

Citizenfour's Escape to Freedom in Russia

Exclusive: An international community of resistance has formed against pervasive spying by the U.S. National Security Agency with key enclaves in Moscow (with NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden) and in London (with WikiLeaks' Julian Assange), way stations visited by ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern.

By Ray McGovern

In early September in Russia, National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden told me about a documentary entitled "Citizenfour," named after the alias he used when he asked filmmaker Laura Poitras to help him warn Americans about how deeply the NSA had carved away their freedoms.

When we spoke, Snowden seemed more accustomed to his current reality, i.e., still being alive albeit far from home, than he did in October 2013 when I met with him along with fellow whistleblowers Tom Drake, Coleen Rowley and Jesselyn Radack, as we presented him with the Sam Adams Award for Integrity in Intelligence.

A year ago, the four of us spent a long, relaxing evening with Snowden and sensed his lingering wonderment at the irony-suffused skein of events that landed him in Russia, out of reach from the U.S. government's long arm of "justice."

Six days before we gave Snowden the award, former NSA and CIA director Michael Hayden and House Intelligence Committee chair Mike Rogers had openly expressed their view that Snowden deserved to be on the "list," meaning the "capture or kill" list that could have made Snowden the target of a drone strike. When I asked him if he were aware of that recent indignity, he nodded yes with a winsome wince of incredulity.

This September, there was no drone of Damocles hanging over the relaxed lunch that the two of us shared. There were, rather, happier things to discuss. For example, I asked if he were aware that one of his co-workers in Hawaii had volunteered to Andy Greenberg of Forbes Magazine that Snowden was admired by his peers as a man of principle, as well as a highly gifted geek.

The co-worker told Greenberg: "NSA is full of smart people, but Ed ... was in a class of his own. I've never seen anything like it. ... He was given virtually unlimited access to NSA data [because] he could do things nobody else could."

Equally important, the former colleague pointed out that Snowden kept on his

desk a copy of the U. S. Constitution to cite when arguing with co-workers against NSA activities that he thought might be in violation of America's founding document. Greenberg's source conceded that he or she had slowly come to understand that Snowden was trying to do the right thing and that this was very much in character, adding, "I won't call him a hero, but he's sure as hell no traitor."

Snowden spoke of his former co-workers with respect and affection, noting that most of them had family responsibilities, mortgages, etc. burdens he lacked. He told me he was very aware that these realities would make it immeasurably more difficult for them to blow the whistle on NSA's counter-Constitutional activities, even if they were to decide they should. "But somebody had to do it," said Snowden in a decidedly non-heroic tone, "So I guess that would be me."

Following the intelligence world's axiom of "need-to-know," Snowden had been careful to protect his family and Lindsay Mills, his girlfriend, by telling no one of his plans. I found myself thinking long and hard at how difficult that must have been to simply get out of Dodge without a word to those you love.

Perhaps he felt Mills would eventually understand when he explained why it was absolutely necessary in order to achieve his mission and have some chance of staying alive and out of prison. But, not having discussed with her his plans, how could he be sure of that?

And so, learning recently of the interim "happy-ending" arrival of Mills in Russia was like a shot in the arm for me. I thought to myself, it *is* possible to do the right thing, survive and not end up having to live the life of a hermit. Equally important, that reality is now out there for the world to see. What an encouragement to future whistleblowers and to current ones, as well, for that matter.

Snowden was delighted when I told him that Bill Binney, the long-time and highly respected former NSA technical director, had just accepted the Sam Adams Award, which will be presented in 2015. It was Snowden's own revelations that finally freed up Binney and other courageous NSA alumni to let the American public know what they had been trying, through official channels, to tell the overly timid representatives in Washington.

Seeing 'Citizenfour'

Snowden was happy to tell me about the documentary, "Citizenfour," explaining that during his sessions in Hong Kong with Laura Poitras, Glenn Greenwald, and *The Guardian's* Ewen MacAskill, Poitras seemed to have the camera always rolling during the eight days they shared in Hong Kong including during the grand escape

from the hotel. With a broad smile, Snowden said, "Ray, when people see my makeshift disguise, well, it is going to be really hard to argue that this thing was pre-planned!"

All I have seen so far is the trailer, but I have tickets for a showing Friday night when "Citizenfour" opens in Washington and other cities. With Snowden, I figured I could wait to witness the grand escape until I saw the film itself, so I avoided asking him for additional detail. Like: "Don't spoil it for me, Ed."

I was encouraged to read, in one of the movie reviews, that the documentary does allude to the key role played by Julian Assange and WikiLeaks in enabling Snowden's escape. I had long since concluded that WikiLeaks's role and that of Sarah Harrison, in particular, was *the sine qua non* for success. I hope "Citizenfour" gives this key part of the story the prominence it deserves.

I feel it is an equal honor to spend time with Julian Assange in the Ecuadorian embassy whenever I'm in London. In early September, Assange was a welcoming host and we had a long chat over dinner while I was en route to Russia via London and Berlin. (I had been invited to present at the U.S.-Russia Forum in Moscow later last month and stayed there an extra day in order to visit with Snowden.)

I had been unaware of "Citizenfour" before visiting Assange. The film came up spontaneously when I volunteered to him that the safe extrication of Snowden from Hong Kong sits atop my gratitude list of the many things he has accomplished. That drew a very broad smile and some words about the world's most powerful country and intelligence service, "and we still got him out!"

Assange shared how important it was not only to rescue Snowden himself but, in so doing, to provide for potential whistleblowers some real-life proof that it is possible to do the right thing and avoid spending decades in prison where WikiLeaks' most famous source Chelsea Manning now sits. This was among the main reasons why WikiLeaks cashed in so many chips in its successful effort to bring Snowden to safety. It was surely not because Assange expected Snowden to share reportable information with WikiLeaks. He gave none.

Assange was in good spirits and hoping for some break in the Kafkaesque situation in which he has found himself for several years now (receiving asylum in Ecuador's Embassy to avoid arrest in Great Britain and extradition to Sweden for questioning regarding alleged sexual offenses).

A Stop in Berlin

I also planned to spend a few days in Berlin to coincide with the NATO summit in Wales (Sept. 4-5). On Aug. 30, the Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity sent a Memorandum to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, warning her about the

dubious “intelligence” adduced to blame Russia for the troubles in Ukraine. Our memo had some resonance in German and other European media, but I was saddened to find the media in the UK and Germany as co-opted and Putin-bashing as the U.S. media.

It was 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. What I said in my various talks and interviews on NATO’s reneging on its promise to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev not to move NATO one inch eastward, once Germany was reunited, seemed to come as a major revelation to most listeners.

“Really?” was the predominant reaction when I explained that 25 years ago there was a unique, realistic chance for a Europe “whole and free” (in words then used by President George H. W. Bush and Gorbachev) from Portugal to the Urals. Instead, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia was excluded. NATO crept steadily east toward Russia’s border.

And last February, the U.S. and EU orchestrated a coup d’État in Kiev to foster Ukraine’s “European aspirations” to cast its lot with the West and dislodge itself from Russia’s sphere of influence. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“The Whys Behind the Ukraine Crisis.”](#)]

The squandering of a historic chance for lasting peace in Europe remains atop the list of severe disappointments encountered during my professional life. The fact that, to this day, so few seem aware of what happened, and who was and is to blame, is also a major frustration.

In Berlin, consolation and affirmation came in renewing friendships there and getting to know others many of them expatriates. First and foremost among the latter is Sarah Harrison, the main figure in executing WikiLeaks’s plan to get Snowden out of Hong Kong and onward to Latin America via Moscow, where his planned journey has so far stalled.

Because the U.S. Justice Department charged Snowden with espionage and the U.S. State Department revoked his passport, his stay in Moscow ended up being quite a long one. But Harrison stayed on for as long as seemed necessary to accompany and support Snowden, as well as to be able to testify to the fact that the Russians were not using anything like “enhanced interrogation techniques” on him.

I had last seen Harrison in Moscow at the Sam Adams Award presentation to Snowden; it was great to have a chance to chat with her over a long lunch.

Flying home from Moscow, having had lunch there with Edward Snowden, lunch in Berlin with Sarah Harrison, and dinner with Julian Assange in that little piece of Ecuadorian territory in London, what came first to mind was Polonius’s advice

to Laertes: "Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried, grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel."

But then, above the din of the jet engines, came a more familiar and more insistent voice. It was that of Jane Fahey, my Irish grandmother, who for some reason seemed 33,000 feet closer than usual: "Show me your company, and I'll tell you who you are!" she would say, often very often. I think my grandmother would be as pleased with my "company" as I am and as grateful.

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. Co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS), he served as an Army infantry/intelligence officer and then as a CIA analyst from the administration of John Kennedy to that of George H. W. Bush. He is also co-founder of Sam Associates for Integrity in Intelligence.

Germans Clear Russia in MH-17 Case

Exclusive: For months, Western governments and media have accused Russia of supplying the anti-aircraft missile that brought down Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 killing 298 people. But now German intelligence has reportedly determined the missile came from a Ukrainian military base, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

The West's case blaming Russia for the shoot-down of a Malaysia Airlines plane over Ukraine last July appears to be crumbling as the German foreign intelligence agency has concluded that the anti-aircraft missile battery involved came from a Ukrainian military base, according to [a report](#) by the German newsmagazine Der Spiegel.

The Obama administration and other Western governments have pointed the finger of blame at Russia for supposedly supplying a sophisticated BUK missile system to ethnic Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine who then allegedly used the weapon on July 17 to shoot down what they thought was a Ukrainian military plane but turned out to be Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, killing all 298 people onboard.

The Russians denied providing the rebels with the weapon and the rebels denied shooting down the plane. But the tragedy gave the U.S. State Department the emotional leverage to get the European Union to impose tougher economic sanctions on Russia, touching off a trade war that has edged Europe toward a new recession.

But now the narrative has shifted. The German intelligence agency, the Bundesnachrichtendienst or BND, asserted that while it believes rebels were responsible for shooting down the plane, they supposedly did so with an anti-aircraft battery captured from a Ukrainian military base, according to Der Spiegel.

The BND also concluded that photos supplied by the Ukrainian government about the MH-17 tragedy “have been manipulated,” Der Spiegel reported. And, the BND disputed Russian government claims that a Ukrainian fighter jet had been flying close to MH-17 just before it crashed, the magazine said.

None of the BND’s evidence to support its conclusions has been made public – and I was subsequently told by a European official that the evidence was not as conclusive as the magazine article depicted.

Der Spiegel said the information given to members of a parliamentary committee on Oct. 8 included satellite images and other photography. What’s less clear, however, is how the BND could determine the precise command-and-control of the anti-aircraft missile system amid the chaotic military situation that existed in eastern Ukraine last July.

At the time, the Ukrainian army and allied militias were mounting an offensive against ethnic Russian rebels who were resisting a U.S.-backed coup regime that ousted elected President Viktor Yanukovich last February, touching off what quickly became a nasty civil war.

Spearheading Kiev’s summer offensive were pro-government militias, some of which were filled with neo-Nazi extremists and financed by Ukrainian billionaire oligarchs including Ihor Kolomoisky, who had been appointed governor of the southeastern Dnipropetrovsk Region. The ethnic Russian rebels also were a disorganized lot with poor command and control.

Rushing to Anti-Russian Judgment

Yet, the Obama administration was quick to pin the blame for the MH-17 crash on Russia and the rebels. Just three days after the crash, Secretary of State John Kerry went on all five Sunday talk shows fingering Russia and the rebels and citing evidence provided by the Ukrainian government through social media.

On NBC’s “Meet the Press,” David Gregory asked, “Are you bottom-lining here that Russia provided the weapon?”

Kerry: “There’s a story today confirming that, but we have not within the Administration made a determination. But it’s pretty clear when there’s a build-up of extraordinary circumstantial evidence. I’m a former prosecutor. I’ve tried

cases on circumstantial evidence; it's powerful here." [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Kerry's Latest Reckless Rush to Judgment.](#)"]

But some U.S. intelligence analysts offered conflicting assessments. After Kerry's TV round-robin, the Los Angeles Times [reported](#) on a U.S. intelligence briefing given to several mainstream U.S. news outlets. The story said, "U.S. intelligence agencies have so far been unable to determine the nationalities or identities of the crew that launched the missile. U.S. officials said it was possible the SA-11 [anti-aircraft missile] was launched by a defector from the Ukrainian military who was trained to use similar missile systems." [See Consortiumnews.com's "[The Mystery of a Ukrainian 'Defector,'](#)"]

A source who was briefed by U.S. intelligence analysts told me that some analysts had concluded that the rebels and Russia were likely not at fault and that it appeared Ukrainian government forces were to blame, although possibly a unit operating outside the direct command of Ukraine's top officials.

The source specifically said the U.S. intelligence evidence did not implicate Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko or Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk but rather suggested an extremist element of the armed forces funded by one of Ukraine's oligarchs.

Regarding the alleged Russian role, the source said the U.S. analysts had found no evidence that the Russian government had given the rebels a BUK missile system, which would be capable of shooting down a commercial airliner at 33,000 feet, the altitude of MH-17.

According to the Der Spiegel story, the BND reached the same conclusion, that Russia was not the source of the missile battery. But the BND and these U.S. analysts apparently differ on who they suspect fired the fateful missile. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Flight 17 Shoot-down Scenario Shifts](#)" and "[Was Putin Targeted for Mid-air Assassination?](#)"]

What has been curious about the handling of the MH-17 case is the failure of the Obama administration and other Western governments to present whatever evidence they have, whether satellite, electronic or telephonic so the investigation can proceed more quickly in determining who was responsible.

By withholding this evidence for nearly three months, the West has benefited from keeping alive the anti-Russian propaganda blaming Moscow and President Vladimir Putin for the tragedy but the secrecy has given the perpetrators time to scatter and cover their tracks.

With Der Spiegel's report, it's now clearer why the delay and the secrecy. If the missile responsible for bringing down MH-17 came from a Ukrainian military

base not from the Russian government then a very potent anti-Putin propaganda theme would be neutralized. More attention also would focus on whether the missile battery was really under the control of a rebel unit, as the BND suggests or was in the hands of anti-rebel extremists.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). For a limited time, you also can order Robert Parry's trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).

The Two Sides of the Berlin Wall

Historical narratives are often boiled down to simplistic and self-serving storylines that influence how people see the world, when a more sophisticated and fair-minded account would offer a different perspective, as William Blum writes about the Berlin Wall.

By William Blum

November 9 will mark the 25th anniversary of the tearing down of the Berlin Wall. The extravagant hoopla began months ago in Berlin. In the United States we can expect all the Cold War clichés about The Free World vs. Communist Tyranny to be trotted out and the simple tale of how the wall came to be will be repeated: In 1961, the East Berlin communists built a wall to keep their oppressed citizens from escaping to West Berlin and freedom. Why? Because commies don't like people to be free, to learn the "truth." What other reason could there have been?

First of all, before the wall went up in 1961 thousands of East Germans had been commuting to the West for jobs each day and then returning to the East in the evening; many others went back and forth for shopping or other reasons. So they were clearly not being held in the East against their will. Why then was the wall built? There were two major reasons:

- 1) The West was bedeviling the East with a vigorous campaign of recruiting East German professionals and skilled workers, who had been educated at the expense of the Communist government. This eventually led to a serious labor and production crisis in the East. As one indication of this, the *New York*

Times reported in 1963: "West Berlin suffered economically from the wall by the loss of about 60,000 skilled workmen who had commuted daily from their homes in East Berlin to their places of work in West Berlin."

It should be noted that in 1999, *USA Today* reported: "When the Berlin Wall crumbled [1989], East Germans imagined a life of freedom where consumer goods were abundant and hardships would fade. Ten years later, a remarkable 51% say they were happier with communism."

Earlier polls would likely have shown even more than 51% expressing such a sentiment, for in the ten years many of those who remembered life in East Germany with some fondness had passed away; although even 10 years later, in 2009, the *Washington Post* could report: "Westerners [in Berlin] say they are fed up with the tendency of their eastern counterparts to wax nostalgic about communist times."

It was in the post-unification period that a new Russian and Eastern Europe proverb was born: "Everything the Communists said about Communism was a lie, but everything they said about capitalism turned out to be the truth."

It should be further noted that the division of Germany into two states in 1949 setting the stage for 40 years of Cold War hostility was an American decision, not a Soviet one.

2) During the 1950s, American cold warriors in West Germany instituted a crude campaign of sabotage and subversion against East Germany designed to throw that country's economic and administrative machinery out of gear. The CIA and other U.S. intelligence and military services recruited, equipped, trained and financed German activist groups and individuals, of West and East, to carry out actions which ran the spectrum from juvenile delinquency to terrorism; anything to make life difficult for the East German people and weaken their support of the government; anything to make the commies look bad.

It was a remarkable undertaking. The United States and its agents used explosives, arson, short circuiting, and other methods to damage power stations, shipyards, canals, docks, public buildings, gas stations, public transportation, bridges, etc; they derailed freight trains, seriously injuring workers; burned 12 cars of a freight train and destroyed air pressure hoses of others; used acids to damage vital factory machinery; put sand in the turbine of a factory, bringing it to a standstill; set fire to a tile-producing factory; promoted work slow-downs in factories; killed 7,000 cows of a co-operative dairy through poisoning; added soap to powdered milk destined for East German schools; were in possession, when arrested, of a large quantity of the poison *cantharidin* with which it was planned to produce poisoned cigarettes to kill leading East

Germans; set off stink bombs to disrupt political meetings; attempted to disrupt the World Youth Festival in East Berlin by sending out forged invitations, false promises of free bed and board, false notices of cancellations, etc.; carried out attacks on participants with explosives, firebombs, and tire-puncturing equipment; forged and distributed large quantities of food ration cards to cause confusion, shortages and resentment; sent out forged tax notices and other government directives and documents to foster disorganization and inefficiency within industry and unions all this and much more.

The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, of Washington, DC, conservative cold warriors, in one of their Cold War International History Project Working Papers (#58, p.9) states: "The open border in Berlin exposed the GDR [East Germany] to massive espionage and subversion and, as the two documents in the appendices show, its closure gave the Communist state greater security."

Throughout the 1950s, the East Germans and the Soviet Union repeatedly lodged complaints with the Soviets' erstwhile allies in the West and with the United Nations about specific sabotage and espionage activities and called for the closure of the offices in West Germany they claimed were responsible, and for which they provided names and addresses. Their complaints fell on deaf ears.

Inevitably, the East Germans began to tighten up entry into the country from the West, leading eventually to the infamous wall. However, even after the wall was built there was regular, albeit limited, legal emigration from east to west. In 1984, for example, East Germany allowed 40,000 people to leave. In 1985, East German newspapers claimed that more than 20,000 former citizens who had settled in the West wanted to return home after becoming disillusioned with the capitalist system. The West German government said that 14,300 East Germans had gone back over the previous 10 years.

Let's also not forget that while East Germany completely denazified, in West Germany for more than a decade after the war, the highest government positions in the executive, legislative and judicial branches contained numerous former and "former" Nazis.

Finally, it must be remembered, that Eastern Europe became communist because Hitler, with the approval of the West, used it as a highway to reach the Soviet Union to wipe out Bolshevism forever, and that the Russians in World War I and II, lost about 40 million people because the West had used this highway to invade Russia. It should not be surprising that after World War II the Soviet Union was determined to close down the highway.

For an additional and very interesting view of the Berlin Wall anniversary, see the article "[Humpty Dumpty and the Fall of Berlin's Wall](#)" by Victor Grossman.

Grossman (née Steve Wechsler) fled the U.S. Army in Germany under pressure from McCarthy-era threats and became a journalist and author during his years in the (East) German Democratic Republic. He still lives in Berlin and mails out his “Berlin Bulletin” on German developments on an irregular basis. You can subscribe to it at wechsler_grossman@yahoo.de.

His autobiography: *Crossing the River: a Memoir of the American Left, the Cold War and Life in East Germany* was published by University of Massachusetts Press. He claims to be the only person in the world with diplomas from both Harvard University and Karl Marx University in Leipzig.

William Blum is an author, historian, and renowned critic of U.S. foreign policy. He is the author of *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* and *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*, among others. [This article originally appeared at the Anti-Empire Report, <http://williamblum.org/> .]

WPost's Slimy Assault on Gary Webb

Exclusive: The movie, “Kill the Messenger,” portrays the mainstream U.S. news media as craven for destroying Gary Webb rather than expanding on his investigation of the Contra-cocaine scandal. So, now one of those “journalists” is renewing the character assassination of Webb, notes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Jeff Leen, the Washington Post's assistant managing editor for investigations, begins [his renewed attack](#) on the late Gary Webb's Contra-cocaine reporting with a falsehood.

Leen insists that there is a journalism dictum that “an extraordinary claim requires extraordinary proof.” But Leen must know that it is not true. Many extraordinary claims, such as assertions in 2002-03 that Iraq was hiding arsenals of WMDs, were published as flat-fact without “extraordinary proof” or any real evidence at all, including by Leen's colleagues at the Washington Post.

A different rule actually governs American journalism that journalists need “extraordinary proof” if a story puts the U.S. government or an “ally” in a negative light but pretty much anything goes when criticizing an “enemy.”

If, for instance, the Post wanted to accuse the Syrian government of killing

civilians with Sarin gas or blame Russian-backed rebels for the shoot-down of a civilian airliner over Ukraine, any scraps of proof no matter how dubious would be good enough (as was the actual case in 2013 and 2014, respectively).

However, if new evidence undercut those suspicions and shifted the blame to people on “the U.S. side” say, the Syrian rebels and the Ukrainian government then the standards of proof suddenly skyrocket beyond reach. So what you get is not “responsible” journalism as Leen tries to suggest but hypocrisy and propaganda. One set of rules for the goose and another set for the gander.

The Contra-Cocaine Case

Or to go back to the Contra-cocaine scandal that Brian Barger and I first exposed for the Associated Press in 1985: If we were writing that the leftist Nicaraguan Sandinista government the then U.S. “enemy” was shipping cocaine to the United States, any flimsy claim would have sufficed. But the standard of proof ratcheted up when the subject of our story was cocaine smuggling by President Ronald Reagan’s beloved Contras.

In other words, the real dictum is that there are two standards, double standards, something that a careerist like Leen knows in his gut but doesn’t want you to know. All the better to suggest that Gary Webb was guilty of violating some noble principle of journalism.

But Leen is wrong in another way because there was “extraordinary proof” establishing that the Contras were implicated in drug trafficking and that the Reagan administration was looking the other way.

When Barger and I wrote the first story about Contra-cocaine trafficking almost three decades ago, we already had “extraordinary proof,” including documents from Costa Rica, statements by Contras and Contra backers, and admissions from officials in the Drug Enforcement Administration and Ronald Reagan’s National Security Council staff.

However, Leen seems to dismiss our work as nothing but getting “tips” about Contra-cocaine trafficking as if Barger and I were like the hacks at the Washington Post and the New York Times who wait around for authorized handouts from the U.S. government.

Following the Money

Barger and I actually were looking for something different when we encountered the evidence on Contra-cocaine trafficking. We were trying to figure out how the Contras were sustaining themselves in the field after Congress cut off the CIA’s financing for their war.

We were, in the old-fashioned journalistic parlance, “following the money.” The problem was the money led, in part, to the reality that all the major Contra organizations were collaborating with drug traffickers.

Besides our work in the mid-1980s, Sen. John Kerry’s follow-on Contra-cocaine investigation added substantially more evidence. Yet Leen and his cohorts apparently felt no need to pursue the case any further or even give respectful attention to Kerry’s official findings.

Indeed, when Kerry’s report was issued in April 1989, the Washington Post ran a dismissive story by Michael Isikoff buried deep inside the paper. Newsweek dubbed Kerry “a randy conspiracy buff.” In Leen’s new article attacking Gary Webb – published on the front-page of the Washington Post’s Sunday Outlook section – Leen just says:

“After an exhaustive three-year investigation, the committee’s report concluded that CIA officials were aware of the smuggling activities of some of their charges who supported the contras, but it stopped short of implicating the agency directly in drug dealing. That seemed to be the final word on the matter.”

But why was it the “final word”? Why didn’t Leen and others who had missed the scandal as it was unfolding earlier in the decade at least try to build on Kerry’s findings. After all, these were now official U.S. government records. Wasn’t that “extraordinary” enough?

In this context, Leen paints himself as the true investigative journalist who knew the inside story of the Contra-cocaine tale from the beginning. He wrote: “As an investigative reporter covering the drug trade for the Miami Herald, I wrote about the explosion of cocaine in America in the 1980s and 1990s, and the role of Colombia’s Medellin Cartel in fueling it.

“Beginning in 1985, journalists started pursuing tips about the CIA’s role in the drug trade. Was the agency allowing cocaine to flow into the United States as a means to fund its secret war supporting the contra rebels in Nicaragua? Many journalists, including me, chased that story from different angles, but the extraordinary proof was always lacking.”

Again, what Leen says is not true. Leen makes no reference to the groundbreaking AP story in 1985 or other disclosures in the ensuing years. He just insists that “the extraordinary proof” was lacking – which it may have been for him given his lackluster abilities. He then calls the final report of Kerry’s investigation the “final word.”

But Leen doesn’t explain why he and his fellow mainstream journalists were so

incurious about this major scandal that they would remain passive even in the wake of a Senate investigation. It's also not true that Kerry's report was the "final word" prior to Webb reviving the scandal in 1996.

Government Witnesses

In 1991, during the narcotics trafficking trial of Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega, the U.S. government itself presented witnesses who connected the Contras to the Medellin cartel.

Indeed, after testimony by Medellin cartel kingpin Carlos Lehder about his \$10 million contribution to the Contras, the Washington Post wrote in a Nov. 27, 1991 editorial that "The Kerry hearings didn't get the attention they deserved at the time" and that "The Noriega trial brings this sordid aspect of the Nicaraguan engagement to fresh public attention."

But the Post offered its readers no explanation for why Kerry's hearings had been largely ignored, with the Post itself a leading culprit in this journalistic misfeasance. Nor did the Post and the other leading newspapers use the opening created by the Noriega trial to do anything to rectify their past neglect.

In other words, it didn't seem to matter how much "extraordinary proof" the Washington Post or Jeff Leen had. Nothing would be sufficient to report seriously on the Contra-cocaine scandal, not even when the U.S. government vouched for the evidence.

So, Leen is trying to fool you when he presents himself as a "responsible journalist" weighing the difficult evidentiary choices. He's just the latest hack to go after Gary Webb, which has become urgent again for the mainstream media in the face of "Kill the Messenger," a new movie about Webb's ordeal.

What Leen won't face up to is that the tag-team destruction of Gary Webb in 1996-97 by the Washington Post, the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times represented one of the most shameful episodes in the history of American journalism.

The Big Papers tore down an honest journalist to cover up their own cowardly failure to investigate and expose a grave national security crime, the Reagan administration's tolerance for and protection of drug trafficking into the United States by the CIA's client Contra army.

This journalistic failure occurred even though the Associated Press far from a radical news outlet and a Senate investigation (not to mention the Noriega trial) had charted the way.

Leen's Assault

Contrary to Leen's column, "Kill the Messenger" is actually a fairly honest portrayal of what happened when Webb exposed the consequences of the Contra cocaine smuggling after the drugs reached the United States. One channel fed into an important Los Angeles supply chain that produced crack.

But Leen tells you that "The Hollywood version of [Webb's] story, a truth-teller persecuted by the cowardly and craven mainstream media, is pure fiction."

He then lauds the collaboration of the Big Three newspapers in destroying Webb and creating such enormous pressure on Webb's newspaper, the San Jose Mercury News, that the executive editor Jerry Ceppos threw his own reporter under the bus. To Leen, this disgraceful behavior represented the best of American journalism.

Leen wrote: "The New York Times, The Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times, in a rare show of unanimity, all wrote major pieces knocking the story down for its overblown claims and undernourished reporting.

"Gradually, the Mercury News backed away from Webb's scoop. The paper transferred him to its Cupertino bureau and did an internal review of his facts and his methods. Jerry Ceppos, the Mercury News's executive editor, wrote a piece concluding that the story did not meet the newspaper's standards, a courageous stance, I thought."

"Courageous"? What an astounding characterization of Ceppos's act of career cowardice.

But Leen continues by explaining his role in the Webb takedown. After all, Leen was then the drug expert at the Miami Herald, which like the San Jose Mercury News was a Knight Ridder newspaper. Leen says his editors sought his opinion about Webb's "Dark Alliance" series.

Though acknowledging that he was "envious" of Webb's story when it appeared in 1996, Leen writes that he examined it and found it wanting, supposedly because of alleged overstatements. He proudly asserts that because of his critical analysis, the Miami Herald never published Webb's series.

But Leen goes further. He falsely characterizes the U.S. government's later admissions contained in inspector general reports by the CIA and Justice Department. If Leen had bothered to read the reports thoroughly, he would have realized that the reports actually establish that Webb and indeed Kerry, Barger and I grossly *understated* the seriousness of the Contra-cocaine problem which began at the start of the Contra movement in the early 1980s and lasted through

the decade until the end of the war.

Leen apparently assumes that few Americans will take the trouble to study and understand what the reports said. That is why I published a lengthy account of the U.S. government's admissions both after the reports were published in 1998 and as "Kill the Messenger" was hitting the theaters in October. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[The Sordid Contra-Cocaine Saga.](#)"]

Playing It Safe

Instead of diving into the reeds of the CIA and DOJ reports, Leen does what he and his mainstream colleagues have done for the past three decades, try to minimize the seriousness of the Reagan administration tolerating cocaine trafficking by its Contra clients and even obstructing official investigations that threatened to expose this crime of state.

Instead, to Leen, the only important issue is whether Gary Webb's story was perfect. But no journalistic product is perfect. There are always more details that a reporter would like to have, not to mention compromises with editors over how a story is presented. And, on a complex story, there are always some nuances that could have been explained better. That is simply the reality of journalism, the so-called first draft of history.

But Leen pretends that it is the righteous thing to destroy a reporter who is not perfect in his execution of a difficult story and that Gary Webb thus deserved to be banished from his profession for life, a cruel punishment that impoverished Webb and ultimately drove him to suicide in 2004.

But if Leen is correct that a reporter who takes on a very tough story and doesn't get every detail precisely correct should be ruined and disgraced what does he tell his Washington Post colleague Bob Woodward, whose heroic Watergate reporting included an error about whether a claim regarding who controlled the White House slush fund was made before a grand jury?

While Woodward and his colleague Carl Bernstein were right about the substance, they were wrong about its presentation to a grand jury. Does Leen really believe that Woodward and Bernstein should have been drummed out of journalism for that mistake? Instead, they were lionized as heroes of investigative journalism despite the error as they should have been.

Yet, when Webb exposed what was arguably an even worse crime of state the Reagan administration turning a blind eye to the importation of tons of cocaine into the United States Leen thinks any abuse of Webb is justified because his story wasn't perfect.

Those two divergent judgments on how Woodward's mistake was understandably excused and how Webb's imperfections were never forgiven speak volumes about what has happened to the modern profession of journalism at least in the mainstream U.S. media. In reality, Leen's insistence on perfection and "extraordinary proof" is just a dodge to rationalize letting well-connected criminals and their powerful accomplices off the hook.

In the old days, the journalistic goal was to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable," but the new rule appears to be: "any standard of proof works when condemning the weak or the despised but you need unachievable 'extraordinary proof' if you're writing about the strong and the politically popular."

Who Is Unfit?

Leen adds a personal reflection on Webb as somehow not having the proper temperament to be an investigative reporter. Leen wrote:

"After Webb was transferred to Cupertino [in disgrace], I debated him at a conference of the Investigative Reporters and Editors organization in Phoenix in June 1997. He was preternaturally calm. While investigative journalists are usually bundles of insecurities and questions and skepticism, he brushed off any criticism and admitted no error. When asked how I felt about it all, I said I felt sorry for him. I still feel that way."

It's interesting and sadly typical that while Leen chastises Webb for not admitting error, Leen offers no self-criticism of himself for missing what even the CIA has now admitted, that the Contras were tied up in the cocaine trade. Doesn't an institutional confession by the CIA's inspector general constitute "extraordinary proof"?

Also, since the CIA's inspector general's report included substantial evidence of Contra-cocaine trafficking running through Miami, shouldn't Leen offer some *mea culpa* about missing these serious crimes that were going on right under his nose in his city and on his beat? What sort of reporter is "preternaturally calm" about failing to do his job right and letting the public suffer as Leen did?

Perhaps all one needs to know about the sorry state of today's mainstream journalism is that Jeff Leen is the Washington Post's assistant managing editor for investigations and Gary Webb is no longer with us.

[To learn how you can hear a December 1996 joint appearance at which Robert Parry and Gary Webb discuss their reporting, [click here.](#)]

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). For a limited time, you also can order Robert Parry's trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).

Shaping the Vietnam Narrative

Controlling the narrative is a key tool for propagandists who realize that how people understand a foreign conflict goes a long way toward determining their support or opposition. So, the U.S. government's sanitizing of the Vietnam War is not just about history, but the present, as Marjorie Cohn writes.

By Marjorie Cohn

For many years after the Vietnam War, we enjoyed the "Vietnam syndrome," in which U.S. presidents hesitated to launch substantial military attacks on other countries. They feared intense opposition akin to the powerful movement that helped bring an end to the war in Vietnam. But in 1991, at the end of the Gulf War, George H.W. Bush declared, "By God, we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all!"

With George W. Bush's wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, and Barack Obama's drone wars in seven Muslim-majority countries and his escalating wars in Iraq and Syria, we have apparently moved beyond the Vietnam syndrome. By planting disinformation in the public realm, the government has built support for its recent wars, as it did with Vietnam.

Now the Pentagon is planning to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War by launching a \$30 million program to rewrite and sanitize its history. Replete with a [fancy interactive website](#), the effort is aimed at teaching schoolchildren a revisionist history of the war. The program is focused on honoring our service members who fought in Vietnam. But conspicuously absent from the website is a description of the antiwar movement, at the heart of which was the GI movement.

Thousands of GIs participated in the antiwar movement. Many felt betrayed by their government. They established coffee houses and underground newspapers where they shared information about resistance. During the course of the war,

more than 500,000 soldiers deserted. The strength of the rebellion of ground troops caused the military to shift to an air war.

Ultimately, the war claimed the lives of 58,000 Americans. Untold numbers were wounded and returned with post-traumatic stress disorder. In an astounding statistic, more Vietnam veterans have committed suicide than were killed in the war.

Millions of Americans, many of us students on college campuses, marched, demonstrated, spoke out, sang and protested against the war. Thousands were arrested and some, at Kent State and Jackson State, were killed. The military draft and images of dead Vietnamese galvanized the movement.

On Nov. 15, 1969, in what was the largest protest demonstration in Washington, DC, at that time, 250,000 people marched on the nation's capital, demanding an end to the war. Yet the Pentagon's website merely refers to it as a "massive protest."

But Americans weren't the only ones dying. Between 2 and 3 million Indochinese – in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia – were killed. War crimes – such as the My Lai massacre – were common. In 1968, U.S. soldiers slaughtered 500 unarmed old men, women and children in the Vietnamese village of My Lai. Yet the Pentagon website refers only to the "My Lai Incident," despite the fact that it is customarily referred to as a massacre.

One of the most shameful legacies of the Vietnam War is the U.S. military's use of the deadly defoliant Agent Orange/dioxin. The military sprayed it unsparingly over much of Vietnam's land. An estimated 3 million Vietnamese still suffer the effects of those deadly chemical defoliants. Tens of thousands of U.S. soldiers were also affected. It has caused birth defects in hundreds of thousands of children, both in Vietnam and the United States. It is currently affecting the second and third generations of people directly exposed to Agent Orange decades ago.

Certain cancers, diabetes, and spina bifida and other serious birth defects can be traced to Agent Orange exposure. In addition, the chemicals destroyed much of the natural environment of Vietnam; the soil in many "hot spots" near former U.S. army bases remains contaminated.

In the Paris Peace Accords signed in 1973, the Nixon administration pledged to contribute \$3 billion toward healing the wounds of war and the post-war reconstruction of Vietnam. That promise remains unfulfilled.

Despite the continuing damage and injury wrought by Agent Orange, the Pentagon website makes scant mention of "Operation Ranch Hand." It says that from 1961 to

1971, the U.S. sprayed 18 million gallons of chemicals over 20 percent of South Vietnam's jungles and 36 percent of its mangrove forests. But the website does not cite the devastating effects of that spraying.

The incomplete history contained on the Pentagon website stirred more than 500 veterans of the U.S. peace movement during the Vietnam era to sign a petition to Lt. Gen. Claude M. "Mick" Kicklighter. It asks that the official program "include viewpoints, speakers and educational materials that represent a full and fair reflection of the issues which divided our country during the war in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia."

The petition cites the "many thousands of veterans" who opposed the war, the "draft refusals of many thousands of young Americans," the "millions who exercised their rights as American citizens by marching, praying, organizing moratoriums, writing letters to Congress," and "those who were tried by our government for civil disobedience or who died in protests."

And, the petition says, "very importantly, we cannot forget the millions of victims of the war, both military and civilian, who died in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, nor those who perished or were hurt in its aftermath by land mines, unexploded ordnance, Agent Orange and refugee flight."

Antiwar activists who signed the petition include Tom Hayden and Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg. "All of us remember that the Pentagon got us into this war in Vietnam with its version of the truth," Hayden said in an interview with The New York Times. "If you conduct a war, you shouldn't be in charge of narrating it," he added.

Veterans for Peace (VFP) is organizing an alternative commemoration of the Vietnam War. "One of the biggest concerns for us," VFP executive director Michael McPhearson told the Times, "is that if a full narrative is not remembered, the government will use the narrative it creates to continue to conduct wars around the world – as a propaganda tool."

Indeed, just as Lyndon B. Johnson used the manufactured Tonkin Gulf incident as a pretext to escalate the Vietnam War, George W. Bush relied on mythical weapons of mass destruction to justify his war on Iraq, and the "war on terror" to justify his invasion of Afghanistan. And Obama justifies his drone wars by citing national security considerations, even though he creates more enemies of the United States as he kills thousands of civilians.

ISIS and Khorasan (which no one in Syria heard of until about three weeks ago) are the new enemies Obama is using to justify his wars in Iraq and Syria, although he admits they pose no imminent threat to the United States. The

Vietnam syndrome has been replaced by the “Permanent War.”

It is no cliché that those who ignore history are bound to repeat it. Unless we are provided an honest accounting of the disgraceful history of the U.S. war on Vietnam, we will be ill equipped to protest the current and future wars conducted in our name.

Marjorie Cohn is a professor at Thomas Jefferson School of Law and former president of the National Lawyers Guild. A veteran of the Stanford anti-Vietnam War movement, she is co-author (with Kathleen Gilberd) of Rules of Disengagement: The Politics and Honor of Military Dissent. Her latest book, Drones and Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral and Geopolitical Issues, will be published in October. She is also co-coordinator of the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief & Responsibility Campaign. Copyright, Truthout.org. Reprinted with permission.

A Mysterious Iran-Nuke Document

A mysterious document has been used for a half dozen years to derail nuclear talks with Iran, but its origins remain dubious and one expert says it’s been used to take international inspectors “for a ride,” as Gareth Porter reports for Inter Press Service.

By Gareth Porter

Western diplomats have reportedly faulted Iran in recent weeks for failing to provide the International Atomic Energy Agency with information on experiments on high explosives intended to produce a nuclear weapon, according to an intelligence document the IAEA is investigating. But the document not only remains unverified but can only be linked to Iran by a far-fetched official account marked by a series of coincidences related to a foreign scientist that that are highly suspicious.

The original appearance of the document in early 2008, moreover, was not only conveniently timed to support Israel’s attack on a U.S. National Intelligence Estimate on Iran in December 2007 that was damaging to Israeli interests, but was leaked to the news media with a message that coincided with the current Israeli argument. The IAEA has long touted the document, which came from an unidentified member state, as key evidence justifying suspicion that Iran has covered up past nuclear weapons work.

In its September 2008 report the IAEA said the document describes

“experimentation in connection with symmetrical initiation of a hemispherical high explosive charge suitable for an implosion type nuclear device.” But an official Iranian communication to the IAEA Secretariat challenged its authenticity, declaring, “There is no evidence or indication in this document regarding its linkage to Iran or its preparation by Iran.” The IAEA has never responded to the Iranian communication.

The story of the high explosives document and related intelligence published in the November 2011 IAEA report raises more questions about the document than it answers. The report said the document describes the experiments as being monitored with “large numbers of optical fiber cables” and cited intelligence that the experiments had been assisted by a foreign expert said to have worked in his home country’s nuclear weapons program.

The individual to whom the report referred, Ukrainian scientist Vyacheslav Danilenko, was not a nuclear weapons expert, however, but a specialist on nanodiamond synthesis. Danilenko had lectured on that subject in Iran from 2000 to 2005 and had co-authored a professional paper on the use of fiber optic cables to monitor explosive shock waves in 1992, which was available online.

Those facts presented the opportunity for a foreign intelligence service to create a report on high explosives experiments that would suggest a link to nuclear weapons as well as to Danilenko. Danilenko’s open-source publication could help convince the IAEA Safeguards Department of the authenticity of the document, which would otherwise have been missing.

Even more suspicious, soon after the appearance of the high explosives document, the same state that had turned it over to the IAEA claimed to have intelligence on a large cylinder at Parchin suitable for carrying out the high explosives experiments described in the document, according to the 2011 IAEA report. And it identified Danilenko as the designer of the cylinder, again basing the claim on an open-source publication that included a sketch of a cylinder he had designed in 1999-2000.

The whole story thus depended on two very convenient intelligence finds within a very short time, both of which were linked to a single individual and his open source publications. Furthermore, the cylinder Danilenko sketched and discussed in the publication was explicitly designed for nanodiamonds production, not for bomb-making experiments.

Robert Kelley, who was the chief of IAEA teams in Iraq, has observed that the IAEA account of the installation of the cylinder at a site in Parchin by March 2000 is implausible, since Danilenko was on record as saying he was still in the process of designing it in 2000. And Kelley, an expert on nuclear weapons, has

pointed out that the cylinder would have been unnecessary for “multipoint initiation” experiments.

“We’ve been taken for a ride on this whole thing,” Kelley told IPS.

The document surfaced in early 2008, under circumstances pointing to an Israeli role. An article in the May 2008 issue of Jane’s International Defence Review, dated March 14, 2008, referred to, “[d]ocuments shown exclusively to Jane’s” by a “source connected to a Western intelligence service.” It said the documents showed that Iran had “actively pursued the development of a nuclear weapon system based on relatively advanced multipoint initiation (MPI) nuclear implosion detonation technology for some years.”

The article revealed the political agenda behind the leaking of the high explosives document. “The picture the papers paints,” he wrote, “starkly contradicts the US National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) released in December 2007, which said Tehran had frozen its military nuclear program in 2003.”

That was the argument that Israeli officials and supporters in the United States had been making in the wake of the National Intelligence Estimate, which Israel was eager to discredit. The IAEA first mentioned the high explosives document in an annex to its May 2008 report, shortly after the document had been leaked to Janes.

David Albright, the director of the Institute for Science and International Security, who enjoyed a close relationship with the IAEA Deputy Director Olli Heinonen, revealed in an interview with this writer in September 2008 that Heinonen had told him one document that he had obtained earlier that year had confirmed his trust in the earlier collection of intelligence documents. Albright said that document had “probably” come from Israel.

Former IAEA Director General Mohamed E Baradei was very skeptical about all the purported Iranian documents shared with the IAEA by the United States. Referring to those documents, he writes in his 2011 memoirs, “No one knew if any of this was real.”

ElBaradei recalls that the IAEA received still more purported Iranian documents directly from Israel in summer 2009. The new documents included a two-page document in Farsi describing a four-year program to produce a neutron initiator for a fission chain reaction.

Kelley has said that ElBaradei found the document lacking credibility, because it had no chain of custody, no identifiable source, and no official markings or anything else that could establish its authenticity, the same objections Iran has raised about the high explosives document.

Meanwhile, ElBaradei resisted pressure from the United States and its European allies in 2009 to publish a report on that and other documents including the high explosive document – as an annex to an IAEA report. ElBaradei's successor as director general, Yukia Amano, published the annex that the anti-Iran coalition had wanted earlier in the November 2011 report.

Amano later told colleagues at the agency that he had no choice, because he promised the United States to do so as part of the agreement by Washington to support his bid for the job within the Board of Governors, according to a former IAEA official who asked not to be identified. [For more on how Amano has been compromised, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Slanting the Case on Iran's Nukes.](#)"]

Gareth Porter is an independent investigative journalist and winner of the 2012 Gellhorn Prize for journalism. He is the author of the newly published *Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare*. He can be contacted at porter.gareth50@gmail.com

'Kill the Messenger': Rare Truth-telling

Exclusive: Much of modern American filmmaking is escapist and vapid, but not "Kill the Messenger," the new movie recounting the brave Contra-cocaine reporting by Gary Webb and his subsequent destruction at the hands of the mainstream media, writes James DiEugenio.

By James DiEugenio

I only met Gary Webb once in December 1996 at the late, great activist bookstore, The Midnight Special, in Santa Monica, California. I was writing at *Probe Magazine* then and had covered Webb's groundbreaking *San Jose Mercury News* three-part series, titled "Dark Alliance."

This fascinating, compelling series outlined a malevolent network which helped fund the CIA-backed Nicaraguan Contra forces with profits from the cocaine trade in California. The Nicaraguan supplier was a man named Norwin Meneses, who associated with top-level Contra leader Adolfo Calero.

Meneses's agent, Danilo Blandon, distributed the cocaine in Los Angeles to a former high school tennis player named Ricky Ross. The Blandon/Meneses brand of cocaine was high grade but cheap, so Ross became a millionaire. He was nicknamed "Freeway Rick," because he made so much money selling drugs that he purchased properties along the Harbor Freeway, including motels and theaters.

Webb's story did not actually say the CIA was directly involved with this network. It said the Agency knew about it and turned a blind eye because the overriding objective had been to overthrow the leftist Sandinista government of Nicaragua even if that meant letting the CIA's clients and their associates import large amounts of cocaine into California and elsewhere in the United States.

The end result was to financially bolster the Contras, while thousands of Americans who could not afford powder cocaine now found themselves addicted to low-cost but high-grade crack. This took the old political adage "the ends justify the means" to mind-boggling new heights. In fact, under oath, Blandon testified that Contra military leader Enrique Bermudez used precisely that phrase, "the ends justify the means."

Webb's series ran from Aug. 18-20, 1996. And, for several weeks, the story advanced unopposed through talk radio, cable TV and the Internet, which was then still in its formative stages. Webb's compelling story gained further traction because the *Mercury News* had created a state-of-the-art, interactive web site which linked to scores of documents and hundreds of pages of supplemental materials.

A Web Revolution

Aided by this web revolution, "Dark Alliance" progressed to the point that Webb's radio and TV schedule was being printed daily by the *Mercury News*. And all this was going on outside and around the gatekeeping protective architecture of the MSM, the mainstream media, i.e., the major newspapers (*Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*), magazines (*Time*, *Newsweek*, *US News*) and the big-three TV networks (CBS, NBC, ABC).

Webb's story, in essence, pitted the nascent alternative media, anchored in the Internet and other lower-cost media outlets against the old-line, powerful corporate media. The public seemed to sense that the MSM was never going to report on this immensely important story that resonated with average Americans, many of whom had witnessed the devastation across the country and especially in black communities caused by the spread of crack.

After all, the major media had been ignoring or disparaging the Contra-cocaine story since it first bubbled to the surface in 1985 when it was reported by Robert Parry and Brian Barger of the *Associated Press*. During the Iran/Contra hearings in 1987, a protester disrupted the testimony by ex-White House aide Oliver North by yelling, "ask about the cocaine," but no one did (at least not in open session).

The plea was ignored even though, during those same hearings, Rep. Les Aspin pointed out that the numbers in the Contra accounts did not check out. (*Boston Globe*, June 27, 1988) The available funds officially accrued were not sufficient to cover the reported weapons purchases. And it was not a small shortfall. For the fiscal year 1984-85, it was around \$7 million. (*Cocaine Politics*, by Peter Scott and Jonathan Marshall, pgs. 210-11).

The MSM's contempt for the Contra-cocaine story continued into the late 1980s when the major newspapers downplayed or disparaged a congressional investigation led by Sen. John Kerry that uncovered more evidence of ties between the Contras, cocaine traffickers and the Reagan administration, both Reagan's CIA and the State Department.

"It is clear that individuals who provided support for the Contras were involved in drug trafficking," Kerry's investigation concluded, "and elements of the Contras themselves knowingly received financial and material assistance from drug traffickers." Kerry's report added, "In each case, one or another agency of the U. S. government had information regarding the involvement either while it was occurring or immediately thereafter." (Introduction to the Kerry Committee Report.)

Just-Say-No Hypocrisy

But the notion that President Ronald Reagan's just-say-no-to-drugs crowd was saying yes to cocaine traffickers as long as they chipped in money to the Contra coffers was something deemed unthinkable by the MSM. How could such a charge be true about these rebels whom Reagan had compared to America's Founding Fathers? It was deemed the journalistically "responsible thing" in the 1980s to simply report the Reagan administration's denials and ignore the mounting evidence.

But the MSM's initial silence in 1996 after Webb revived the Contra-cocaine scandal was only the quiet before a very nasty storm. The MSM was going to write about the subject, but the big newspapers had no intention of furthering Webb's good work or even acknowledging that this scandal deserved much greater attention than the MSM had given it in the 1980s.

To do so would have amounted to a self-indictment. After all, if the major newspapers had performed their journalistic responsibilities in the 1980s, much of the devastation and violence caused by the crack epidemic might have been averted. American lives could have been saved; American prisons might not have filled up with low-level drug dealers and users; American communities and families might not have been blighted and impoverished; the costly "war on drugs" might have been revealed as a failure much earlier than it eventually was.

Indeed, one of the reasons that Webb's series seemed so new and shocking to the public in 1996 was *because* the MSM had largely ignored it. In the case of the Kerry investigation, the failure to fully air the committee's public hearings and highlight its disclosures was especially disgraceful. After all, Kerry's hearings and the Senate report were official U.S. government proceedings.

In 1996, by documenting some of the human consequences of the Contra drug trafficking and by circumventing the media gatekeepers Webb had issued his own indictment: that the U.S. government had, in effect, sanctioned the drug trade in America and that the major U.S. news media had failed to alert the public about this grave national security crime. Another implication of the series was that the MSM was in bed with the CIA.

More Voices

But the MSM's behavior was actually even worse than that. Because of the sensation over Webb's series, other ignored voices joined the fray with further exposures of Contra drug running. For example, former DEA agent Celerino Castillo, former CIA agent Bradley Ayers and former Los Angeles police officer Mike Ruppert all began to speak out about CIA-sanctioned drug running.

The high point may have been Ruppert's confrontation with CIA Director John Deutch at a large gathering at a Los Angeles high school. It was clear that a populist tidal wave was building. Therefore, a dam had to be built before this flood of public outrage engulfed such important institutions as Ronald Reagan's Legacy, the National Security State and the Corporate Media.

Granted, it would have taken some professional courage and real integrity for the editors and bureau chiefs of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* to put their journalistic duties ahead of their instincts for self-preservation. They would have had to face up to their earlier failures and make amends to millions of readers who had been betrayed. Thus, it was much easier and safer, career-wise to put Webb's series under a microscope and claim to find fault with it, to make Webb "the story," not the reality of the Reagan administration's malfeasance and the MSM's misfeasance.

Although the initial assaults on Webb's series were mounted by the right-wing news media, including the *Washington Times*, the MSM soon prepared its own withering counterattack against Webb. It began on Oct. 4, 1996, with a front-page story, with sidebars, in the *Washington Post*. The lead article was written by Walter Pincus and Roberto Suro, entitled "The CIA and Crack: Evidence is Lacking of Alleged Plot."

A relentless offensive followed designed to crush the populist uprising in its

infancy. In short order, the *New York Times* joined in. Then came the *Los Angeles Times* with the most deliberate and vicious attack. Editor Shelby Coffey commissioned the equivalent of a journalistic SWAT team. No less than 17 reporters prepared a three-day series that was actually longer than Webb's original "Dark Alliance" series. Internally, it was known as the "Get Gary Webb Team." (*LA Weekly*, 9/29/14)

As the team worked, its common chorus was: "We're going to take away this guy's Pulitzer." The hit team was headed by Doyle McManus and Leo Wolinsky. (A few months later, Coffey promoted Wolinsky to assistant managing editor.)

One of the most absurd assertions made by the *L.A. Times* was to dismiss the Bandon/Ross network as a relatively minor player in the crack trade and claim that it only managed to give \$50,000 to the Contras. Yet, two years earlier, the *Times* had described Ross as the "king of crack" with his network selling half a million crack rocks per day, essentially a one-man Wal-Mart for crack retailing. However, when the need was to minimize Ross's role and thus how much help his operation could have given the Contras, the reality was reshaped.

L.A. Times' Cover-up

Further, it appears that the *Times* later cooperated in a cover-up with Sheriff Sherman Block about an important lead in the "Dark Alliance" series. Through the *Times*, Block announced that, unlike what Webb had reported, a shady and mysterious local character, one Ronald Lister, was not associated with the Contras or any drug running.

But an alternative publication, *Orange County Weekly*, investigated Lister and came up with something completely different, concluding that Lister a security consultant, former policeman and partner of Bandon's had given Bandon weapons, which he sold to Ross, and helped the drug ring launder money and avoid law enforcement discovery. While Lister was doing all this, he was holding what he called "business meetings" with Salvadoran death squad leader Roberto D'Aubuisson and "retired" CIA agents locally. (*LA Weekly*, May 30, 2013)

But was there more to all this than just a vendetta against a reporter from a smaller northern California newspaper unearthing a huge scandal on the *Los Angeles Times'* home turf? While professional jealousy clearly played a role in the cruelty inflicted on Webb, the intensity of the counterattack also reflected the symbiotic relationship between the U.S. national security apparatus and Washington-based national security reporters who are dependent on official background briefings to receive pre-approved information that news organizations need, especially during foreign crises when access to on-the-ground events is limited.

Perception Management

A recently released CIA document on how the counterattack against Webb was promoted is revealing in this regard. Entitled "Managing a Nightmare: CIA Public Affairs and the Drug Conspiracy Story," the six-page internal report described the CIA's damage control in the wake of the publication of Webb's story.

The report showed how the spy agency's PR team exploited relationships with mainstream journalists who then essentially did the CIA's work for it, mounting a devastating counterattack against Webb that marginalized him and painted the Contra-cocaine trafficking story as some baseless conspiracy theory.

Crucial to that success, the report credits "a ground base of already productive relations with journalists and an effective response by the Director of Central Intelligence's Public Affairs Staff [that] helped prevent this story from becoming an unmitigated disaster."

The Agency convinced friendly journalists to characterize Webb's series as presenting "no real news, in that similar charges were made in the 1980's and were investigated by the Congress and were found to be without substance." That, of course, was a lie. In fact, Kerry's investigation confirmed many of the Contra-cocaine allegations first reported by Parry and Barger for the *Associated Press*.

According to the CIA's "Managing a Nightmare" report, journalists were advised to read Webb's series critically and the CIA considered the initial attack by the *Washington Post* the key moment in blunting Webb's story. The CIA distributed the negative stories to other members of the press.

From there, other papers refused to pick up Webb's articles, but they often carried the articles attacking him. The CIA's report noted that the tide of the public relations battle had fully turned by October and soon became a rout. Even the *American Journalism Review*, which like similar publications is supposed to stand up for honest journalists under fire, instead joined the all-out charge against Webb.

The Agency crowed how easy it was to work with journalists to first blunt and then turn around this negative national security story. [See Consortiumnews.com's "The CIA/MSM Contra-Cocaine Cover-up."]

Webb wanted to reply to these attacks as he pressed ahead with his investigation. In fact, at that Midnight Special talk, he said his paper would soon publish new work backing up his original series. But panic was sweeping the Knight-Ridder corporation which then owned the *Mercury News*.

So, the newspaper's executive editor Jerry Ceppos sounded retreat and abandoned Webb and his investigation. Not only did Ceppos not publish the new work, he began to dismantle the prodigiously successful web site. Then, in May 1997, he printed a letter that amounted to a public apology for publishing the story in the first place. He said the series fell short of the paper's standards and failed to handle the "gray areas" with sufficient care.

Understandably, Webb was upset with this decision. When he aired his disagreement, Ceppos dispatched him to the newspaper's back-water Cupertino office, separating Webb from his home and family during the week because of the long commute.

Out of Journalism

The writing was on the wall. Webb took a severance package from the paper in November 1997, effectively forced out "in disgrace." For betraying Webb, Ceppos received an "Ethics in Journalism Award" in 1997 from the Society of Professional Journalists. He was also got a promotion from Knight-Ridder.

Though Webb's journalistic career had gone down in flames, he had forced the U.S. government to conduct more thorough investigations of the Contra-cocaine scandal by Justice Department Inspector General Michael Bromwich and CIA Inspector General Frederick Hitz. Both reports, especially the latter, confirmed the gist of what Webb had written and, indeed, provided shocking new details, revealing a pervasive relationship between the Contras and major cocaine traffickers, including the Medellin cartel and other powerful drug smuggling operations.

The reports acknowledged that the CIA had cast a blind eye on the drug-running activities by the Contras for the entire decade of the 1980s and had even intervened to block potentially damaging investigations. The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* gave short shrift to these damaging findings and the *Los Angeles Times* all but ignored them. There was not a word from Jerry Ceppos about Webb's (too late) vindication. Gary Webb had become a non-person in his profession. [For details on these findings, see Consortiumnews.com's "[The Sordid Contra-Cocaine Saga.](#)"]

Ceppos also sandbagged Webb's best opportunity to enrich himself and his family over his important work. At the peak of the controversy over "Dark Alliance," Webb was getting lucrative offers for a book deal. His wife told Webb biographer Nick Schou that publishing giant Simon and Schuster made an initial offer to Webb of a \$100,000 advance for a book. Webb's wife urged him to take it.

But Ceppos told Webb that he could not work on a book about his series while

still being employed at the *Mercury News*. Misguided loyalty kept Webb at the paper as he shunned the offer. He ultimately did write a book, also titled *Dark Alliance*, for a small publisher, Seven Stories Press. Without the muscle of a large publishing house and with the MSM-enforced conventional wisdom about the Contra-cocaine issue being a “conspiracy theory” the book did not get much media play.

A Downward Spiral

Forced out of the only profession he really wanted to be part of, Webb became an investigator for the California legislature. But when there was a power shift in Sacramento, he was without a job. He could not find a new reporter’s position anywhere on any major newspaper. In fact, he could not even get an interview.

Because of his finances, and due to a divorce from his wife, she had garnished his wages. The only job he could get was with a weekly alternative journal called the *Sacramento News and Review*. And that position did not pay nearly enough for him to keep up his expenses, which included a \$2,000 mortgage.

Webb had asked to move back in with his former wife, but she said she would feel uncomfortable with the situation. He also asked a former girlfriend the same. She first agreed but then changed her mind. The only alternative left was to move in with his mother. His one solace in life at this time was his motorcycle rides. But then someone stole his motorcycle.

Faced with a forced move out of his house, Webb arranged for his cremation and typed out letters to his former wife and his three children. Although the letters have never been made public, his wife said he declared that he never regretted any news article that he wrote. He then used his father’s gun to take his own life. The first shot only wounded him, so he fired again. He was 49 years old.

After Webb’s death, Sen. John Kerry wrote the *Sacramento News and Review* that “Because of Webb’s work the CIA launched an Inspector General investigation that named dozens of troubling connections to drug runners. That wouldn’t have happened if Gary Webb hadn’t been willing to stand up and risk it all.” (*LA Weekly*, May 30, 2013)

Salvaging the Story

And the story might have ended there, except for one of the reporters who had decided not to deride Gary Webb’s work, but to build on it. Nick Schou of the *Orange County Weekly* had met Webb and took a liking to him. Upon hearing the news of Webb’s death, Schou felt a personal loss. So he decided to write a biography of his former friend and colleague, called *Kill the Messenger*,

originally published in 2006.

The book is not just a chronicle of the furious and mindless attack that destroyed both Webb and any hope of getting to the bottom of the Contra/crack scandal. It was also an attempt at a biography of the man whom the mainstream media had caricatured as an amateurish, hotheaded, gonzo-type journalist. Schou's book followed Webb's career in depth and included many comments from fellow journalists who had worked with him and recalled Webb as a dedicated, hard-working, intelligent reporter who took himself and his job seriously and hated government officials who duped the public and/or broke the law.

Coming alive in Schou's book was a three-dimensional Gary Webb who fit the classic adage about what journalism should be, comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable. From the beginning of his career, in college at Northern Kentucky, Webb went on to win dozens of reporting awards, including an H. L. Mencken Award and a Pulitzer Prize for being part of the *Mercury News* team coverage of the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

For instance, when Walt Bogdanich of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* met Webb who was working at the *Kentucky Post*, Bogdanich was quickly impressed and told Schou, "I made it my job to try to get him to come to the *Plain Dealer*."

In Cleveland, fellow reporter Steve Luttner told Schou, "I've never seen a more dogged reporter in thirty years." Another reporter, Tom Suddes said, "He had an in-your-face spirit of journalism. He felt we weren't there to nurture people, we were there to raise hell."

Mary Anne Sharkey, who worked closely with Webb at the *Plain Dealer*, told Schou: "Gary was one of the most meticulous and dogged investigators. I'd come into the office, and he'd been there all night, reading documents."

Bert Robinson at the *San Jose Mercury News* worked with Webb at the Sacramento office covering the state government. Robinson amplified on Sharkey's comments about Webb's ability to work with documents: "It seemed like a gift. He could pick up a 200-page report and skim through it and focus on one sentence on page 63 that suggested some huge outrage. It was amazing to watch. He was a hell of a reporter."

Unsmearing Webb

Schou's book also straightened out another smear about Gary Webb. When the "Dark Alliance" series began stirring up populist anger, the *New York Times* set up a hit team to go after Webb's earlier reporting. One of the angles was to check on Webb's past stories to see if he had ever caused his newspaper to defend itself in a legal action, which did happen on two occasions. And that is what the *Times*

reported in order to create the image of an irresponsible reporter.

But Schou went back and interviewed the newspaper executives involved. The reason the papers settled the lawsuits was not because of any inaccuracy in Webb's reporting, but because of some hyperbole in the headlines, which Webb did not write. Webb did not want his employers to pay out anything. He wanted to continue the legal process because he felt he could back up everything he wrote in each story.

According to Schou, another investigative journalist, Peter Landesman showed an interest in adapting his book, *Kill the Messenger*, for the screen shortly after it was published in 2006. Landesman was a writer for *New York Times* magazine who specialized in writing very long and expensive stories that often made the cover of the weekend journal. Some of the stories, like one he did in 2004 about an international sex trade in young girls, drew some controversy. This may have been his impetus for approaching Schou about adapting the Webb book into a screenplay.

But the script spent years languishing around Hollywood until actor Jeremy Renner got involved. Renner had a major breakthrough role in *The Hurt Locker* in 2009, for which he was nominated for an Oscar for Best Actor. This helped launch him into some big-budget films like *The Avengers*, *Mission Impossible-Ghost Protocol*, *The Bourne Legacy* and *American Hustle*.

Renner's Intervention

It was on the strength of that kind of roll that he turned actor/producer and decided to make *Kill the Messenger*. As he told interviewer Elizabeth Thorp, he was immediately drawn to the David and Goliath aspect of the story. And once he was in, he was all in:

"It was going to be a big hill to climb to get it made. It's not a movie that people were screaming to make. Having me as a part of it helped. I wanted to get it made, not just sit around and wait for someone else to make that happen." He added that he was instrumental in acquiring the cast, the director, other producers and the rest of the production team.

What's amazing is that this is Renner's first film as a producer. Yet, it's hard to detect where he made a false step anywhere. From the editing, to the direction, to the casting, everything about this film is extremely well chosen. And we sense that from the start.

The opening credit montage, largely in black and white stills, juxtaposes various presidents' pledges to fight a war on drugs: Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan. Halfway through, it then breaks into another montage concerning

America's necessity to fight communism in Central America. Brian Kates edits this all very snappily, with a martial rhythm and appropriately loud and threatening music behind it. It is a gripping and pointed way to begin: a sort of visual topic sentence indicating the hypocrisy about to be exposed.

From that memorable opening, the promise is that we are in good hands, with people who understand the material and the forces involved. And we are. One reason I have detailed so much of the story behind Webb's work and Schou's biography is this: although the film is only 110 minutes long, what is remarkable is not how much was cut, but how much made it onto the screen.

It begins with the drug asset forfeiture story Webb worked on for the *Mercury News*. As Webb wrote in his book *Dark Alliance*, he was doing a story on how the police would file charges, burst into a home, seize property, and then drop the charges later, leaving the defendant much poorer. That story had created a lot of buzz.

A woman named Coral Baca called Webb. She had read his story and was impressed by his honesty, since it had been done to her boyfriend, one Rafael Cornejo. But, she said, there was more to it than that. The government had enlisted a former drug trader turned informant, Blandon, to testify against Cornejo.

Or, as Baca told Webb, "One of the government's witnesses is a guy who used to work for the CIA selling drugs. Tons of it. Four tons! And if that's what he's admitted to, you can imagine how much it really was." She promised Webb some official records, so Webb showed up in court to see who Blandon was. And this is what got him interested in the story. All of this is faithfully depicted in the film.

Telling the Story

Approximately the first half of the picture pieces together Webb's search for the story. It's an interesting and skillfully handled piece of filmmaking, even for those already familiar with the tale. Besides the inherent drama of the subject, director Michael Cuesta makes it all move very quickly and adroitly through several different locales from Washington D.C., to a prison in Nicaragua, to South Central Los Angeles.

Renner has also gotten some fairly famous actors to take parts that are rather small, but well-delineated: Andy Garcia as Meneses; Oliver Platt as Ceppos; Ray Liotta as a kind of Jack Terrell, CIA soldier of fortune type; and Michael Sheen as a composite of Kerry investigators, based on Jonathan Winer, Ron Rosenblith and Jack Blum, with a mix of journalist Robert Parry who warned Webb about the career risks from the Contra-cocaine story before "Dark Alliance" was published.

Since the movie is done from Webb's point of view, a mass audience will, for the first time, see what Webb saw, and how he saw it and how the major media caricatured his work by exaggerating what he actually had written (he never said the CIA plotted to bring crack into the Los Angeles ghetto).

The beauty of Webb's storytelling is that he showed that, almost through a kind of strange serendipity, a cast of oddball characters who would never have met anywhere else, all coalesced in the background of this CIA-sponsored war in Central America. For instance, Ricky Ross didn't even know who Blandon really was. It was Webb's ability to put names and histories on these faces, and to show not just *why* they did what they did, but *how* they did it, that's what made his series so extraordinary.

And this is the thrill the audience gets as it watches this first half: a gifted reporter wearing out the proverbial shoe leather, as the story of a lifetime first falls into his lap and then assembles itself before him. Director Cuesta lays it all out for us, sometimes using a moving camera in close, sometimes with vast panoramic shots in the jungle of Nicaragua, always keeping up a headlong tempo.

Renner as Webb

To match that directorial tempo, there is Renner as Webb. Renner is not the subtlest actor, but his energy and commitment are perfectly in tune in drawing a man who goes through three stages. The first is one of curiosity and growing interest, as a large, sinister tableau takes shape. Then, the experience of piecing together the dots on a board from Nicaragua to San Francisco begins to enthrall him. (We actually see Renner arrange those dots in the film on a wall map.)

And finally, when he is thrown overboard by his newspaper, we see a man's slow deterioration as he loses all that is dear to him in pursuit of a journalistic Holy Grail, which the powers-that-be don't want him to have. Renner is convincing in all three stages of a difficult role.

Landesman's script dexterously handles the various story lines of a complex subject without ever being confusing or laying on too much information. The sequence where the major newspapers decide to turn on Webb and the *Mercury News* is forcefully and concisely written. There is a realism to the MSM's self-protective decision-making.

For example, we see the *Washington Post* interacting with the CIA's Public Affairs Office, which, of course, we now know actually happened. We then cut to a conference room at the *Los Angeles Times* building, where the "Get Gary Webb

Team” is getting chastised for letting a regional newspaper from Northern California steal the story of a generation out from under their noses.

There are other directorial touches showing a quiet, creative imagination at work. Towards the end of his life, one way Webb escaped his frustration was on his motorcycle. Near the end of the film, Cuesta does not shoot these from a distance or from the side with a car camera, *Easy Rider* style. Both of those would denote a freedom in the landscape. He shoots them head on with a static camera, with the very loud noise of the engine cranked up on the soundtrack. This conveys the tension building in a man as he drives headlong into a buzz-saw.

Some Fiction

There are some Hollywood-style fictional flourishes, of course, but they are not too distracting and make necessary points, such as the scene with the Liotta/Terrell CIA asset waking Webb as he sleeps in a small motel room after his banishment to Cupertino by Ceppos. Webb has brought his files there with him to work on his book.

In the middle of the night, without any noise being made, Liotta is suddenly in the room. The scene is shot as if through a gauze, shadowy and dreamlike. It unfolds slowly, weirdly, inchoately, as if Webb is now in a supernatural netherworld. And it achieves its intended effect, even if it diverges from the realism of many other parts of the movie.

There are other cases of dramatic license. In addition to the pseudonym for the Kerry staffer, there is also one for the late Georg Hodel, a Swiss journalist who was helping Webb on the follow-up stories to his original series, the stories Ceppos failed to run. Although Hodel’s life was threatened in Nicaragua, it was never as blatant as at the end of a rifle as is shown in the movie. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Hung Out to Dry.”](#)]

Webb did wound a man trying to steal his car. But it was not during this crisis period in his life, it was many years before he got to California. In the film, a fictional female character is used as Webb’s direct supervisor (who was actually Dawn Garcia.)

But these are all excusable since they are used to compress the story and to heighten the action and drama. The scene where Webb thinks he sees a man attempting to steal his car is another attempt by Cuesta to get inside Webb’s head: to show how the pressures of defending his story began to take a real toll on him.

I cannot conclude this review without mentioning the simple, moving and symbolic

ending. It is one that will stay with me for awhile. Webb and his family appear at a journalism awards banquet at which Webb receives a prize from the California chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists for his "Dark Alliance" series. The state SPJ had announced the award before the cumulative MSM attacks pushed the *Mercury News* into its cowardly retreat.

What happened next was that the national SPJ pressured the state chapter to revoke the award to add to Webb's personal humiliation, but the California SPJ refused to do so. That became the context for the national SPJ granting the "Ethics in Journalism" award to *Mercury News* executive editor Ceppos for his role in destroying Webb's career. Since national SPJ could not coerce the state chapter to reverse itself, the special award was given to Ceppos to demonstrate the organization's extraordinary disdain for Webb and his Contra-cocaine story.

In the movie, the award ceremony is first portrayed as what could have been, with Ceppos and other *Mercury News* executives celebrating Webb's courageous reporting. But that dream sequence is replaced with a harsher reality in which Webb walks to the lectern as most of the journalists in attendance sit on their hands.

The End

Webb's acceptance speech is rather inelegant and leaves Ceppos wincing. Webb explains that he never realized why his pre-Contra-cocaine stories were so well received – because he hadn't written anything that really mattered. When he steps down from the podium, Webb drops his letter of resignation in front of Ceppos and the editor who handled the series.

Webb and his family go outside. Realizing this is probably the end of his newspaper career, which it was, Webb apologizes to his wife for any pain his ordeal has caused her. Then, in a beautiful, metaphorical stroke, Cuesta has Renner ascend an open air escalator in the atrium of the building. The film ends with on-screen titles saying that Webb never got another newspaper position and later took his own life.

Over the credits, we watch a home movie with the real Gary Webb playing with his children in the kitchen of his house. That ending contains the kind of subtlety, restraint and quiet power that, in this age of Scorsese and Tarantino, has been missing from American cinema for too long.

In December 1996, after seeing Webb at his Midnight Special appearance with fellow journalist Robert Parry, I noted Webb's still confident attitude in both his story and the corporate structure above him. Having studied the assassinations of the 1960s, I didn't quite comprehend it. For like those

assassinations, the link between CIA and drug running was a radioactive subject. It was on the short list of *bÃ¢te noires* of the MSM.

I had seen what happened to people who had tried to get to the bottom of those kinds of stories in the past, e.g., New Orleans DA Jim Garrison and House Select Committee on Assassinations Chief Counsel Richard Sprague. As I walked out, I told the friend I had come with, "I don't think he understands what is happening to him." He didn't. Which is why he took the story on in the first place.

Because of Jeremy Renner and the "Kill the Messenger" movie, Gary Webb has been redeemed.

Many cinema observers, including me, have complained of late about the declining quality of American film and the genre's divorce from both fact and the socio-political realities of American life. Renner has worked the near-miracle. He has made a film that is not just technically and aesthetically excellent, but one that tells the truth about the ugly side of the modern American political system. It is a side that was covered up and enabled by the cronyism of the MSM.

The movie also shows the personal tragedy of what that system did to a reporter who wanted to root out the ugliness. See this film as soon as you can. And tell your friends about it. It's the best and most important American picture I've seen in a long time.

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](#).

James Risen's Painful Truths

President Obama promised a "transparent" administration but the American people didn't know the transparency would go only one way, letting the government look at the people while blocking the public's view of the government, a reality described in James Risen's new book, reviewed by Norman Solomon.

By Norman Solomon

No single review or interview can do justice to *Pay Any Price* the new book by James Risen that is the antithesis of what routinely passes for journalism about the "war on terror." Instead of evasive tunnel vision, the book offers big-picture acuity: focusing on realities that are pervasive and vastly destructive.

Published this week, *Pay Any Price* throws down an urgent gauntlet. We should pick it up. After 13 years of militarized zealotry and fear-mongering in the name of fighting terrorism, the book – subtitled “Greed, Power, and Endless War” – zeros in on immense horrors being perpetrated in the name of national security.

As an investigative reporter for the *New York Times*, Risen has been battling dominant power structures for a long time. His new book is an instant landmark in the best of post-9/11 journalism. It’s also a wise response to repressive moves against him by the Bush and Obama administrations.

For more than six years – under threat of jail – Risen has refused to comply with subpoenas demanding that he identify sources for his reporting on a stupid and dangerous CIA operation. (For details, see [“The Government War Against Reporter James Risen,”](#) which I co-wrote with Marcy Wheeler for *The Nation*.)

A brief afterword in his new book summarizes Risen’s struggles with the Bush and Obama Justice Departments. He also provides a blunt account of his long-running conflicts with the *Times* hierarchy, which delayed some of his reporting for years – or spiked it outright – under intense White House pressure.

Self-censorship and internalization of official worldviews continue to plague the Washington press corps. In sharp contrast, Risen’s stubborn independence enables *Pay Any Price* to combine rigorous reporting with rare candor.

Here are a few quotes from the book:

– “Obama performed a neat political trick: he took the national security state that had grown to such enormous size under Bush and made it his own. In the process, Obama normalized the post-9/11 measures that Bush had implemented on a haphazard, emergency basis. Obama’s great achievement – or great sin – was to make the national security state permanent.”

– “In fact, as trillions of dollars have poured into the nation’s new homeland security-industrial complex, the corporate leaders at its vanguard can rightly be considered the true winners of the war on terror.”

– “There is an entire class of wealthy company owners, corporate executives, and investors who have gotten rich by enabling the American government to turn to the dark side. But they have done so quietly. The new quiet oligarchs just keep making money. They are the beneficiaries of one of the largest transfers of wealth from public to private hands in American history.”

– “The United States is now relearning an ancient lesson, dating back to the Roman Empire. Brutalizing an enemy only serves to brutalize the army ordered to do it. Torture corrodes the mind of the torturer.”

– “Of all the abuses America has suffered at the hands of the government in its endless war on terror, possibly the worst has been the war on truth. On the one hand, the executive branch has vastly expanded what it wants to know: something of a vast gathering of previously private truths. On the other hand, it has ruined lives to stop the public from gaining any insight into its dark arts, waging a war on truth. It all began at the NSA.”

Fittingly, the book closes with a powerful chapter about the government’s extreme actions against whistleblowers. After all, whistleblowing and independent journalism are dire threats to the secrecy and deception that fuel the “war on terror.”

Now, James Risen is in the national spotlight at a time when the U.S. government is launching yet another spiral of carnage for perpetual war. As a profound book, *Pay Any Price* has arrived with enormous potential to serve as a catalyst for deeper understanding and stronger opposition to abhorrent policies.

Norman Solomon, a journalist with ExposeFacts.org, is executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy and co-founder of RootsAction.org. His books include *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death.*

An Imperial Death Grip on Democracy

Official Washington controlled by a lethal mix of politics, ideology, media and money has an imperial death grip on what’s left of the American democratic republic, a hold so suffocating that it’s hard to envision any move to escape. But some citizens keep on trying, writes Greg Maybury.

By Greg Maybury

Andrew Bacevich, a former U.S. military officer and now a professor at Boston University, has measured the U.S. government against British historian Correlli Barnett’s observation that “war is the great auditor of institutions” and noted that since 9/11 America “has undergone such an audit and found to be wanting.”

A military man whose tours of duty included Vietnam and Europe, Bacevich has for years presented sharper, more cogent insights into America’s place in the

geopolitical firmament than most of the pundits we see trotted out on CNN, ABC and FOX News and their ilk. But this prolific author, political scientist, and professor of history and international relations is little known to most Americans, perhaps because he had the audacity to judge the Iraq War a “catastrophic failure” well before others were prepared to do so.

Bacevich’s critical assessment of how U.S. institutions responded to the post-9/11 crises is contained in an [article that he published in 2008](#). But his insights can be found in any of his books, including [Washington Rules: America’s Pathway to Permanent War](#) and [Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and their Country](#), to name two.

What makes Bacevich’s insights even more compelling and indeed poignant is that his own son, a U.S. Army officer, was killed in 2007 by an improvised explosive device (IED) in Iraq. In an [article in the Washington Post](#) in May of that same year tellingly titled “I lost my son to a war I opposed; we were both doing our duty” he asked himself the following: “What exactly is a father’s duty when his son is sent into harm’s way?” He provided this response: “As my son was doing his utmost to be a good soldier, I strove to be a good citizen.”

Bacevich, of course, is far from alone in being a good citizen by daring to critique his country’s foreign policy misadventures. In a 2004 book of essays, [Dismantling the Empire: America’s Last Best Hope](#), the late [Chalmers Johnson](#) also provided in a similar vein a sobering and persuasive argument for America drawing back from the imperialist ambitions that have long characterized its foreign and national security policies.

Whether it’s in his published works or his numerous magazine and newspaper articles, Johnson left little doubt as to what he saw was driving this geopolitical obsessive-compulsive disorder the profits of waging war. To preserve any lasting vestige of itself as a democratic republic, the empire as it stands must be dismantled, Johnson warned. He summed it up this way:

“We are on the brink of losing our democracy for the sake of keeping our empire. Once a nation starts down that path, the dynamics that apply to all empires come into play isolation, overstretch, the uniting of global and local forces opposed to imperialism, and in the end, bankruptcy.”

Johnson, who passed away in 2010, basically said that if America is to *sustain* itself as a viable nation economically, socially and politically, and *preserve* whatever integrity, standing and influence it currently enjoys among nation states as a truly global leader in the conduct and management of world affairs, it must attend to three fundamental issues.

Firstly, the U.S. needs to dismantle the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) completely, an organization which he views as being both incompetent and dangerous, not only to America's own security but global security.

Secondly, he proposed the curtailment of any further expansion of U.S. global military presence along with the progressive dismantlement of the existing infrastructure. (This itself is an interesting proposal given that my own country Australia has recently signed up to a new agreement with the U.S. to *increase* its military presence here in Australia's north.)

Thirdly, he emphasized America's urgent need to scale back and then eradicate the *intertwined* military, industrial, security and economic foundations that have both driven and underpinned the growth of U.S. empire for far too long.

If these actions are not taken, Johnson argued in his introduction, the "long-standing reliance on imperialism and militarism in our relations with other countries and the vast, potentially ruinous global empire of bases that goes with it," will lead to "a likely collapse similar to that of the former Soviet Union." Although Johnson rightly observed that this outcome is not inevitable, he noted pessimistically "it may be unavoidable given the hubris and arrogance of our national leadership."

The World is Never Enough

For anyone following recent events from outside the realms of the corporate media's reach the proxy "cold war" with Russia over the Ukraine along with the provocative saber rattling over the downing of MH17, Israel's genocidal incursions into the Gaza Strip, the deteriorating situations in Iraq and Syria and the rise of ISIS, just to name a few of the volatile global ructions to which America is a party to or has some vital stake in these conclusions should be obvious. The hubris is palpable, and hubris is always the precursor to imperial decline.

Moreover, if we accept Johnson's proposition that America's unerring desire to impose political and economic dominion over the rest of the world is driven largely by economic (read that: *energy*) imperatives, then the irony herein is that in doing so, the U.S. may end up bankrupting itself, must also be blindingly obvious.

For all President Barack Obama's 2008 election promises to bring America back from the brink of imperial overreach and to dampen its global hegemonic ambitions by relying more on the wielding of soft power than hard power, America's place in the world order is even more precarious now than it ever was.

The current malaise is not all attributable to the Obama administration to be

sure. Although his election rhetoric indicated otherwise, as with many presidents who take over the White House, they have to deal with the accumulative baggage left behind by their immediate (and not so immediate) predecessors. This is to say, Obama was locked into pursuing what neoconservative historian Max Boot billed as the "Doctrine of the Big Enchilada."

But a lot of it is the present administration's cross to bear and has been for some time. In fact, it seems that not a week goes by where this contention does not become even more apparent. At best Obama seems to be trying to be all things to all people whilst placating the neoconservative hawks in his administration and in the broader Beltway.

Yet after now almost six years of Obama as president, the imagined scenario of imperial collapse becomes all too plausibly *undeniable*. For those who might scoff at this suggestion, it is important to remember that there were indeed plenty of folk who did actually predict the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc: that is, well and truly *after* it all went pear shaped!

As for the likes of Johnson and Bacevich and their fervent hope America will pull back from the strategic brinkmanship it has been engaging in, it seems unlikely to happen anytime soon. This becomes even more evident when one reads author F. William Engdahl's *Full Spectrum Dominance Totalitarian Democracy in the New World Order*, published in 2010. Engdahl delivers an unsettling account of the evolution of U.S. global military strategy since the Fall of the Wall and especially that which has prevailed since 9/11.

Put simply, the term "full spectrum dominance" denotes America's plan to advance its long-term goal of *total military control* of every nook and cranny of the Big Blue Ball and beyond: this includes land, sea, air, inner/outer space, and even cyberspace. In essence, full spectrum dominance is the *very opposite* of what Johnson had in mind.

Yet clearly the Agenda Benders in the National Security State and other stakeholders not just eager to maintain the *status quo* but relentlessly and recklessly pursue its expansion appear not to have received Johnson's "memo." Or for that matter, Andrew Bacevich's either, someone else who has had a word or two about "full spectrum dominance" and its implications.

And if anyone is on the lookout for a prime example of the blowback of this "World is Not Enough" tendency to dominate the globe militarily in the name of freedom, democracy, liberty and the filthy lucre, then a brief recap of America's recidivist history of "regime rehab" since the CIA instigated overthrow of Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh in Iran back in 1953 should

provide a salutary lesson in why the U.S.'s hitherto relatively untarnished reputation as the global go-to "good guy" is taking a trashing at present.

Folks may be finally waking up and smelling the rodent. Whilst this may be a good sign and certainly not before time, it may be too little too late.

By the end of November 2008, after eight years of the Bush administration it was not hard for Americans and non-Americans alike to buy into the singular promise of "Yes We Can" and "Change We Can Believe In" message that Obama brought to campaign.

â€‹America was on the ropes economically and financially, and some would say spiritually and morally. It had overreached itself militarily and geopolitically in ways not seen since the Vietnam era. Clearly even many die-hard Republicans had had enough of the Bushmeister's regime, which apart from anything else had done much to diminish America's reputation for world leadership and all but cut the power on its moral beacon.

America certainly used up most if not all the political and moral capital it accrued as a result of the 9/11 disaster, the worst attacks on American soil since Pearl Harbor in 1941, a squandering of goodwill for which no one has yet to be called to account. That 9/11 accrued the degree of capital it did is remarkable in hindsight, especially given the extraordinary and catastrophic defense, security and intelligence failures on the day itself and leading into it. All this, along with the fact that the powers-that-be had to be dragged kicking and screaming to an investigation into what actually happened and how such a failure transpired.

Even after the monumental shell-game regarding Iraq's mythical weapons of mass destruction, along with its alleged links to al-Qaeda and support of terrorism, and the revelations of the execrable treatment of Abu Ghraib prisoners (to name a few of the memorable outcomes from America's overarching response to 9/11), America continued to dine out on the sympathetic support that sprang from that historically tragic event.

That the belated revelation the numerous pretexts for war in Iraq were bogus failed to dent the image that America had carefully crafted in the wake of 9/11 possibly best exemplified by the plaintive wail, "Why do they hate us?" is also illuminating. And the very fact that there are still so many disturbing, outstanding questions regarding the 9/11 attacks, including the government's redaction of evidence on alleged Saudi financing of al-Qaeda, leaves many Americans and non-Americans alike wondering, "where to from here?"

An Empire of Graveyards

Where indeed? In addition to Johnson's recommendations, here's a few more. America needs to pull back from its unstinting support of Israel. It should counterbalance the excessive influence the Israel lobby has on both the domestic political scene and its foreign and national security policies. And above all, it should clip the wings of the Zionistas in the U.S., and cut off the funding of their counterparts in Israel.

Overall, it needs to reflect long and hard on its compulsion for meddling in the so-called Greater Middle East, and we need no further evidence in support of this given the current circumstances in Syria and Iraq. All this of course is about as likely to happen as the suggestions made by Johnson and Bacevich, but we press on regardless.

The U.S. should also stop meddling in Europe, and begin by reassessing its support of the Ukraine regime instead of pointing the finger at Russia for its perceived aggression in the east of that country. A rapprochement with Russia should be the order of the day, but instead we get old school Cold War belligerence that we many thought was well past its use-by-date.

The hypocrisy demonstrated by the West over Russia's policies in respect of the Ukraine (and the Crimea) is breathtaking, and an example of geopolitical double standards of the first order. [See Consortiumnews.com's "America's Staggering Hypocrisy" and "The Only Standards Are Double Standards."]

The West could do worse than look in its own historical backyard and see the mess it has created therein in similar scenarios for what it has truly represented. And it will need to go back a long ways in order to do this! It's all very well to label Vladimir Putin "dangerous" as some folk have done, but he has ample reason not to trust the West in general and the U.S. in particular.

Despite its promise not to expand NATO after the collapse of the former Soviet Union, America and its NATO allies have consistently tested Russia's patience by not abiding by this agreement in a way that America herself would never have tolerated had the "boots on the ground" been on the other foot.

Whilst a discussion for another time, Putin knows what the West did in the lead up to and aftermath of the USSR's collapse. Which is to say, for anyone wanting to get a real handle on "Comrade Putinski's" neo-Bolshie "up yours" 'tude towards the Americans, two words will do here: Project Hammer!

By way of taking this discussion full circle, if indeed war is the "great auditor of institutions," then we can only conclude from that that *permanent* war the very type America seems determined to engage in going forward will be the "great auditor" of *empire*. The downside is that such is the monumental faith,

hope and trust we have placed in it over such a long period *that* empire's decline and fall almost certainly will mean the decline and fall of the rest of us.

For this reason alone, I hope I am proven dead wrong, or dead before proven right. Not that that will be of much comfort to those left behind who will have to bear the brunt of the inevitable, albeit uncertain, but doubtless ugly, outcome.

It's a somewhat overworked cliché to label Afghanistan the Graveyard of Empires, but whether true or trite, either way America, the current occupying imperial power, could already be well on the road to becoming an Empire of Graveyards!

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Can MSM Handle the Contra-Cocaine Truth?

Exclusive: "Kill the Messenger" tells the tragic tale of journalist Gary Webb who revived the Contra-cocaine scandal in the 1990s and saw his life destroyed by the mainstream media. The question now is: Will the MSM continue its cover-up of this sordid part of Ronald Reagan's legacy or finally accept the truth, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

The mainstream news media's reaction to the new movie, "Kill the Messenger," has been tepid, perhaps not surprising given that the MSM comes across as the film's most unsympathetic villain as it crushes journalist Gary Webb for digging up the Contra-cocaine scandal in the mid-1990s after the major newspapers thought they had buried it in the 1980s.

Not that the movie is without other villains, including drug traffickers and "men in black" government agents. But the drug lords show some humanity and even honesty as they describe how they smuggled drugs and shared the proceeds with the Nicaraguan Contra rebels, President Ronald Reagan's beloved "freedom fighters."

By contrast, the news executives for the big newspapers, such as the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times, come across as soulless careerists determined to maintain their cozy relations with the CIA's press office and set on shielding their failure to take on this shocking scandal when it was playing out in the

1980s.

So, in the 1990s, they concentrated their fire on Webb for alleged imperfections in his investigative reporting rather than on U.S. government officials who condoned and protected the Contra drug trafficking as part of Reagan's Cold War crusade.

Webb's cowardly editors at the San Jose Mercury News also come across badly as frightened bureaucrats, cringing before the collective misjudgment of the MSM and crucifying their own journalist for the sin of challenging the media's wrongheaded conventional wisdom.

That the MSM's "group think" was upside-down should no longer be in doubt. In fact, the Contra-cocaine case was conclusively established as early as 1985 when Brian Barger and I wrote the first story on the scandal for the Associated Press. Our sourcing included some two dozen knowledgeable people including Contras, Contra supporters and U.S. government sources from the Drug Enforcement Administration and even Reagan's National Security Council staff.

But the Reagan administration didn't want to acknowledge this inconvenient truth, knowing it would sink the Contra war against Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista government. So, after the AP story was published, President Reagan's skillful propagandists mounted a counteroffensive that elicited help from editors and reporters at the New York Times, the Washington Post and other major news outlets.

Thus, in the 1980s, the MSM treated the Contra-cocaine scandal as a "conspiracy theory" when it actually was a very real conspiracy. The MSM's smug and derisive attitude continued despite a courageous investigation headed by Sen. John Kerry which, in 1989, confirmed the AP reporting and took the story even further. For his efforts, Newsweek dubbed Kerry "a randy conspiracy buff."

This dismissive treatment of the scandal even survived the narcotics trafficking trial of Panama's Manuel Noriega in 1991 when the U.S. government called witnesses who implicated both Noriega and the Contras in the cocaine trade.

The Power of 'Group Think'

What we were seeing was the emerging power of the MSM's "group think," driven by conformity and careerism and resistant to both facts and logic. Once all the "smart people" of Official Washington reached a conclusion no matter how misguided that judgment would be defended at nearly all costs, since none of these influential folks wanted to admit error.

That's what Gary Webb ran into in 1996 when he revived the Contra-cocaine

scandal by focusing on the devastation that one Contra drug pipeline caused by feeding into the production of crack cocaine. However, for the big newspapers to admit they had ducked such an important story and indeed had aided in the government's cover-up would be devastating to their standing.

So, the obvious play was to nitpick Webb's reporting and to destroy him personally, which is what the big newspapers did and what "Kill the Messenger" depicts. The question today is: how will the MSM react to this second revival of the Contra-cocaine scandal?

Of the movie reviews that I read, a few were respectful, including the one in the Los Angeles Times where Kenneth Turan wrote: "The story Webb related in a series of articles told a still-controversial tale that many people did not want to hear: that elements in the CIA made common cause with Central American drug dealers and that money that resulted from cocaine sales in the U.S. was used to arm the anti-communist Contras in Nicaragua.

"Although the CIA itself confirmed, albeit years later, that this connection did in fact exist, journalists continue to argue about whether aspects of Webb's stories overreached."

A normal person might wonder why if the CIA itself admitted (as it did) that it was collaborating with drug dealers journalists would still be debating whether Webb may have "overreached" (although in reality he actually understated the problem). Talk about missing "the lede" or the forest for the trees.

What kind of "journalist" obsesses over dissecting the work of another journalist while the U.S. government gets away with aiding and abetting drug traffickers?

Turan went on to note the same strange pattern in 1996 after Webb's series appeared: "what no one counted on was that the journalistic establishment, including elite newspapers such as the Los Angeles Times, would attempt to discredit Webb's reporting. The other newspapers questioned the shakier parts of his story and proving the truth of what one of Webb's sources tells him: 'You get the most flak when you're right above the target.'"

Sneering Still

However, other reviews, including those in the New York Times and the Washington Post, continued the snarky tone that pervaded the sneering treatment of Webb that hounded him out of journalism in 1997 and ultimately drove him to suicide in 2004. For instance, the headline in the Post's weekend section was "Sticking with Webb's Story," as in the phrase "That's my story and I'm sticking to it."

The review by Michael O'Sullivan stated: "Inspired by the true story of Gary Webb, the San Jose Mercury News reporter known for a controversial series of articles suggesting a link between the CIA, the California crack epidemic and the Nicaraguan Contras, this slightly overheated drama begins and ends with innuendo. In between is a generous schmear of insinuation."

You get the point. The allegations, which have now been so well-established that even the CIA admits to them, are "controversial" and amount to "innuendo" and "insinuation."

Similarly, the New York Times review by Manohla Dargis disparaged Webb's "Dark Alliance" series as "much-contested," which may be technically accurate but fails to recognize that the core allegations of Contra-cocaine trafficking and U.S. government complicity were true something an earlier article by Times' media writer David Carr at least had the decency to acknowledge. [See Consortiumnews.com's "NYT's Belated Admission on Contra-Cocaine."]

In a different world, the major newspapers would have taken the opening created by "Kill the Messenger" to make amends for their egregious behavior in the 1980s in discrediting the scandal when the criminality could have been stopped and for their outrageous actions in the 1990s in destroying the life and career of Gary Webb. But it appears the big papers mostly plan to hunker down and pretend they did nothing wrong.

For those interested in the hard evidence proving the reality of the Contra-cocaine scandal, I posted a Special Report on Friday detailing much of what we know and how we know it. [See Consortiumnews.com's "The Sordid Contra-Cocaine Saga."]

As for "Kill the Messenger," I had the pleasure of watching it on Friday night with my old Associated Press colleague Brian Barger and we both were impressed by how effectively the movie-makers explained a fairly complicated tale about drugs and politics. The personal story was told with integrity, aided immensely by Jeremy Renner's convincing portrayal of Webb.

There were, of course, some Hollywood fictional flourishes for dramatic purposes. And it was a little weird hearing my cautionary advice to Webb delivered when we talked before his "Dark Alliance" series was published in 1996 being put into the mouth of a fictional Kerry staffer.

But those are minor points. What was truly remarkable about this movie was that it was made at all. Over the past three decades, many directors and screenwriters have contemplated telling the sordid story of Contra-cocaine trafficking but all have failed to get the projects "green-lighted."

The conventional wisdom in Hollywood has been that such a movie would be torn apart by the major media just as Webb's series (and before that the AP articles and Kerry's report) were. But so far the MSM has largely held its fire against "Kill the Messenger," relying on a few snide asides and knowing smirks.

Perhaps the MSM simply assumes that the old conventional wisdom will hold and that the movie will soon be forgotten. Or maybe there's been a paradigm shift and the MSM realizes that its credibility is shot (especially after its catastrophic performance regarding Iraq's WMD) and it is losing its power to dictate false narratives to the American people.

[To learn how you can hear a December 1996 joint appearance at which Robert Parry and Gary Webb discuss their reporting, [click here](#).]

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). For a limited time, you also can order Robert Parry's trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).
