton has coolly countenanced against others.

"Again and again, Hillary Clinton both as a U.S. senator and as Secretary of State has demonstrated a nonchalant readiness to unleash the vast destructiveness of American military power. The charitable explanation, I suppose, is that she knows nothing of war from direct personal experience." [For more of McGovern's account of his arrest, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Standing Up to War and Hillary Clinton](#)."]]

In a civil court filing, the PCJF lawyers described the scene: "As Secretary Clinton was reading from her prepared remarks regarding Egypt's dictatorship [and] saying, 'Then the government pulled the plug,' the then-71-year-old

McGovern was forcibly and falsely arrested by GWU police officers, grabbed by the head, assaulted, and as Secretary Clinton continued undisturbed stating, 'the government ... did not want the world to watch,' Mr. McGovern was removed from public view with excessive and brutal force, taken to jail, and left bleeding with bruises and contusions."

In a press release about Clinton's emails on Thursday, McGovern's attorneys said they had sought State Department emails related to McGovern's arrest but had not received Clinton's email exchange with Blumenthal. Those emails surfaced in connection with congressional inquiries about Clinton conducting State Department business using a private server outside U.S. government control.

Based on the new disclosures, it was clear Clinton knew a great deal about the incident from Blumenthal, including receiving photos of McGovern's injuries.

Blumenthal suggested that Clinton "have someone apologize to Ray McGovern," but referred to the incident and McGovern in condescending terms, noting that McGovern's mistreatment has "become a minor cause célèbre on the Internet among lefties." As for McGovern, Blumenthal said the former CIA analyst who was a presidential briefer to George H.W. Bush has "become a Christian antiwar leftist who goes around bearing witness. Whatever his views, he's harmless."

Clinton responded, "I appreciate your sending thgis [sic] to me. Neither State nor my staff had anything to do w this. The man stood up just as I was starting and GW—which claims their quick actions were part of their standard operating procedures to remove anyone who stands up and starts speaking while an invited guest is talking—moved to remove him. GW claims he was not in any way injured."

However, McGovern was not speaking, simply standing quietly until he was attacked by the police. As for Clinton, no apology was forthcoming, nor any further explanation of why she failed to stop police from roughing up a peaceful protester in her presence.

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](#)).

The Disgrace of Flint's Poison Water

The case of Flint, Michigan, and its lead-poisoned water supply has exposed a U.S. political disgrace, treating poor and minority communities with shocking

disregard and showing little interest in punishing the officials responsible, as Marsha Coleman-Adebayo told Dennis J Bernstein.

By Dennis J Bernstein

As a teacher in the mid-1970s, my middle-school students in Far Rockaway, Queens, one of the poorest communities of New York City, were celebrating Mayday, the international workers holiday. Marilyn, the proud-queen of the Mayday show, was dressed in a redesigned wedding gown, surrounded by the girls in the class who were admiring her classy attire.

When it came time to kick off the Mayday festivities, Marilyn rose to take her place at the Maypole, but she never made it to a full standing position. She grew extremely dizzy, fell back into her chair and was taken to the emergency room. I then learned that places where my students lived, played and studied were laced with lead-based products and their minds were being dulled and poisoned, even as I tried to expand them.



Now, four decades later, there is the case of Flint, Michigan, where an entire city has had its water systems poisoned by lead. Many in the community and environmental activists around the country are outraged at what was allowed to happen to Flint and the slow reaction of state and federal officials. And the more the people of Flint find out about what their politicians and officials knew and didn't do the angrier the citizens are getting.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, "Lead is a neurotoxic substance that has been shown in numerous research studies to affect brain function and development. Children who have been exposed to elevated levels of lead are at increased risk for cognitive and behavioral problems during development. Exposure to lead can result in a variety of effects upon neuropsychological functioning including deficits in general intellectual functioning, ability to sustain attention on tasks, organization of thinking and behavior, speech articulation, language comprehension and production, learning and memory efficiency, fine motor skills, high activity level, reduced problem solving flexibility, and poor behavioral self-control."

Marsha Coleman-Adebayo, an Environmental Protection Agency whistleblower, worked at the EPA for some 18 years and is the author of *No Fear: A Whistleblowers Triumph over Corruption and Retaliation at the EPA*. Her lawsuit led to the "No Fear Act," passed to protect government whistleblowers from intimidation and retaliation.

In a recent interview, with Dennis J Bernstein, Coleman-Adebayo called for a full-scale criminal investigation to ascertain, and if need be punish, EPA and Michigan officials at the highest level for their part in poisoning the water and the people of Flint.

DB: What I hope to cover in our interview is, first, if the EPA has the resources to investigate and the criminal mandate, if you will. And then I want to get into if they have the will to do it. So let's start with what's possible. What do you think the EPA could and should be doing?

MC: The EPA has the legal authority to prosecute. In fact, as you said, there are criminal ... there are violations. There are provisions [of] The Clean Air Act that provide for criminal prosecutions. [] A lot of people really don't understand the breadth of the EPA, and the provisions by law that the EPA has to go against environmental criminals. EPA has 200 fully authorized federal law enforcement agents. And these agents actually are authorized to carry firearms in order to carry out their responsibility.

At EPA we have about 70 forensic scientists and technicians. We have ... 45 attorneys at EPA who do nothing but litigate environmental criminals. And so it's not the most extensive array of personnel but we certainly have the resources. It certainly does not take the 200 [environmental] law enforcement officers to arrest a governor, or even other people who have been involved in this criminal act, in Michigan. So we have the authority.

But the second question that you asked, "Do we have the will?" [] I think that's really where the fault line lies. And that is what the agency has shown, is that it may have the authority, but it certainly does not have the will to protect the people of this country from environmental criminals.

DB: I do want you to hone in on this. It's sort of an institutional decision that the EPA made not to prosecute in certain communities. You want to talk a little bit about the so-called sacrifice zones?

MC: Well, sacrifice zones are essentially primarily African[-American], Hispanic communities, low-income white communities that no longer have the [economic] ability to flex their muscles, in the overall environment, in the overall economics of our economy, of our country.

For example, Flint, Michigan, used to be an area where a lot of African-Americans [moved to] who were escaping from state-sponsored violence in the South, from the Ku Klux Klan, the White Knights, and all the organizations that were dedicated to killing black people in the early 1920's, 30's, 40's.

So a lot of these people who live in Flint now migrated from the rural South into cities like Detroit, into Flint, trying to escape state-sponsored violence. And they went to Flint seeking economic value, jobs in the auto industry.

And, then, of course, ... it's another economic betrayal, where these industries basically pick up through NAFTA and other kinds of economic [incentives] and they leave these cities. And they go to Mexico, or to some other place where they can pay workers very low wages, with almost no benefits, leaving these communities without a way of really recovering from that kind of economic devastation.

We call those kinds of communities where the economy is almost non-existent in terms of supporting human activities, you know, good schools, and now, of course, even water, it seems, we call these kinds of communities sacrifice zones. These communities no longer have the ability to demand from the political system that they are treated as equal citizens in this country.

DB: Another thing that always comes up here is there are various ways to blame the victims for poisoning themselves. You already start to hear it reverberating, "Well, these people are too poor and stupid to know what's happening to them." You want to talk about that?

MC: Sure, I mean, it's such a pathetic argument, to be honest with you. This community started complaining almost two years ago, that the water had turned various colors: gray, brown. That there was an odor emanating from their faucets. And the governor, as well as all the other city officials, and also EPA, basically ignored them, made fun of them, basically tells them that there was nothing wrong with water that has [this] brown color.

In fact, there's a very interesting interview some government officials in Michigan actually were shown drinking, supposedly, the water from Flint. But the reality is that there are a number of people who actually knew that there was something terribly wrong. And one company, in fact, Ford Motor Company, realized that something was wrong because they refused to use the water because it was corroding the various parts they were creating. And they received some special compensation so that they could bring water in for the various parts that they were creating.

So they had enough sense to make sure that the water that they used to build

cars was not polluted. But they, in fact, were allowing the children and the men and women of Flint to bathe in the water, to drink the water. It is a crime of such unbelievable proportion. The fact that no one has been charged with a crime is, in fact, absolutely astounding, at this point.

DB: It is indeed, and I'm somebody who spent about 12 or 14 years teaching in various areas, very poor communities in New York City. And I saw, first hand, the impact, what happened when kids were exposed to lead. It is beyond acceptance or understanding that this action would unfold like this, that these kids and this community would be poisoned.

It troubles me that, in fact, there is not even a clear and wide ranging education program in terms of what to do, how to deal with it, what's coming next. A lot of people still don't know all the dangers, or what's bad and what's good. And it's troubling because there has been so much disinformation from the government, in terms of Michigan, at all levels.

MC: And not only that, lead is irreversible. The poisoning is irreversible. And it's an inter-generational poisoning. So the children of the fetuses who have been poisoned through their mother's womb, their grandchildren will most likely be lead poisoned. So this is an inter-generational poisoning.

These children will never, to a large extent, see their God-given potential because of this lead poisoning. And the President hasn't even gone to Flint, to kiss these babies or hold their hands, or just make a head bow to the incredible disaster that Flint has become. And so one of the questions that I asked in my first Guardian piece on this issue is what would have happened, for example, if we can imagine if ISIS, for example, had lead poisoned an American city? How would the response have been different if "a terrorist" had poisoned hundreds of American children and thousands of adults? How would we have dealt with that situation?

And it's one of the really sad parts about this is that a lot of the people who are responsible for this kind of poisoning will get away with it. They will get away with it. We've already seen one sacrificial lamb sort of pushed under the bus and that was Susan Hedman, who was Region 5 Administrator, in EPA.

DB: I believe she tried to blow the whistle in April of 2015.

MC: No, she didn't. There was an EPA whistleblower named Miguel Del Toral and he tried to blow the whistle in April. And in EPA's culture, if you try to blow the whistle the first thing they do is demean you. They start spreading rumors that you've got mental illness or that you're not quite up to par in the EPA.

They demeaned his work, they discredited what he tried to do. And what's really

fabulous about this particular man, he just refused to allow the people of Flint to be poisoned, on his watch, without sounding the alarm. And so he joined with a Virginia Tech scientist named Mark Edwards, who also, by the way, was the person who exposed the lead poisoning in Washington, D.C. And EPA and the CDC did the same thing to this professor. They also demeaned him, tried to discredit him. And he also refused to be intimidated by the EPA and the CDC.

And also a medical doctor who noticed that a lot of her patients were bringing their children in to see her. And when she evaluated them and performed tests she realized that they had 3 to 4 times the amount of lead in their system that's allowed. So there [are] some real heroes in this story. There's one EPA employee who [has] been really battered but he's still standing. But all the officials from Region 5, Chicago all the way to Washington, D.C., none of these officials lifted a finger to help the people of Flint, Michigan.

DB: Wow. It's very interesting when we look at the statement from the EPA administrator talking about, I guess, letting Susan Hedman take the brunt of it and call her the scapegoat and she says, "Susan's strong interest in insuring that the EPA Region 5's focus remains solely on the restoration of Flint's drinking water." She's resigning.

MC: I mean you have to laugh at this stuff. It's just so silly. And so the question that we're posing to Congress is when did Gina McCarthy, who is head of the EPA, when did she know about this crisis, and what did she do about it when she found out about it?

In other words, we need to see the e-mails stream. E-mail traffic from Susan Hedman to Gina McCarthy. We need to find out when did the head of the EPA find out that an American city had been poisoned. And then, what did she do about it?

And if she didn't know that Susan Hedman was inadequate and should have been removed, was there any conversation between the head of the EPA and the White House? That, "I have an employee in Region 5, who's not up to snuff, who shouldn't be there." Either way, it seems to me that we need to really focus on the head of the EPA instead of all the people that she's basically pushing under the bus.

DB: You make the mighty powerful point that really at the core of this, this should be a criminal investigation.

MC: At the very least.

DB: At the very least, not only of the people at the EPA, but in terms of the role of the governor and the various officials and the appointed administrators, and the decisions that were made at all levels. I'm wondering about how you

might carry out that part of the investigation, who you'd want to ask what to.

MC: Well, I think the responsibility to carry out this investigation lies with Congress. I was at the hearing last week, at the first hearing on this issue. There will be a second hearing on this hopefully, fairly soon. But we need to really get to the bottom of what happened. How were these people poisoned? And, by the way, Flint is not the only city that's being poisoned. I mean there are cities and municipalities around this country who are also being impacted by lead in the water. And so if people think, "Well this is just a problem for Flint," I think they're really in a fool's paradise at this point.

DB: Examples of other cities?

MC: For example, I found out about three cities in Pennsylvania today, that also have very high levels of lead. And we're trying to track that down now, and perhaps we'll do another piece for the Guardian, on those cities. And there are obviously some municipalities that people are complaining about in California now.

Let me just say, citizens have a right to know whether the water coming from their faucet is clean and safe to drink. I mean, it sounds like such a simple statement but it's really very powerful. Because what is it that the EPA could have done in Flint?

The reason why I'm pointing my baton at the EPA is because EPA has the power of the federal government behind it. And even if state officials, the governor and the officials in Michigan had decided to hide the information from their citizens, the EPA had the overall responsibilities as the federal government to inform the citizens of Flint that their water was not safe.

They could have given the governor, for example, ten days to inform the citizens of Flint that there was a possibility that their water was not safe. And they could have said, "Until we've confirmed the results, we advise you to drink bottled water." That didn't happen. If the governor decided that he was not going to inform, it was the responsibility of the EPA then, to inform the citizens of Flint ... that there was a possibility that their water was not safe.

The EPA could have ordered a cease-and-desist order. They could have told the state, "You do not have the right to poison your people. And we are now going to step in as the federal government and we're going to take over this responsibility." EPA did not do that.

They could have referred the governor to the Department of Justice for criminal prosecution; for poisoning his residents. They didn't do [that]. There were so many tools that EPA had at its disposal, to step in and really make such a

profound statement about the sanctity of life. Not only the planet, but the sanctity of human life, the EPA did not use. That's the reason why I'm really pointing my baton at EPA, because that was the responsibility of the agency, that when states fail to protect their population, the federal government must step in and protect the people.

DB: As I mentioned earlier, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder is turning down a request from the House to testify about his role in Flint. His spokesperson Anna Eaton said that the governor won't attend because he's due to present his annual budget proposal that day in Michigan. Now, would you suggest that Congress subpoena him, rather than offering him the possibility of not showing up?

MC: Absolutely. In fact, that came up at the hearing any number of times, where a number of the Democratic members of Congress strongly urged the chairman of the committee, Chaffetz, to subpoena the Michigan governor. Force him to stand before Congress, and explain what happened in Michigan. So we're still waiting to see that kind of Congressional action.

In fact, there's one other person, I think he's a Michigan official, that Congress has now subpoenaed, and the chairman has actually ordered U.S. Marshal service to hunt him down. Direct quote, "hunt him down," and bring him to Congress. Congress can do the same thing with the Michigan governor, by the way. They could actually order the U.S. Marshal service to serve a subpoena against this governor. And to order him to stand before Congress. And that's the kind of action we're looking for at this point. Because this criminality deserves that kind of commitment to justice. And so we must, really, put a lot of pressure on Congress, to carry out its oversight responsibilities.

DB: So you would advocate ... subpoenaing the governor, and if he doesn't show up, just tracking him down and taking him into Congress?

MC: Absolutely. And that is what the law provides. And so we can't have two systems of justice. You know, where now a Michigan official has been ordered by U.S. Marshals, subpoenaed and ordered to appear before Congress. But the governor is sort of out of bounds for that kind of action. So we can't have citizens treated so differently in this country.

One of the things that, I just think is ... again, a two-tier system of justice, in this country: We have young men in prison now for possessing, you know, a little bit of marijuana, a couple of grams of marijuana and they're sentenced to 10, 20 years in prison. And we have federal government employees and we have state employees who have poisoned an entire city and no one has been charged. So we can't allow the government to operate with this two-tier system of justice. This isn't a democracy at this point. We need to really focus in on this. And

then also the people of Flint, we need to really understand how the federal government is going to assist these families, going forward, with major medical and educational challenges before them.

And these families are going to really suffer a lot. I mean, they're already suffering because they're living in an economically depressed community. But now they're going to have children who are going to find it very difficult to learn.

And they're going to have other medical problems as a result of the lead poisoning. And so we need to try to understand how the government is going to assist these families, in helping these children with these enormous, enormous challenges that lie before them.

DB: Finally, I want to ask you, and I'm not being facetious here, if you were still in the EPA or if not ... what do you think would have happened if you're in EPA and you tried to go right to the President, or send an epistle through somebody who might be a little bit closer. And what do you think he would have done if he heard from an official like you who was concerned, on the ground, the city being poisoned. Has that ever happened?

MC: Well, a lot of us at EPA have gone to Congress, when we've tried to go through the bureaucratic channels, and communities are being poisoned ... you know, in my case I also reported that a community had been poisoned.

DB: Where did that get you? It got you a lot of hell.

MC: Exactly. It was hell because you become the target. ... I became the target, death threats and rape threats. And, eventually, of course, I was fired. So, it is a process. But we don't know what the President knew and we don't know when he found out. So did the President find out about the lead poisoning when all of us found out about it? Did he find out about the lead poisoning 6 months ago ... or 3 months ago? And if he did, what did he do about it? We don't have any of those answers, yet.

So now we have to rely on Congress to help us figure out this puzzle. It's the same puzzle that they grappled with at Watergate. What did you know, and when did you know it? We need to find that out. And then once we have those answers, the officials who for 6 months, or 4 months, or 3 months, or a month or whatever it was, allowed the residents of Flint, Michigan to continue to drink poisoned water, bathe in poisoned water, feed their children, allow their children to drink poisoned water. Those officials must be held accountable.

DB: Well, the President might have learned a little bit more if he had gone down there for a couple of days, and started handing out water, and dialoguing with the people who were poisoned. Probably a bunch of them voted for him.

MC: What's really sad, of course, is that those residents are getting like a couple bottles of water a day. So that means that they have to bathe in that one bottle of water, they have to bathe their children, using that one bottle of water. ... I mean it's almost just too sad to talk about. And yet we haven't seen the National Guard sent out, and put up tents, and places, for example, where people can just go and take a bath once a day. You know, we do that when we have disasters, the Red Cross and other emergency operations will go out and they'll put up large tents, and allow people to take a bath, or have a place to have clean water. But we haven't seen that happen in Flint. So this story just remains a very heart breaking and very sad story.

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.

Recalling the Slaughter of Innocents

From the Archive: The quarter-century anniversary of an early U.S. war crime in Iraq passed largely unnoticed this week, the bombing of a civilian air-raid shelter in Baghdad during President George H.W. Bush's Persian Gulf War, an atrocity that killed more than 400 women and children, as Ray McGovern recalled in 2011.

By Ray McGovern (Updated from the original publication on Feb. 14, 2011)

Twenty-five years ago, as Americans were celebrating Valentine's Day, Iraqi husbands and fathers in the Amiriyah section of Baghdad were peeling the remains of their wives and children off the walls and floor of a large neighborhood bomb shelter.

The men had left the shelter the evening before, so their wives would have some measure of privacy as they sought refuge from the U.S.-led coalition bombing campaign, which was at its most intense pre-ground-war stage.

All of the more than 400 women and children were incinerated or boiled to death at 4:30 a.m. on Feb. 13, 1991, when two F-117 stealth fighter-bombers each dropped a 2,000-pound laser-guided "smart bomb" on the civilian shelter at Amiriyah.

It was one of those highly accurate "surgical strikes." The first bomb sliced through 10 feet of reinforced concrete before a time-delayed fuse exploded, destroying propane and water tanks for heating water and food. Minutes later the

second bomb flew precisely through the opening that had been cut by the first and exploded deeper in the shelter creating an inferno. Fire rose from the lower level to the area where the women and children were seeking shelter and so did the boiling water. Those who did not burn to death immediately or die from the bombs' impact were boiled or steamed to death in the intense heat.

The bombs hit toward the end of the month-long bombing campaign to "soften up" Iraq before the U.S.-led ground invasion to drive Iraqi troops from Kuwait. The aerial bombing had begun on Jan. 17, 1991; the coalition flew over 100,000 sorties, dropping 88,500 tons of bombs. U.S. government documents show that the bombs were targeted on civilian as well as military infrastructure. They were very accurate.

This is not to suggest that the targeters knew that some 400 women and children would be killed at Amiriyah. No, it was just one of those unfortunate mistakes to which many Americans have become accustomed, even inured whether the unintended-but-nevertheless-dead victims be in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, wherever.

Indeed, the stealth aircraft and the ordnance were a proud paragon of precision performing their mission. How was the Air Force to know that the targeting information was based on spurious "intelligence" reports that the shelter had become a military command site?

Actually, Brigadier General Buster Glosson, who had overall responsibility for targeting, later commented that the "intelligence" pointing to military use was not "worth a shit."

Human Rights Watch noted later in 1991: "It is now well established, through interviews with neighborhood residents, that the Amiriyah structure was plainly marked as a public shelter and was used throughout the air war by large numbers of civilians."

A BBC correspondent, Jeremy Bowen, was among the first TV reporters to arrive on the scene. He was given access to the site and found no evidence of military use. The Pentagon later admitted that it had known that "the Amiriyah facility had been used as a civil-defense shelter during the Iraq-Iran war" from 1980 to 1988.

So who was held responsible for this horrible "mistake"? Are you kidding? What planet did you say you were from?

A Time to Witness

In "Death of a Salesman," Arthur Miller puts these words into the mouth of Willy

Loman's wife, Linda, words that I believe also apply to the "small" people huddled that night in the shelter in Amiriyah: "I don't say he's a great man. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall in his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must finally be paid to such a person."

This imperative was brought home to me when my friend Art Laffin of the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker in Washington, DC, called me on Feb. 12, 2003, as a fresh wave of "coalition" attacks on Iraq loomed. Art had visited the huge underground coffin at Amiriyah. He said: "I was there, Ray; I saw it; I talked to the men."

Art told me of a memorial liturgy to be held in front of the White House the next day, marking the 12th anniversary of the precision bombing at Amiriyah, lest the massacre be forgotten.

"You should come with us," said Art in his soft-spoken but prophetically challenging way.

"But I am planning to write the kind of op-ed that might inform enough people about the lies upon which a new war on Iraq would be launched, that the juggernaut might be stopped," thought I to myself. "If people only knew the truth. "

Then Linda Loman's words started ringing in my ears, or perhaps they were coming from somewhere else, maybe a voice emerging out of my deep respect for the likes of Dorothy Day and Art Laffin. "Attention, attention must be finally paid."

So there we stood marking the day, and praying that somehow future days like it could be avoided. The wind-chill factor was well below zero, so there was some solace to being put in the paddy wagon. It was my first arrest and (brief) imprisonment.

And it was exhilarating. I may be biased, given the experience of this first arrest, but if you are going to risk arrest via non-violent civil disobedience, you can't have steadier, more prophetic companions than those of the Catholic Worker.

When we went to court for trial the new war had already begun. To our surprise, the judge announced that the arresting officer had not appeared and, thus, we were free to go. I rushed to get out the door, thinking the officer might still get there.

But Art blocked my way, turned to the judge, and asked if she would allow him to explain what we were doing on Feb. 13, 2003, and why. The crowded courtroom listened intently as Art held forth for about five minutes.

"Let's have some coffee," said Art as he caught up to me running down the street away from the courthouse. "Have you been able to reflect on what just happened? Do you remember how that African-American woman police officer was listening to us as we shared our hopes in the paddy wagon?"

"Do you think, Ray, that non-violent civil disobedience could be contagious?"

A day or two later, a short passage in Luke's gospel leaped out at me. Jesus of Nazareth is warning fledgling "Catholic workers" about what to expect if they remain faithful:

"Countries will fight each other there will be terrifying things coming from the sky. Before all these things take place, however, you will be arrested and persecuted; you will be handed over to be tried you will be brought before kings and rulers for my sake Stand firm This will be your chance to tell the Good News."

Duh! My big chance to tell the Good News, and I was running for the door. I was even more grateful that Art did not blow the chance to witness, and to remind me what it is all about.

I've matured to the point where witnessing and risking arrest comes more naturally and even more exhilarating. On the very snowy day of Dec. 16, 2010, when 131 witnesses against war were arrested at the White House gates at a rally arranged by Veterans for Peace, 42 of us insisted on standing trial.

The authorities, though, quickly lost their appetite for trying the likes of us, most of whom have defended our country and its constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and assembly, for "failure to obey a lawful order," i.e. not moving, after being ordered not to remain standing on the sidewalk in front of the White House. The "paperwork" on us 42 had been misplaced, we were told.

As we celebrate Valentine's Day and other holidays that stress love and peace, let's keep in mind that the most painful anniversaries must also be marked; they must be witnessed to; attention must be paid the plight of "small" people still further diminished by the euphemism "collateral damage."

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He served as a CIA analyst and Army infantry/intelligence officer for almost 30 years, and is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).

Lost Lessons of Libya

Exclusive: Despite months of Western diplomatic efforts, Libya remains an object lesson in “regime change” arrogance, a failed state beset by rival militias and becoming a new base for Islamic extremists as the movie “Thirteen Hours” graphically depicts, writes James DiEugenio.

By James DiEugenio

American foreign policy leaders are not great at learning lessons from the past. The cautionary tale about “regime change” from George W. Bush’s invasion of Iraq in 2003 did not even last until 2011 when President Barack Obama at the urging of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton plunged into “regime change” in Libya, creating one more failed state and another humanitarian catastrophe.

Different presidents, different parties, very similar results.

In the case of Libya, many of the failings from that enterprise are recounted in the book, *Thirteen Hours*, along with one of the tragic consequences of that adventure, the death of U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans in Benghazi on Sept. 11, 2012, an event highlighted in a movie by the same name.

But the failure of Obama and Clinton to heed the warnings from the Iraq disaster has historical precedents in other prescient warnings that were ignored by impetuous leaders, such as early doubts expressed about the gathering storm clouds in Vietnam in the 1950s.

In 1958, William Lederer, a former Navy officer, and Eugene Burdick, a political scientist, submitted their draft of a non-fiction book called *The Ugly American* to W.W. Norton Company. An editor at Norton suggested it would probably be more dramatically effective if it was rewritten as a roman a clef, that is as a thinly disguised fiction based on actual people and events.

From a marketing standpoint at least, the editor was correct. *The Ugly American* became a sensational success, spending 76 weeks on the best-seller lists and eventually selling over four million copies. [*New York Times*, Nov. 29, 2009]

Arrogance and Stupidity

Essentially, the authors were criticizing the arrogance and stupidity of American foreign policy in Indochina. They were particularly hard on the State Department. They pictured its employees as being insensitive and unknowledgeable

about the true circumstances and conditions of the cultures they were dealing with. Even the best of their representatives were blinded by the distortions of the Cold War. Their consuming anti-communism kept them from perceiving that they had become their own worst enemies.

Sen. John F. Kennedy, a skeptic about U.S. interventions in Third World conflicts, mailed a copy of *The Ugly American* to each member of the U.S. Senate, but the United States plunged nonetheless into the Vietnam killing fields, with Kennedy as president deploying the Green Berets and other military advisers to the South Vietnamese army and then after Kennedy's death President Lyndon Johnson escalating the war dramatically by committing more than a half million U.S. soldiers.

But even the devastating failure in Vietnam did not instill any lasting sense of caution and humility in the U.S. foreign policy establishment. Bristling with boasts about "American exceptionalism," President George W. Bush rushed off to invade Iraq in 2003 and President Barack Obama launched an air war in Libya in 2011 in support of an uprising against longtime strongman Muammar Gaddafi.

Like his predecessors in other U.S. interventions, Obama was either ignorant of or chose to ignore history, since Libya had a long record of suffering under and resisting foreign powers.

For three centuries, the Ottoman Empire had controlled Libya until 1890. In 1912, Italy took over the northern African country, but was cast out eight years later. However, in 1931, Italian fascist Benito Mussolini invaded again. His forces captured and hanged the Moslem leader Omar Mukhtar, who became a martyred hero, especially in eastern Libya.

It was not until after World War II, with Italy and its fascist Axis allies defeated, that Libya became free and independent. In 1951, a constitutional monarchy under the Senussi Moslem leader Idris al-Senussi was formed. At that time, Libya was one of the poorest and most illiterate countries in the world. [*Thirteen Hours*, by Mitchell Zuckoff, e-book version, p. 11]

In 1969, the king was overthrown in a bloodless military coup led by Colonel Muammar Gaddafi who then exercised what was essentially one-man rule over Libya for over 40 years during which Libya grew rich from oil fields mostly located in the east around Benghazi, although political power was concentrated in the west around Tripoli, which Gaddafi made the permanent capital and the home for the National Oil Corporation. Most of the improvements Gaddafi made, such as hospitals and schools, were also in the west. [ibid, p. 11]

Backing a Rebellion

So, in 2011, when a rebellion broke out against Gaddafi, it understandably started in east Libya and was partly fueled by the slighting of the east for the west. Once this happened, in the context of other uprisings known as the Arab Spring, President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton assisted by then U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice and National Security staffer Samantha Power decided to seize the opportunity to eliminate Gaddafi, long considered a thorn in the side of U.S. foreign policy.

But as with Bush in Iraq they did not appear to have asked themselves: 1.) What do we have to replace him? and 2.) Will the situation in Libya be better or worse when he is gone? Some observers cautioned about any American intervention, simply because of the Pandora's Box effect: Who could possibly predict what would happen afterwards?

The rebellion against Gaddafi began in February 2011 in east Libya, and then spread westward. It included the Islamist organizations, the Libyan Fighting Group and the Obaida Ibn Jarrah Brigade. These organizations appear to have fought Gaddafi because he allowed a secular form of government, including many rights for women.

The anti-Gaddafi opposition also included elements of Al Qaeda, though the rebel groups denied this at the time. The role of Islamic extremists was confirmed by a West Point study of captured Al Qaeda documents called the Sinjar Records, which showed that a disproportionate number of jihadists who flocked to fight American troops in Iraq came from eastern Libya. Also, according to documents released by Wikileaks, one of the rebel leaders had joined the Taliban. [*The Daily Telegraph*, Oct. 29, 2011]

So, although there were pro-democratic elements in the rebellion against Gaddafi, mainly among the professional classes, there was a real danger that, if the rebels won out, the result could be a hardline Islamist state that would revoke rights for women and create a new stronghold for terrorism.

Secretary Clinton also was made aware of the role of regional rivalries seeking Gaddafi's demise as well as Western motives that had nothing to do with protecting the lives or improving the lot of Libyans. For instance, among Clinton's recently declassified emails, private adviser Sidney Blumenthal informed her that Egyptian special operations units were training and arming Libyan militants along the Egypt/Libya border and in Benghazi even before the uprising began. [Brad Hoff, *The Levant Report*, Jan. 4, 2016]

France's Motives

France also parachuted weapons to the rebels, including anti-tank rockets. [Le

Figaro, June 28, 2011] And, as Blumenthal explained to Clinton, France's motives were not entirely noble. French President Nicolas Sarkozy wanted a greater share of Libyan oil production than he was getting from Gaddafi. Also, Sarkozy was interested in a new government in Libya because Gaddafi had plans to supplant the French franc with the Libyan golden dinar in Francophone Africa. In other words, Gaddafi wanted to free Africa from the neocolonial interests of the old colonial powers.

Blumenthal warned Clinton, too, that elements of Al Qaeda were infiltrating upward into the rebel umbrella group called the NTC, the National Transitional Council. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[What Hillary Knew about Libya.](#)"]

Retired UK Prime Minister Tony Blair was alerted to the terrorist role directly by Gaddafi. While in power, Blair had visited Gaddafi a number of times and the Libyan leader considered him a friend.

In two phone calls on Feb. 25, 2011, Gaddafi told Blair that the forces he was fighting were similar to Osama Bin Laden. He said, "We are not fighting them, they are attacking us. An organization had laid down sleeping cells in North Africa. Called the Al Qaeda Organization in North Africa. The sleeping cells in Libya are similar to dormant cells in America before 9/11." [*The Telegraph*, Jan. 7, 2016] As the author of this story, Robert Mendick noted Gaddafi was prophetic about this considering the later attacks in France.

But the Western leaders ignored these warnings. Following the Lederer-Burdick script from Indochina, France and the U.S., for different reasons, decided to team up again to attack a Third World country, this time in Africa.

While there were covert operations already going on in Libya, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton were working more or less out in the open at the United Nations.

Tricking the Russians

In February 2011, the U.S., France, Germany and England teamed up to pass Security Council Resolution 1970. This act condemned Gaddafi for using lethal force against civilians in Tripoli (which, as many commentators have written, probably did not happen.) The UN then passed a series of sanctions against Libya, including freezing some assets and enacting an arms embargo. At the same time Western countries were aiding some of the worst elements of the rebellion.

One month later, the Obama administration returned to the United Nations, wanting to go even further. Resolution 1973 proposed the establishment of "a no-fly zone" over Libya, supposedly for humanitarian purposes. It also contained a clause that allowed all necessary means to protect civilians, short of an

occupying force. Russia and China were lobbied not to veto it but rather to abstain from the vote, which they did despite concerns that the use of military force could result in unintended consequences.

The pretense for this intervention was that Gaddafi's forces, which had isolated the rebels near Benghazi, would inflict a bloodbath. So, soon after the "humanitarian" resolution passed, the Western military operation unleashed fierce attacks against Gaddafi's army in the east and quickly expanded the intervention into a "regime change" project headed by NATO, bombing a wide range of Libyan government targets and blockading ports.

Codenamed "Operation Unified Protector," over 9,000 strike sorties were flown and over 400 artillery batteries were destroyed along with 600 tanks or armored vehicles. [*Final Mission Stats*, published by NATO, Nov. 2, 2011]

Some critics argued at the time that the Obama administration was exaggerating the potential for a bloodbath. For instance, University of Texas professor Alan Kuperman pointed out that neither Amnesty International nor Human Rights Watch warned of any impending massacre in Libya and neither did the U.S. intelligence community.

In March 2011, Kuperman wrote that there was no photographic evidence to support the administration's claims but rather mostly rebel propaganda transmitted to the White House, which uncritically accepted it. [*Foreign Affairs*, "Who Lost Libya", April 21, 2015] Kuperman said the intervention was actually driven by the fact that Gaddafi was close to stifling the rebellion. ["Obama's Libya Debacle," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015]

The true aim of the UN/NATO enterprise was not humanitarian relief but "regime change." Once the rebel forces sensed that, they decided to reject each and every offer of a truce with negotiations that the Libyan government extended.

Call for 'Regime Change'

Obama signaled U.S. support for the rebel intransigence by announcing on March 3, 2011, that Gaddafi "must step down from power and leave." (op. cit. "Who Lost Libya") The State Department then ordered U.S. Africa Command to stop peace negotiations on March 22. Even though Gaddafi made two more offers for a truce, with minimal demands on his side requesting only that his inner circle be allowed to leave the country peacefully and that Libya retain a military force strong enough to fight Al Qaeda and ISIS elements of the rebellion. (ibid)

Former Rear Admiral Charles Kubic, who had a major role in the negotiations, confirmed that Gaddafi was willing to step down and that his military leaders were willing to withdraw their forces from the cities to the outskirts in order

to begin a truce process. Kubic was puzzled by the refusal of Western officials to accept, not only this but also the offer to discuss constitutional changes and pay compensation to victims of the fighting.

Kubic came to the conclusion that, "It wasn't enough to get him out of power; they wanted him dead." (ibid) Gaddafi's olive branches were rebuffed, dismissed out of hand.

If Gaddafi's death was indeed the goal a kind of head-on-a-spike, tough-guy/gal moment of blood lust the goal was achieved. Due to the massive NATO bombing and repeated refusals of a negotiated settlement, Tripoli was taken in the autumn of 2011. Gaddafi retreated to his hometown of Sirte, where he was captured on Oct. 20, 2011, tortured (sodomized with a knife) and then murdered.

Secretary Clinton could hardly contain her glee. Basking in her "Mission Accomplished" moment, she famously declared to a broadcast reporter, "We came, we saw, he died."

But as George W. Bush had shown, when proper geopolitical conditions are not considered, a seeming victory can become a disaster. It turned out Gaddafi was correct. There were strong elements of radical Islam incorporated into the rebellion against him. And although an interim government was constructed, it could not control the anarchy that had been unleashed by the civil war. The government simply could not coax or order the guerrillas, militias and Islamists to disarm.

Benghazi Chaos

There was so little order that huge arms bazaars materialized overnight and sold sophisticated weapons on the street. Even before the outbreak of violence against Americans at the State Department compound and the CIA annex in Benghazi, there were two major violent clashes in 2012: the Sabha tribal dispute, resulting in 147 dead and 395 wounded, and the Zuwara conflict between Gaddafi loyalists and local militias, with estimates of more than 50 dead and over 100 wounded.

In the face of this escalating violence and the inability of the new government to quell the disorder, several foreign embassies shuttered their windows and closed their doors. However, the United States did not withdraw, even from the anarchic situation surrounding Benghazi.

In Benghazi, the United States had allied itself with a less radical group called the February 17th Martyrs Brigade which supplied hired guards to protect State Department buildings. [Zuckoff, p. 19] But perhaps the most powerful militia in Libya at the time of the Benghazi attack was the Ansar al Sharia

Brigade, which translates as Partisans of Islamic Law.

The violence escalated because of the easy availability of weapons, including grenades, mortars, rocket launchers and heavy machine guns. [ibid, p. 20] In June 2012, a rocket-propelled grenade was fired at the British ambassador, contributing to the United Kingdom's decision to depart Benghazi. (ibid, p. 22)

In June 2012, Ambassador Christopher Stevens sent a cable to Washington, warning that Al Qaeda influence was spreading in Libya and he had seen their flags flying. Around the same time, Stevens had sent another cable to Washington seeking more bodyguards. He described the security conditions in Libya as being "unpredictable, volatile and violent." [ibid, p. 63]

This request was denied, as were similar ones. Altogether, Stevens' requests for added security were denied three times, even though the State Department classified the conditions for staffers there as critical. In late August 2012, the department circulated a travel warning to Libya declaring that "Political violence in the form of assassination and vehicle bombs have increased in both Benghazi and Tripoli. Inter-military conflict can erupt at any time or any place in the country." [ibid, p. 65]

So the questions become: 1.) If the U.S. was going to stay, why was State not willing to fully protect its own personnel? and 2.) If not willing to fully protect the personnel, why should they stay? Whatever the answer to those questions, one of the main functions of the State Department compound in Benghazi, which did not technically qualify as a consulate, was to gather intelligence on the growing influence of Al Qaeda. (ibid, pgs. 35, 61)

Whenever one of the State Department employees went out to meet with a citizen, whoever it may have been, they were escorted by at least one bodyguard. That guard was either employed by Diplomatic Security (DS) or the CIA's Global Response Staff (GRS). The former arose after the Beirut bombing in 1983; the latter after 9/11. The GRS is largely staffed by former special operations officers, e.g. Navy Seals. Two of the men who died at Benghazi on Sept. 11, 2012, were part of the GRS, Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods.

A Fatal Visit

Ambassador Stevens had arrived for a five-day visit in Benghazi from Tripoli on Sept. 10. He attended a ribbon cutting at a local school, and opened up an "American Corner" on a city street: a place where Libyans could get bilingual books and films and magazines. (ibid, p. 65) He had five DS agents assigned to him, plus a computer technology officer, Sean Smith.

The State Department compound in Benghazi was not secure even from the Libyan

guards hired to defend it. A post-incident review stated that the compound “had been vandalized and attacked by some of the same guards who were there to protect it.” [ibid, p. 67] In fact, at the time Stevens was in Benghazi there was a work dispute going on with these very same guards.

For security reasons, Stevens had not planned on leaving the compound on Sept. 11, which was the 11th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. During the day, Stevens heard from an assistant that protesters had stormed the U.S. Embassy in Cairo over an insulting video about Islam that had been placed on YouTube, called *Innocence of Muslim*. (p. 76)

A State Department warning was sent out about a danger to local government buildings from Libyans. Stevens was alerted to this but disregarded it. In his last diary entry that night, Stevens wrote about how much he enjoyed being in Benghazi, except for the “Never ending security threats”

Shortly after 9 p.m., a Toyota pick-up truck pulled up in front of the compound. The car had police insignia. It stayed awhile, and then left. An explosion rang out. Dozens of men swarmed the gate firing AK-47s into the air. Some had walkie-talkies. To this day, there is a debate about whether the gate was left open or whether the Libyan guards were coerced into opening it. [Zuckoff, pgs. 83-85]

The militia leader who seemed to have organized the attack was Abu Khattala. [New York Times, Dec. 28, 2013] He had been a leader of the Al Jarrah brigade, which had helped depose Gaddafi with extensive American aid. Some witnesses interviewed by David Kirkpatrick of the *New York Times* said that, during the rioting inside the compound, *Innocence of Muslims* was mentioned. Yet, whether or not the film was the casus belli of the attack or it was simply a pretense used by the main organizer, perhaps Khattala, has become part of a partisan debate, which has obscured some of the larger questions involved.

As calls went out for help, Stevens took refuge with Smith in a safe room part of his villa, led there by a security officer. The attackers could not get into the room but managed to set fire to most of the area outside. The security officer tried to lead Smith and Stevens to a bathroom with an escape window onto a terrace. But en route, he lost Stevens and Smith. He tried going back several times to find them, but could not. He was later overcome with smoke inhalation and collapsed on the terrace.

After a delay of about 20-30 minutes, six GRS officers left the CIA annex, which was about a mile from the State Department compound. They managed to counter the attackers, and they found the body of Sean Smith who was dead from smoke inhalation. They also tried to find Stevens but could not get into the safe room

due to fire and smoke.

After the rescuers returned to the CIA annex, they took positions on the rooftops of the main buildings. Several more men arrived from Tripoli in the middle of the night, with the defenders repulsing an attack on the CIA annex. The attackers regrouped and launched a mortar barrage. In the shelling, Bud Doherty, one of the men who arrived from Tripoli, and Ty Woods, part of the rescue team, were killed.

Stevens' body was later recovered by locals. He was taken to a hospital and pronounced dead from smoke inhalation. Stevens was the first American ambassador to die in office in the line of duty since 1988.

A Political Football

The administration sent UN Ambassador Susan Rice out that weekend to make the circle of talk shows relying on talking points that played up the impact of the YouTube video as provoking the attack. [ibid, *New York Times*.] The Republicans seized on Rice's statement, insisting that it was part of an Obama administration cover-up. But as Kirkpatrick noted in his six-part series, the Republicans went overboard in their painting of a conspiracy theory. (ibid)

Yet, there were clearly errors in Secretary Clinton's and the State Department's handling of the Libyan conflict and the resulting chaos. Benghazi was one of the most dangerous State Department outposts in the world, perhaps the most dangerous, yet pleas for enhanced security were bureaucratically rebuffed. The other key error was the delay in getting help to the compound sooner.

But the question that neither side wants to address is the one that Professor Kuperman confronts head on: Would it have been better for Libya and America if the State Department had negotiated with Gaddafi to ease his ouster and, perhaps, have had his son Saif al-Islam take over Libya? Due to the insistence on "regime change," Libya is now listed by the State Department as a failed state. In 2014, it descended into its second civil war in three years. And now Al Qaeda and ISIS have operational cells there.

Lederer and Burdick could not have written a more nightmarish scenario to show the arrogance and short sightedness of American foreign policy. Prominent neocon Richard Perle could not have done worse. Yet, the overriding failure of "regime change" strategies was not the focus of Republican investigations. The Republican-controlled Congress insisted instead on focusing on what Secretary Clinton knew and when she knew it.

As the Benghazi political firestorm swept across Washington, author Mitchell Zuckoff got in contact with the surviving GRS officers who rode from the CIA

annex to rescue Stevens that night. Zuckoff, a former journalist and author, relied on those accounts in *13 Hours: The Inside Account of What Really Happened at Benghazi*, written as a deliberate attempt to sidestep all of the partisan issues that had enveloped the incident.

The book concentrated on the characters of the six GRS contractors, Ambassador Stevens, computer expert Smith, and the CIA chief of station who was fictionally named Bob. The book details the firefights at both the State Department Compound and the CIA annex in extraordinary detail.

Considering the focus of the book, director-producer Michael Bay was a decent enough choice to transform the book into a movie. Producer Jerry Bruckheimer had hired Bay to direct action films like *Bad Boys*, *The Rock*, *Armageddon*, *Pearl Harbor* and *Bad Boys 2*. Bay is strong on technical elements: visuals, sound and editing. He is not so interested in things like story, character development, subtlety, and dramatic structure. But, in truth, Zuckoff's book is not really interested in those aspects either.

To adapt the book, Bay hired author Chuck Hogan, who wrote novels including *Prince of Thieves*, which was adapted into the Ben Affleck film *The Town* in 2010.

Book into Movie

In comparing the book, *Thirteen Hours*, with the film by the same name, there seems to me to be only one really exaggerated scene of dramatic license. When a militia at a checkpoint stops two of the GRS agents, the book does not describe any shooting which followed. (Zuckoff, pgs. 23-25) Bay does show an exchange of fire.

There has been some controversy over whether the CIA station chief actually delayed the rescue attempt and resisted the GRS involvement. But this is all in Zuckoff's book, and he details it profusely. (pgs. 94-102) If it did not happen, then the GRS agents are lying. I suspect the CIA is probably covering for the reluctance of "Bob" to let the agents leave the station relatively unprotected.

One of the problems with the film is that, although it is an action movie, there is a lot of time between the set pieces of violence. And, the running time of the film is well over two hours. Thus, we have a lot of dialogue and scenes where people at the CIA annex are interacting, not one of Bay's strengths. He also didn't seem interested in casting acutely either.

Because of the subject matter, the film spent heavily on the production value and not on performance value. With the exception of Toby Stephens as Bud Doherty, the acting performances are not notable or dynamic. However, with the action scenes, Bay does a decent enough job. They are vividly presented,

especially the last mortar attack in which the shells are seen arriving at the CIA annex in super slow motion.

Zuckoff's book does mention the Internet video in more than one place. But Bay's film makes very little comment on that topic. At the end, after the last attack, the film takes a nihilistic attitude toward the whole affair. The Arab linguist, who the GRS team employed as a translator on their rescue mission, decides not to go with them to the infirmary. He shakes his head in disgust and says words to the effect, none of this should have ever happened.

Before the end titles roll, the film tells us that Libya is classified as a failed state today. We then learn that the five surviving agents who tried to rescue Stevens all resigned shortly after this mission. This is as close as director Bay gets to any kind of political statement, a reflection of the Lederer-Burdick sense of how U.S. foreign policy ambitions often outstrip American ability to achieve those goals and how the misguided efforts result in grave human catastrophes.

James DiEugenio is a researcher and writer on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and other mysteries of that era. His most recent book is *Reclaiming Parkland*.

France Dumps Libert  for Security

Exclusive: France's response to last year's terror attacks in Paris imposed draconian measures that waived basic civil rights during the immediate "emergency," but the French parliament is now considering making those rules permanent, as Jonathan Marshall explains.

By Jonathan Marshall

When Islamist radicals destroy centuries-old artifacts, from Bamy  to Palmyra, civilized people everywhere register their outrage. Yet in the name of fighting those same Islamists, some Western governments are destroying their own architecture of legal and human rights that took centuries to build.

The United States, post-9/11, offers countless examples. But now the government of French President Fran ois Hollande is bucking condemnations from local and international human rights groups, the United Nations, and the European Council to ram through parliament constitutional amendments that would permanently enshrine the government's emergency powers.

In the classic words of authoritarian leaders everywhere, France's interior minister insists, "it is terrorism that is the threat to freedom not the state of emergency."

France is today living under a temporary national state of emergency, imposed after the Nov. 13, 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris that killed 130 people and injured hundreds. Already extended once, the emergency will expire Feb. 26, unless extended again by parliament.

The national emergency, based on legislation dating back to the Algerian War in 1955, gives the government extraordinary rights to search homes and hold people under house arrest without warrants, ban public protests, and censor the media. The French bar association condemned it as "a judicial and social model which breaks with republican values."

The constitutional amendments, if adopted, would not only bar legal challenges to the emergency powers, but would strip French-born nationals of their citizenship if they are convicted of terrorism. Hollande's Justice Minister, Christiane Taubira, resigned in protest against the latter proposal. She tweeted, with a nod to Charles de Gaulle, "sometimes resisting means leaving."

Critics point out that France's police have widely abused their extraordinary powers, making life miserable for innocent suspects and generating more sympathy for Islamist radicals among the country's marginalized Muslim population.

In early February, Human Rights Watch released a report based on interviews with 18 people who had suffered unjustified police raids on their homes, restaurants or mosques, or been detained under house arrest for no apparent cause. In the process, these police actions have terrified parents and children and left some adults unable to earn a living. In some cases, judges have harshly condemned the raids, after the fact.

"In one house raid, police broke four of a disabled man's teeth before they realized he wasn't the person they were looking for," the organization reported. "In another case, a single mother's children were transferred to foster care following a raid. Many of those interviewed said they were now scared of the police and have been shunned by their neighbors."

"France has a responsibility to ensure public safety and try to prevent further attacks, but the police have used their new emergency powers in abusive, discriminatory, and unjustified ways," said Izza Leghtas, Western Europe researcher at Human Rights Watch. "This abuse has traumatized families and tarnished reputations, leaving targets feeling like second-class citizens."

Since November, French police have conducted more than 3,200 raids and put about

400 people under house arrest. Yet for all that, prosecutors had initiated only five terrorism-related investigations as of Feb. 2.

“This state of emergency seems to have had relatively limited concrete effects in terms of fighting against terrorism,” commented Nils Muiznieks, the Council of Europe’s human rights commissioner, “but it has on the other hand greatly restricted the exercise of fundamental liberties and weakened certain guarantees of the rule of law.”

French human rights observers note that such heavy-handed tactics may in fact be counterproductive. “These measures are aimed at a specific movement and at very observant Muslims,” said Jacques Toubon, the French human rights ombudsperson. “That can give rise to a feeling of injustice and of defiance towards public authorities.”

Like Washington’s own commitment to fighting an open-ended “war on terrorism,” the French government envisions governing under a state of emergency virtually in perpetuity. Prime Minister Manuel Valls told a reporter the extraordinary powers must remain in effect “until we can get rid of” Islamic State. “As long as the threat is there, we must use all the means,” he said.

France has been increasing police powers for years. In 2013, the legislature quietly passed a law codifying sweeping electronic surveillance powers available to the country’s intelligence agencies, with no judicial review. It passed sweeping new anti-terrorism legislation in 2014 and again in 2015, after the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* magazine.

Yet none of those laws prevented incompetent police from letting known terrorists freely cross European borders to strike last November.

As Leela Jacinto, a reporter for *France 24*, commented, “Even before the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, French anti-terrorism laws were so tight, they didn’t need further tightening, they simply had to be put to better use. Under the controversial 1996 anti-terrorism statute known as . . . ‘terrorist criminal association,’ thousands have been arrested and hundreds convicted. Prosecutors have sought and won convictions not by proving the existence of a terrorist plot, but by simply showing ‘participation in a grouping or an agreement established with a view to the preparation’ of a terrorist act.

“Defense lawyers complain their clients have been declared guilty of ‘address book’ crimes. Worse, this paint-by-numbers scheme only accelerated the flow of young, mostly Muslim, men into notorious French prisons . . . where, ironically, they have associated with hardened criminals-turned-jihadis, emerging from the system more dangerous than they were before they entered.”

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Obama's 'Moderate' Syrian Deception

Exclusive: President Obama, who once called the idea of "moderate" Syrian rebels a "fantasy," has maintained the fiction to conceal the fact that many "moderates" are fighting alongside Al Qaeda's jihadists, an inconvenient truth that is complicating an end to Syria's civil war, explains Gareth Porter.

By Gareth Porter

Secretary of State John Kerry insisted at the Munich Security Conference on Saturday that the agreement with Russia on a temporary halt in the war in Syria can only be carried out if Russia stops its airstrikes against what Kerry is now calling "legitimate opposition groups."

But what Kerry did not say is that the ceasefire agreement would not apply to operations against Al Qaeda's Syrian franchise, the Nusra Front, which both the United States and Russia have recognized as a terrorist organization. That fact is crucial to understand why the Obama administration's reference to "legitimate opposition groups" is a deception intended to mislead public opinion.

The Russian airstrikes in question are aimed at cutting off Aleppo city, which is now the primary center of Nusra's power in Syria, from the Turkish border. To succeed in that aim, Russian, Syrian and Iranian forces are attacking rebel troops deployed in towns all along the routes from Aleppo to the border. Those rebels include units belonging to Nusra, their close ally Ahrar al-Sham, and other armed opposition groups some of whom have gotten weapons from the CIA in the past.

Kerry's language suggests that those other "legitimate opposition groups" are not part of Nusra's military structure but are separate from it both organizationally and physically. But in fact, there is no such separation in either of the crucial provinces of Idlib and Aleppo.

Information from a wide range of sources, including some of those the United States has been explicitly supporting, makes it clear that every armed anti-Assad organization unit in those provinces is engaged in a military structure controlled by Nusra militants. All of these rebel groups fight alongside the Nusra Front and coordinate their military activities with it.

This reality even slips into mainstream U.S. news accounts on occasion, such as Anne Barnard's New York Times article last Saturday about the proposed Syrian cease-fire in which she reported, "With the proviso that the Nusra Front, Al Qaeda's branch in Syria, can still be bombed, Russia puts the United States in a difficult position; the insurgent groups it supports cooperate in some places with the well-armed, well-financed Nusra in what they say is a tactical alliance of necessity against government forces."

At least since 2014 the Obama administration has armed a number of Syrian rebel groups even though it knew the groups were coordinating closely with the Nusra Front, which was simultaneously getting arms from Turkey and Qatar. The strategy called for supplying TOW anti-tank missiles to the "Syrian Revolutionaries Front" (SRF) as the core of a client Syrian army that would be independent of the Nusra Front.

However, when a combined force of Nusra and non-jihadist brigades including the SRF captured the Syrian army base at Wadi al-Deif in December 2014, the truth began to emerge. The SRF and other groups to which the United States had supplied TOW missiles had fought under Nusra's command to capture the base.

And as one of the SRF fighters who participated in the operation, Abu Kumayt, recalled to The New York Times, after the victory only Nusra and its very close ally Ahrar al-Sham were allowed to enter the base. Nusra had allowed the groups supported by the United States to maintain the appearance of independence from Nusra, according to Abu Kumayt, in order to induce the United States to continue the supply of U.S. weapons.

Playing Washington

In other words, Nusra was playing Washington, exploiting the Obama administration's desire to have its own Syrian Army as an instrument for influencing the course of the war. The administration was evidently a willing dupe.

Former U.S. Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford, who had been supporting an aggressive program of arming opposition brigades that had been approved by the CIA, told a January 2015 seminar in Washington, "For a long time we have looked the other way while the Nusra Front and armed groups on the ground, some of

which are getting help from us, have coordinated in military operations against the regime.”

Reflecting the views of some well-placed administration officials, he added, “I think the days of us looking the other way are finished.” But instead of breaking with the deception that the CIA’s hand-picked clients were independent of Nusra, the Obama administration continued to cling to it.

Nusra and its allies were poised to strike the biggest blow against the Assad regime up to the time the capture of Idlib province. Although some U.S.-supported groups participated in the campaign in March and April 2015, the “operations room” planning the campaign was run by Al Qaeda and its close ally Ahrar al Sham.

And before the campaign was launched, Nusra had forced another U.S.-supported group, Harakat Hazm, to disband and took all of its TOW anti-tank missiles.

Furthermore, Saudi Arabia and Qatar were financing the “Army of Conquest,” commanded by Nusra, and were lobbying the administration to support it. U.S. strategy on Syria was then shifting toward a tacit reliance on the jihadists to achieve the U.S. objective of putting sufficient pressure on the Assad regime to force some concessions on Damascus.

But the idea that an independent “moderate” armed opposition still existed and that the United States was basing its policy on those “moderates” was necessary to provide a political fig leaf for the covert and indirect U.S. reliance on Al Qaeda’s Syrian franchise’s military success.

When the fall of Idlib led to the Russian intervention last September, the U.S. immediately resorted to its propaganda line about Russian targeting of the “moderate” armed opposition. It had become a necessary shield for the United States to continue playing a political-diplomatic game in Syria.

As the current Russian-Syrian-Iranian offensive between Aleppo and the Turkish border unfolds, the Obama administration’s stance has been contradicted by fresh evidence of the subordination of non-jihadist forces to the Nusra Front. In late January, Nusra consolidated its role as the primary opposition military force in the eastern part of Aleppo City by sending a huge convoy of 200 vehicles loaded with fighters, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights in London.

BBC reported that “thousands of troops” had just arrived in Aleppo for the coming battle. Ahrar al-Sham confirmed on Feb. 2 that its ally, the Nusra Front, had deployed a large convoy of “reinforcements” to Aleppo. The pro-Assad Beirut daily As-Safir reported that the convoys also included artillery, tanks and armored vehicles, and that Nusra had taken over a number of buildings to serve

as its headquarters and offices.

How Al Qaeda Controls

An assessment published on Saturday by the Institute for the Study of War, which has long advocated more U.S. military assistance to Syrian anti-Assad groups, provides further insights into the Nusra Front's system of control over U.S.-supported groups. One way the jihadist organization maintains that control, according to the study, is Ahrar al Sham's control of the Bab al Hawa border crossing with Turkey, which gives Nusra and Ahrar power over the distribution of supplies from Turkey into Aleppo City and surrounding areas.

ISW points out that another instrument of control is the use of "military operations rooms" in which Nusra and Ahrar al Sham play the dominant role while allocating resources and military roles to lesser military units.

Although the Nusra Front is not listed as part of the "Army of Aleppo" formally announced to combat the Russian offensive, it is hardly credible that it does not hold the primary positions in the operations room for the Aleppo campaign, given the large infusion of Nusra troops into the theater from Idlib and its history in other such operations rooms in the Idlib and Aleppo regions.

Yet another facet of Nusra's power in Aleppo is its control over the main water and power plants in the opposition-controlled districts of the city. But the ultimate source of Nusra's power over U.S.-supported groups is the threat to attack them as agents of the United States and take over their assets. Al Qaeda's franchise "successfully destroyed two U.S.-backed groups in Northern Syria in 2014 and early 2015," ISW recalls, and initiated a campaign last October against one of the remaining U.S.-supported groups, Nour al Din al Zenki.

The official U.S. posture on the current offensive in the Aleppo theater and the proposed ceasefire obscures the fact that a successful Russian-Syrian operation would make it impossible for the external states, such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia, to resupply the Nusra Front and Ahrar al Sham and thus end the military threat to the Syrian government as well as the possibility of Al Qaeda's seizure of power in Damascus.

Russian-Syrian success offers the most realistic prospect for an end to the bloodletting in Syria and would also reduce the likelihood of an eventual Al Qaeda seizure of power in Syria.

The Obama administration certainly understands that fact and has already privately adjusted its diplomatic strategy to take into account the likelihood that the Nusra Front will now be substantially weakened. But it cannot

acknowledge any of that publicly because such a recognition would infuriate many hardliners in Washington who still demand “regime change” in Damascus whatever the risks.

President Obama is under pressure from these domestic critics as well as from Turkey, Saudi Arabia and other GCC allies to oppose any gains by the Russians and the Assad regime as a loss for the United States. And Obama administration must continue to hide the reality that it was complicit in a strategy of arming Nusra in part through the mechanism of arming Washington’s “moderate” clients to achieve leverage on the Syrian regime.

Thus the game of diplomacy and deceptions continues.

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Turkey’s Revival of a Dirty ‘Deep State’

Exclusive: NATO keeps backing Turkey, one of its members, despite its aid to the Islamic State and other jihadists fighting Syria’s secular government – and even though Turkey’s erratic President Erdogan may be leading NATO into a risky showdown with Syria’s Russian allies, writes Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

Turkey’s embattled President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is resurrecting the “deep state” alliance of secret intelligence operatives and extreme rightists that he so notably challenged just a few years ago while putting hundreds of military officers and other opponents on trial for conspiring against Turkish democracy. In a remarkable about-face, Erdogan is now emulating the ruthless tactics of previous authoritarian rulers at the expense of Turkey’s evolution as a liberal state.

Like many of his secular predecessors, Erdogan has reverted to waging an all-out war against radical Kurdish separatists, the PKK. He is dramatically expanding the once discredited National Intelligence Agency, which in years past recruited Mafia criminals and right-wing terrorists to murder Kurdish leaders, left-wing activists and intellectuals. And he appears to be forging an alliance with ultranationalist members of the National Action Party (MHP), who supplied many of the ruthless killers for those murderous operations.

These developments should alarm U.S. and European leaders. They are ominously anti-democratic trends in a country that once promised to meld the best of Western and Near Eastern traditions. They are also helping to drive Turkey's secret alliances with Islamist extremists in Syria and its violent opposition to Kurdish groups that are leading the resistance to ISIS in that country.

Erdogan successfully cultivated a democratic image after his moderate Islamic party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), gained a two-thirds parliamentary majority in the November 2002 elections. Then in 2008, with public support for his party sagging, Erdogan oversaw the mass indictment of more than 200 former military officers, academics, journalists, businessmen and other opponents of the AKP.

The 2,455-page indictment alleged a vast conspiracy by members of an alleged "Ergenekon terrorist organization," named after a mythical place in the Altay Mountains, to destabilize Turkish society and overthrow the government.

The alleged Ergenekon plot drew credibility from an all-too-real alliance of intelligence operatives, criminals and rightist terrorists exposed in the aftermath of the so-called "Susurluk Incident." A car crash in the Turkish town of Susurluk in 1996 connected one of the country's leading heroin traffickers and terrorists with a member of the conservative ruling party, the head of the counterinsurgency police, and the Minister of Interior.

Subsequent investigations linked this "deep state" network to a former NATO program, sometimes known by the name of its Italian version, "Operation Gladio", to foment guerrilla resistance in case of a Soviet occupation of Turkey.

In contrast to the legitimate revelations that grew out of the Susurluk affair, the Ergenekon proceeding at times resembled a Soviet show trial. A court handed down life sentences to a former head of the Turkish military and several top generals, the heads of various intelligence organizations, a prominent secular ultranationalist, secular journalists, and a prominent deputy from a secular opposition party, among others.

A separate proceeding, known as "Sledgehammer," convicted more than 300 secular military officers of involvement in an alleged coup plot against the AKP government in 2003.

Critics accused the Erdogan regime of using the cases to neutralize its potential rivals as part of its broader suppression of political dissent.

"The intimidation and the number of arrests have steadily risen in the last 10 years," Der Spiegel observed in 2013. "Many journalists no longer dare to report what's really happening, authors avoid making public appearances and government

critics need bodyguards. The anti-terrorism law is an effective instrument of power for the government as the supposed terrorist threat is an accusation that's hard to disprove. It plays on a deep-rooted fear among Turks that someone is trying to destabilize and damage the nation."

The two big trials that fanned that fear were based on falsified evidence and a politicized judicial system. The injustice was effectively recognized by Istanbul's high criminal court in 2014 when it freed the former army chief of staff convicted in the Ergenekon case. In March 2015, a prosecutor admitted that evidence submitted in the Sledgehammer case was "fake" and 236 convicted suspects were acquitted.

However, just as Erdogan had used those two cases to purge the Turkish power structure of his secular critics, so he used the discrediting of those cases as an excuse to purge supporters of another rival, the exiled moderate Muslim cleric Fethullah GÃ¼len. Erdogan accused them of terrorism and of creating a "parallel state" to challenge his rule. The crackdown followed judicial actions and news leaks, attributed to GÃ¼len followers, that implicated Erdogan's family and supporters in high-level corruption. As the *New York Times* observed, Erdogan turned his back on those show trials "for the simple reason that the same prosecutors who targeted the military with fake evidence are now going after him."

Now, in a complete reversal of his previous warnings about the dangers of the deep state, Erdogan is actively cultivating the very institutions that were at its core.

For example, the government is planning a 48 percent increase in spending for the National Intelligence Agency (MIT) in 2016, on top of a 419 percent increase over the past decade. The new money is slated to pay for construction of a big new headquarters building and to expand the agency's operations.

According to Turkish expert Pinar Tremblay, "What we are observing here is a national intelligence agency that has become a prominent player in the decision-making process for Turkish politics. [MIT head Hakan] Fidan acts as a shadow foreign minister. He is present in almost all high-level meetings with the president and prime minister. It is an open secret that both the president and the prime minister trust Fidan more than any other bureaucrat."

After MIT trucks were caught in 2013 and 2014 smuggling ammunition, rocket parts, and mortar shells to radical Islamic groups in Syria, Erdogan's allies put police and other officials involved in the raids on trial for allegedly conspiring with GÃ¼len against the government.

A recent report also suggest that Erdogan is also seeking support for his Syrian adventures from members of the National Action Party (MHP), sometimes known as the Grey Wolves. Once openly neo-fascist in ideology, the party figured prominently in terrorist violence in the 1970s and 1980s with backing from military and police officials. Mehmet Ali Agca, the terrorist who tried to assassinate Pope John Paul II in 1981, was a member of the Grey Wolves.

Members of a youth branch of the MHP are reportedly now fighting in Syria to support that country's Turkish ethnic minority, the Turkmen, against Syrian Kurds. (The Turkmen are also being armed by the MIT.) At least one MHP notable was killed recently by a Russian bombing raid; one of the mourners at his funeral was the Turkish gunman who murdered the pilot of the Russian jet shot down by Turkey in November.

A leading Turkish expert on the Grey Wolves, journalist Kemal Can, says they are drawn to supporting the Turkmen less for ideological reasons than because of state recruitment. "I think that, directly or indirectly, the state link is the decisive one," he said. "The ultranationalists are the most fertile pool for secret operations."

Many members of the MHP are also drawn to the cause by their violent opposition to the Kurds and other non-Turkish minority groups.

After PKK militants attacked Turkish soldiers and police last summer and fall, Grey Wolves attacked 140 offices of the HDP, the Peoples' Democratic Party which supports the rights of Kurds and other minorities, according to the leftist Turkish journalist Sungur Savran, setting many offices on fire:

"Ordinary Kurds were hunted on the streets of the cities and towns of the Turkish-dominated western parts of the country, intercity buses stopped and stoned, and Kurdish seasonal workers attacked collectively, their houses and cars burnt down, and they themselves driven away *en masse*."

Such polarizing violence suited the needs of Erdogan's AKP party, which wants to eliminate the HDP from parliament in order to gain the super-majority it needs to revise the constitution to enhance Erdogan's powers as president.

Last September, intriguingly, one leader of the ultranationalist MHP urged restraint against ordinary Kurds, saying that "equating the PKK and our Kurdish-origin siblings is a blind trap" that would ensure wider ethnic conflict. Further, he claimed that groups acting in the name of the Grey Wolves to attack Kurds were actually "Mafia" fronts for President Erdogan.

His claim about the "Mafia" may have been more than metaphorical. Following Erdogan's recent denunciation of hundreds of Turkish academics as "traitors" for

protesting the government's vicious crackdown on Kurdish communities, an ultranationalist organized crime boss who was briefly imprisoned for his alleged role in the Ergenekon conspiracy but is today chummy with Erdogan promised to "take a shower" in "the blood of those so-called intellectuals."

So there you have it: The Erdogan regime has revived an alliance of intelligence officials, right-wing ultranationalists and even organized criminals to crush Kurdish extremism, to cow political critics, and to support radical Islamists in Syria.

The Erdogan regime, once the great scourge of alleged anti-democratic conspirators, has recreated the Turkish deep state as part of a menacing power grab. It represents a direct threat not only to Turkish democracy, but to Turkey's neighbors and NATO allies, who will bear the consequences of Erdogan's ever-more risky, erratic and self-serving policies.

Jonathan Marshall is author or co-author of five books on international affairs, including [The Lebanese Connection: Corruption, Civil War and the International Drug Traffic](#) (Stanford University Press, 2012). Some of his previous articles for Consortiumnews were "[Risky Blowback from Russian Sanctions](#)"; "[Neocons Want Regime Change in Iran](#)"; "[Saudi Cash Wins France's Favor](#)"; "[The Saudis' Hurt Feelings](#)"; "[Saudi Arabia's Nuclear Bluster](#)"; "[The US Hand in the Syrian Mess](#)"; and "[Hidden Origins of Syria's Civil War.](#)"]
