

# Behind the USS Liberty Cover-up

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

By Maidhc Ó Cathail

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

Directed by British filmmaker Richard Belfield, the documentary confirms not only that the attack on the U.S. Navy spy ship was deliberate, an undisputed fact long accepted by all but the most shameless Israeli apologists, but reveals, perhaps for the first time, how Tel Aviv was able to induce the U.S. government to cover up an attack that killed 34 and injured 171 of its own seamen by a supposed "ally."

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

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

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

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

"Blackmail!" retired U.S. Navy admiral Bobby Ray Inman frankly summed up Israel's strategy to deal with Johnson. "[T]hey know if he is thinking about running again he's going to need money for his campaign," said Inman, who from 1977 to 1981 directed the National Security Agency, the U.S. intelligence agency

under whose aegis the USS Liberty had been dispatched to the eastern Mediterranean. "So alleging that he's blood-libeling is going to arouse the Jewish donors."

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

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

### **Israelis Bearing Gifts**

Noting the cleverness of Israel's tactics, the documentary revealed that after having identified the Vietnam War as Johnson's "soft spot" it quietly provided him with "two extraordinary gifts."

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

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

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

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

Johnson's "softer approach" to Israel was reflected in the U.S. Navy inquiry then underway onboard the Liberty. As one of the survivors recalled, the

Liberty's crew began to realize that "a cover-up was descending" upon them. Among key testimony ignored was the strafing of the Liberty's deck with napalm and the machine-gunning of the sinking ship's lifeboats.

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

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

"The Israelis have always been very skillful at tracking what the U.S. government is doing, saying, thinking, and effort[s] to influence it," Inman pointed out. "And the great advantage they have as compared to other countries is their influence on the Congress."

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

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

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

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

### **Israel's White House Friends**

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

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

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

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

"Hamlet" was Abe Feinberg, one of the most influential fundraisers ever in Democratic Party politics, whose phone calls Johnson couldn't afford to ignore; "Menashe" was Arthur Goldberg, the U.S ambassador to the United Nations; "Harari" was David Ginsberg, a prominent Washington lawyer who represented the Israeli embassy; and "Ilan" was Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas, a longtime Johnson confidant who had dined with the President on the eve of the Six-Day War.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## The Mystery of Ray McGovern’s Arrest

**Exclusive:** On Oct. 30, ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern was arrested for trying to attend a public speech by retired Gen. David Petraeus. McGovern had hoped to ask Petraeus a critical question during Q-and-A but was instead trundled off to jail, another sign of a growing hostility toward dissent, McGovern says.

By Ray McGovern

Why, I asked myself, would the New York City police arrest me and put me in The Tombs overnight, simply because a security officer at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y told them I was “not welcome” and should be denied entry to a talk by retired General David Petraeus? In my hand was a ticket for which I had reluctantly shelled out \$50.

I had hoped to hear the photogenic but inept Petraeus explain why the Iraqi troops, which he claimed to have trained so well, had fled northern Iraq leaving their weapons behind at the first whiff of Islamic State militants earlier this year. I even harbored some slight hope that the advertised Q & A might afford *hoi polloi* like me the chance to ask him a real question.

However rare the opportunity to ask real questions has become, it can happen. Witness my extended (four-minute) questioning of then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in Atlanta on May 4, 2006. The exchange wasn’t exactly the oh-so-polite give-and-take of the Sunday talk shows but it represented what Americans should expect of democracy, a chance to confront senior government officials when they engage in deception or demonstrate incompetence especially on issues of war or peace.

It seems a safe guess that somebody wanted to protect Petraeus from even the possibility of such accountability on Oct. 30. Also, let me make clear that I had no intention of embarrassing the retired four-star general and ex-CIA director with a question about his extramarital affair with his admiring biographer Paula Broadwell, which precipitated his CIA resignation in November

2012.

Many an aging male ego has been massaged by the attentions of someone like Broadwell, and she seemed happy to do the massaging to expedite the research on *All In*, her biography of the fabled general. I had decided to resist the temptation to refer to the Biblical admonition against entrusting large matters to those who cannot be faithful in small things.

The affair may not have been a small thing to Mrs. Petraeus, but it pales in significance when compared to the death and destruction resulting from Petraeus's self-aggrandizing disingenuousness and dissembling about prospects for eventual success in Iraq and Afghanistan.

### **Petraeus Agonistes**

Assuming that Petraeus's expertise in counterinsurgency warfare was more than mere pretense, he knew both expeditions were doomed to failure. And he certainly now knows the inevitable answer to the question he famously posed to journalist Rick Atkinson in 2003 as U.S. forces troops began to get mired down in the sand of Iraq "Tell Me How This Ends."

The twin conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq "ended" if that's the right word for these late-stage fiascos with two additional stars pinned to Petraeus's uniform and with some 6,700 gold stars sent to the wives, husbands, or parents of U.S. troops killed, plus tens of thousands of purple hearts for those badly injured in both body and mind. A bad bargain for the American people and especially the dead and maimed U.S. troops not to mention the hundreds of thousands of dead and maimed Afghans and Iraqis but a pretty successful career move for Petraeus, if not for his fateful extramarital affair.

Surely, in the grim light of all the bloodshed, L'Affaire Broadwell can be seen as a minor peccadillo, the least of Petraeus's sins. But many of his ardent admirers view the sexual indiscretion as the only blot on his otherwise spotless dress uniform festooned with row after row of medals and ribbons.

It was my intent to put the spotlight, via a question or two, on Petraeus's far more consequentially dishonest behavior. And this seemed particularly important at this point in time, as his starry-eyed emulator generals seem no less willing than Petraeus to throw a new wave of youth from a poverty draft into a fool's-errand sequel in Iraq and Syria.

In any event, it seems reasonably clear why they did not let me enter the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y on Oct. 30. Someone thought that the thin-skinned ex-general might be discomforted by a less-than-admiring question. His speech was to be another moment for Petraeus to bathe in public adulation, not confront a citizen or two

who might pose critical queries. [For more on Petraeus and his acolytes, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Petraeus Spared Ray McGovern's Question.](#)"]

## **Lingering Mystery**

But one mystery lingers. The “organs of state security” (the words used by the Soviets to refer to their intelligence/security services) were lying in wait for me when I walked into the Y? Why? How on earth did they know I was coming?

My initial reaction was that the culprit could be a lingering BOLO, the “Be on the Look-Out” warning that the State Department had issued against me earlier for my non-violent anti-war stances. In September, thanks to a civil rights lawsuit filed on my behalf by the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund (PCJF), the State Department rescinded that BOLO alert for me, under which State Department agents had been ordered to stop and question me on sight.

State Department documents acquired under the Freedom of Information Act showed that the damning evidence behind that draconian (and patently unconstitutional) order was “political activism, primarily anti-war.”

The proximate cause was my standing silently with my back to then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Feb. 15, 2011, to protest the unconscionably violent policies she had promoted, including her vote for the Bush-Cheney war of aggression against Iraq (which she thought politically smart at the time) and her infamous suggestion during her political campaign that we could “obliterate” Iran.

In response to my silent protest, I was roughed up, cuffed, arrested, and jailed as Clinton delivered a major speech at George Washington University admonishing foreign governments not to stifle dissent. Heedless of the irony, Clinton did not miss a syllable, much less a word, as she watched me snatched directly in front of her and brutally removed. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Standing Up to War and Hillary Clinton.](#)"]

The charges were immediately dropped, since there were simply too many cameras recording what actually did happen to me. A State Department investigation into my background came up dry; but the words “political activism, primarily anti-war” were enough to get me BOLOed.

The State Department assured my pro bono lawyers at the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund that State not only had rescinded the BOLO but also had notified other law enforcement agencies that the BOLO was “non-operational.” But I remained suspicious that, while the State Department’s assurance may have been made in good faith, God only knows (and then only if God has the proper clearances) what other organs of state security had entered the “derogatory”

information about the danger of my “political activism” into their data bases.

Had my “derog” been shared, perhaps, with the ever-proliferating number of “fusion centers” that were so effective in sharing information to track and thwart the activists of Occupy including subversives like Quakers and Catholic Workers? However, as I reflected on the circumstances of my arrest on Oct. 30, I came to discount the possible role of the BOLO.

### **Taken by Surprise**

As I walked up the steps to the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y on Oct. 30, I had no idea there would be a reprise of the treatment accorded me three-and-a-half years ago at Hillary Clinton’s speech.

My friend and associate in Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPs) Bill Binney, a former Technical Director at the National Security Agency before he left in protest against NSA’s unconstitutional eavesdropping on Americans, long since advised me to assume that I am one of several thousands subjected to post-Fourth-Amendment surveillance.

So I had taken the precaution of asking a friend, who was in no way linked to me via email or phone records, to order the ticket for me, just on the off-chance the organs of state security might learn I intended to hear Petraeus speak at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y and might do something to prevent my attending.

Actually, it was pure coincidence that I happened to be in New York on the day of the Petraeus event. Months before, I had committed to teaching classes at Manhattan and Fordham universities on Oct. 30. I learned of the Petraeus event much later.

At that point, I chose what I thought would be a safe way to purchase a ticket. But I apparently failed to practice the kind of “tradecraft” in terms of limiting associations that is needed to function in today’s democratic society.

How did the organs of state security learn I was coming? It is more likely to have been guilt by association than the residue from a BOLO. In short, when I travel to New York to teach, I normally email my friend Martha at Maryhouse in the Bowery the Catholic Worker house founded by her grandmother, Dorothy Day.

If there is a free bed, I gratefully receive Catholic Worker hospitality and have a chance to enjoy the company of those who have been placed at the margins of society, as well to witness the selfless kindness of those forming authentic relationships with them.

Here’s the catch. Catholic Workers are involved not only in extending



hospitality but also in activism, trying, as Dorothy Day did, to make the world a less violent, more caring place. It is primarily the activism, of course, that brings scrutiny from the organs of security, but you might call it “political activism, primarily anti-war,” as the State Department did.

Moreover, the Catholic Worker Movement is an international organization widely looked upon as subversive of the Establishment, and this adds to the suspicion. In recent years, many of my Catholic Worker friends have been arrested for protesting the use of drones to kill foreigners dubbed “militants,” most of whom don’t look like most of us.

But the targets can now include American citizens, as President Barack Obama turns the Constitution upside down and takes it upon himself to act as judge, jury and executioner. Yes, the Fifth Amendment has gone the way of the Fourth, and the First has become an endangered species. Worth protesting before it too is extinct, would you not agree?

### **At The Tombs**

In a kind of poetic justice, it turns out my friend Martha has the same court date as I have the morning of Dec. 8 at the New York City Criminal Court building (aka “The Tombs”) at 100 Centre Street in New York, where I spent the night/morning of Oct. 30/31. She was arrested with about 100 others at a Sept. 22 action dubbed “Flood Wall Street,” protesting the important role of the financial industry in facilitating air pollution and global warming.

In an aside, Martha told me that the police had as much trouble getting handcuffs on the “polar bear” sitting next to her that day as they did on Oct. 30 trying to bend my injured left shoulder back far enough to get the cuffs on me. I look forward to standing at the same dock where Martha will be defending her action which was very much in the tradition of “Grannie.”

My Catholic Worker friends comfort the afflicted, while in no way shying away from afflicting the comfortable, as the saying goes. And for that, they often pay a price, including being snooped upon, in violation of the Fourth Amendment, for exercising their rights under the First.

I am not making this up: In the fall of 2010, Justice Department Inspector General Glenn Fine criticized the FBI for conducting “anti-terrorism” spy operations against the Catholic Worker Movement and even the Thomas Merton Center in Pittsburgh. According to Fine, spies were sent into the Merton Center to “look for international terrorists.” One of the informers photographed a woman he thought was of “Middle Eastern descent” to have her checked out by “terrorism analysts.”

So my possible tradecraft lapse may have been contacting my Catholic Worker friends. On Oct. 26, I sent Martha an email with the innocuous title, "Room in the Inn?" It contained the usual request for simple lodging at the Catholic Worker together with details regarding my classes at Fordham and Manhattan and the Petraeus event.

While the title and other metadata accompanying that message might seem singularly unsuspecting, eavesdroppers covering Martha's or my email addresses (or both) would have had no trouble ferreting out an email exchange following an earlier attempt to attend an event at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y, three years ago.

On Sept. 8, 2011, a group of Catholic Workers, together with others all of us with valid tickets were summarily expelled, most of us 10 minutes *before* an event sponsored by the Jewish Policy Center. That event bore the title "9/11 a Decade Later: Lessons Learned and Future Challenges" and featured former Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, ex-Attorney General Michael Mukasey, and George W. Bush's press spokesman Ari Fleisher. It was moderated by neoconservative talk show host Michael Medved.

Since I was not among those subjected to Y security's preventive strike before the performance, I sat quietly for Medved's opening rant about radical, fundamentalist Muslim terrorists, but then stood up in silent witness against the right-wing invective. I was unceremoniously, violently thrown out after a mere two minutes.

More relevant here: I still have in my email inbox a message of encouragement dated Sept. 12, 2011, in which Martha reminded me that every action, "successful" or not, is important; adding, "We of the Catholic Worker are 'fools for Christ,' as the saying goes."

### **Only Metadata**

You are perhaps thinking that the National Security Agency stores only metadata; and, if so, you would be wrong. Content is saved. So if the government wants to access the content of emails from the past, no problem.

As Bill Binney reminded me, former FBI director Robert Mueller let that particular cat out of the bag three-and-a-half years ago. In his testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 30, 2011, Mueller bragged about having access to "past emails and future ones as they come in."

Binney explains that the metadata is used to access the content. And, thanks to the documents provided by Edward Snowden, we know that under NSA's PRISM operation, data is routinely collected directly from Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, Facebook, PalTalk, AOL, Skype, YouTube, Apple (and God knows where else, again

assuming God is cleared).

So my best guess is that I can blame the “subversive” activities of the Catholic Workers and the monitoring of them by the organs of state security, for my recent arrest and overnight accommodations in The Tombs.

The people at the World Can’t Wait in New York, who were also aware of my plan to take in the Petraeus performance, are known to have been targets of eavesdropping, too. With the surfeit of people sorting through emails from suspicious folks, it may be that both the Catholic Workers and the World Can’t Wait were monitored all to keep us safe, of course.

It seems the height of irony that it may have been NSA’s eavesdropping that enabled the White House to get rid of Petraeus, when he was getting too big for his britches (and I allude here not only to his dalliance with Broadwell). To Bill Binney, it is clear as day that the President was ready to move against Petraeus right after Obama’s re-election in November 2012.

### **A Final, Sad Irony**

A couple of days after my arrest and jailing, I received a sympathetic email from “George” in Germany, who described himself as a national security whistleblower in his own right. George strongly suggested I ditch my Gmail account.

“Before Edward Snowden’s revelations last spring,” he said, “I too was using Gmail as my primary address. I was dismayed to learn that Google was an NSA PRISM partner.” George strongly suggested that I switch to a more trustworthy email provider outside the U.S. and actually suggested one in particular.

Why ironic? In the years after my birth in 1939, Germany was widely considered the cutting edge on matters of eavesdropping and enhanced interrogation techniques, and most Germans didn’t challenge these forms of oppression even when it touched them personally. Perhaps saddest of all, those with some pretense to moral leadership first and foremost the Catholic and Lutheran Churches could not find their voice. Is that history repeating itself in the U.S.?

In *Defying Hitler*, Sebastian Haffner’s journal of his life as a lawyer in training to become a judge in Berlin in the early 1930s, the author (whose real name was Raimund Pretzel) provides an eerily reminiscent account of what ensued after Berlin’s equivalent of the attacks of 9/11 the burning of the Reichstag.

“I do not see that one can blame the majority of Germans who, in 1933, believed that the Reichstag fire was the work of the Communists. What one can blame them

for, and what shows their terrible collective weakness of character ... is that this settled the matter.

“With sheepish submissiveness, the German people accepted that, as a result of the fire, each one of them lost what little personal freedom and dignity was guaranteed by the constitution, as though it followed as a necessary consequence. If the Communists had burned down the Reichstag, it was perfectly in order that the government took ‘decisive measures.’ ... from now on, one’s telephone would be tapped, one’s letters opened, and one’s desk might be broken into.” (pp. 121-122).

Substitute Americans for Germans, terrorists for Communists, September 11, 2001, for 1933, and give some thought to where we seem to be headed. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. warned that “there is such a thing as being too late,” a quotation that, ironically, President Obama is fond of citing. It would be a good thing if we Americans woke from our lethargy before it is too late.

**Ray McGovern works for Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He served as an Army officer and then a CIA analyst for a total of 30 years, including two tours in Germany. He now serves on the Steering Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).**

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## Obama’s Last Chance

**Exclusive:** For six years, President Obama has bent to the will of Official Washington by renegeing on promises to the American people for “transparency” and operating instead as an out-of-touch “insider.” Now, the Democratic election debacle offers him a last chance to remember why he was elected, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

The Democrats clearly deserved to lose on Tuesday, though the Republicans may not have deserved to win. Indeed, there was almost a yin-yang quality to the Democratic rout/Republican victory in which the Democrats played into almost all the Republican themes, making the outcome feel inevitable.

Most notably, President Barack Obama and the Democrats shelved all the “contentious” issues that might have rallied their “base” to turn out and vote. Immigration reform was put on hold; release of the Senate report on “torture” was postponed; what to do about “global warming” was ignored; the argument about

the value of activist government was silenced; etc., etc., etc.

On a personal level, supposedly polarizing “liberal” candidates, such as actor Ashley Judd in Kentucky, were pushed aside in favor of supposedly more “electable” candidates, like Alison Lundergan Grimes. Unwilling to say whether she had voted for President Obama in 2012, Grimes managed to win only 41 percent of the vote against the perennially unpopular Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell.

Obama himself was virtually sidelined from many races in what was an implicit Democratic admission of the Republican theme that Obama was a failure and that he deserved an electoral repudiation. The smell of fear pervaded the Democratic ranks and panic is not the most inspiring of emotions.

In some states, the Democrats seemed enamored with what might be called the “nepotism strategy,” counting on the “magic” of political names and family connections to somehow overcome their lack of message and their image of timidity: Pryor in Arkansas, Grimes in Kentucky, Nunn in Georgia all went down to decisive defeat.

In the bigger picture, the Democratic failure seems part and parcel with the broader weakness of progressivism in the United States. The Right continues to dominate in areas of media and messaging, investing billions upon billions of dollars in a vertically integrated media apparatus, from the older technologies of print, radio and TV to the newer ones around the Internet. The Right also has layers upon layers of think tanks and other propaganda outlets.

By comparison, the Left has never made anything close to a comparable investment. And, even the ostensibly “liberal” network MSNBC and the purportedly “liberal” New York Times fall into line behind neoconservative foreign policy initiatives at nearly every turn, such as the “regime change” campaigns in Syria, Iran and Ukraine. So, too, do many of the supposedly “liberal” think tanks, such as the Brookings Institution and the New America Foundation.

Indeed, a remarkable reality about U.S. policy circles is that six years after the end of George W. Bush’s disastrous neocon-dominated presidency, the neocons continue to dominate America’s foreign policy thinking, albeit sometimes rebranded as “liberal interventionism.”

### **A ‘Closet Realist’**

Though President Obama may be something of a “closet realist” hoping to work quietly with foreign adversaries to resolve international crises he has never taken firm control over his own foreign policy.

Obama apparently thought that neocon holdovers from the Bush years, like Gen.

David Petraeus or Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland, and Democratic neocons, such as his first Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, would somehow drop their ideological certitudes and cooperate with his approach.

Instead, the neocons and their "liberal interventionist" allies burrowed deep into the foreign policy bureaucracy and pop up periodically to press for their war-mongering agendas. A distracted President Obama always seems outmaneuvered from the 2009 Afghan "surge," to the 2010 stand-off over Iran's nuclear program, to the 2011 civil wars in Libya and Syria, to the 2014 Ukrainian coup d'état.

Arriving late at each new crisis, Obama usually signs off on what the neocons want, although he intermittently pushes for his "realist" approach, such as collaborating with Russia's President Vladimir Putin in avoiding a U.S. war on Syria in 2013 and negotiating a peaceful settlement to Iran's nuclear program, which could be completed in 2014 if Obama doesn't lose his nerve.

The big question now is whether the Democrats' humiliating defeat on Nov. 4 will teach Obama and the party any meaningful lessons or will the Democrats just kid themselves into thinking that "demographics" will save them or that they will prevail in 2016 by avoiding controversial stands and putting up another famous "name," in Hillary Clinton.

Will Obama finally realize that he has to revert back to his inspiring messages of 2008 on issues such as his promise of government transparency? For the past six years, transparency has worked only one way: the government gets to look into the secrets of citizens while the citizens have no right to know about the government's secrets.

There is a fundamental disconnect between this image of an intrusive federal government spying on everyone and the progressive concept that an active federal government is necessary to address fundamental problems facing the American people and the world, such as what to do about global warming, income inequality, corporate power, racial injustice, etc.

What I'm hearing from many young progressives is that they are so resentful of government intrusions into their lives that they are veering more toward libertarianism, even though it offers no solutions to most environmental, economic and social problems. If Obama hopes to stanch this flow of progressive youth to the right, he needs to finally recognize that the people need transparency on the government and the government must learn to trust the people.

An obvious first step would be to override CIA objections and release the report

on torture during the Bush years. And while Obama is at it, he should make public the secret pages from the 9/11 report relating to Saudi funding for al-Qaeda terrorists.

I'm also told that Obama has information that contradicts his administration's early claims blaming the Aug. 21, 2013 sarin gas attack on the Syrian government and faulting Russia for the July 17, 2014 shoot-down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over Ukraine. Those two incidents fueled dangerous international confrontations with the United States nearly going to war against the Syrian government in 2013 and starting a new Cold War with Russia in 2014.

If Obama has U.S. intelligence information that points the finger of blame in different directions, he should correct the impressions left by Secretary of State John Kerry and other U.S. officials. The neocons won't like that and some "liberal interventionists" may have egg on their faces, too but misleading propaganda has no place in a democracy. False information must be removed as quickly as possible.

Similarly, Obama should commit his administration to expediting release of historical secrets. Currently, it takes many years, even decades, to pry loose embarrassing "secrets" from the U.S. government, often allowing false historical narratives to take hold or creating a hot house for conspiracy theories. It's way past time for the U.S. government to give the American people their history back.

By releasing as much information as possible about important topics, Obama could finally begin to win back the people's trust, not just in him but in the government. Nothing is as corrosive to democratic governance as a belief by the people that the government doesn't trust them and that they, in turn, have no reason to trust the government.

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

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## Gary Webb and Media Manipulation

Many Americans still count on the mainstream media to define reality for them, but too often the MSM spins false narratives that protect the powerful and diminish democracy, as happened in the long-running denial of cocaine trafficking by President Reagan's beloved Nicaraguan Contra rebels, writes Beverly Bandler.

By Beverly Bandler

The sad tale of the mainstream U.S. media's destruction of journalist Gary Webb for reviving the Contra-cocaine scandal in the 1990s a story recounted in the movie "Kill the Messenger" is important not only because of Webb's tragic demise but because the case goes to the central question of whether the American people are getting information and facts to which we are entitled in a free society, or whether we are being manipulated with half-truths, propaganda and straight-out lies.

What is ironic about the recent patronizing anti-Webb commentary by the *Washington Post's* Jeff Leen claiming that "an extraordinary claim requires extraordinary proof" is that the *Post* was a prime salesman for the Iraq War in 2002 and 2003. And just what "proof" did the *Post* require for the "extraordinary claim" about Iraq hiding stockpiles of WMD, the chief selling point to the American people? Apparently nothing more than "jingoism," the beating of war drums and empty assurances from the Bush administration's neocons.

As journalist Michael Massing pointed out in February 2004 after the U.S. invasion force failed to find the promised stockpiles "'Iraq's Arsenal Was Only on Paper,' declared a recent headline in *The Washington Post*."

But Leen's commentary in response to "Kill the Messenger" was just the latest example of the mainstream press covering its own tracks for its failure to pursue the Contra-cocaine scandal and for its complicity in destroying Gary Webb.

It's now clear that the CIA has long been trying to fend off the reality of the Contra-cocaine scandal, often with the help of what a newly released CIA report described as its "productive relations with journalists."

Americans need to know about such "dark alliances," the title that Webb gave his original series at the *San Jose Mercury News* and later his book. This posting is about two such "dark alliances": 1) The Contra-cocaine scandal that surfaced in 1985 when then Associated Press colleagues Robert Parry and Brian Barger first broke the news. 2) The concerted effort by U.S. major news media, specifically, the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Washington Post* to not only disparage the scandal but also discredit investigative reporter Gary Webb who, in 1996,



revived the story by explaining the Contra cocaine's impact on U.S. cities in the 1980s.

### **'Just Say No'**

Webb's revelations, of course, flew in the face of the conventional wisdom that President Ronald Reagan was a stern enemy of drugs and a fierce threat to drug traffickers. On Oct. 27, 1986, Reagan budgeted \$1.7 billion for the drug war and federalized Rockefeller law-style mandatory-minimum sentences. The message was: "Just say no."

It also turned out that the CIA's "productive relations with journalists" proved so strong that it didn't even seem to matter when official government investigations confirmed key facts about the Contra-cocaine scandal.

For instance, Sen. John Kerry chaired a 2 ½-year investigation of the Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics, and International Operations that reported in 1989: "It is clear that individuals who provided support for the Contras were involved in drug trafficking ... and elements of the Contras themselves knowingly received financial and material assistance from drug traffickers."

Commenting on Kerry's investigation and the major U.S. media's response, journalism professor Jeff Cohen wrote: "Contra drug dealing was tolerated in the U.S. frenzy to overthrow Nicaragua's leftwing Sandinista government. Kerry's work was ignored or attacked in big media – *Newsweek* labeled him a 'randy conspiracy buff.' "

With Kerry and his investigation dismissed as irrelevant by the big newspapers, the scandal remained largely suppressed for the next seven years until Webb revived it in 1996.

Webb (1955-2004) was an investigative journalist whose awards included a Pulitzer in 1990, as part of a team at the *San Jose Mercury News*, and at least four other major prizes for his solo work. Webb tried to reveal the impact that some of the cocaine that came through the Nicaraguan Contra pipeline had on American cities, saying:

"It's not a situation where the government or the CIA sat down and said okay, let's invent crack and sell it in black neighborhoods and let's decimate black America. It was a situation where we need money for a covert operation. The quickest way to raise it is to sell cocaine and you guys go sell it somewhere. We don't want to know anything about it. And you had this bad luck of them doing it right around the time people were figuring out how to make crack."

### **A Sad But True Tale**

"This, sadly, is a true story," Webb wrote in his 1999 book, *Dark Alliance*. It is a story now told in the Hollywood film, "Kill the Messenger," based on the book of the same name by Nick Schou and Webb's *Dark Alliance*.

The story begins with Webb's 1996 series "Dark Alliance" in California's *San Jose Mercury News*. Webb investigated and told how for a better part of a decade, in a "wildly successful conspiracy," a San Francisco Bay area drug ring sold tons of cocaine to Los Angeles street gangs and funneled millions of dollars in drug profits from those sales to the CIA-backed Nicaraguan Contras.

For his investigation, Webb drew from newly declassified documents, newly released undercover DEA audio and videotapes, federal court testimony, and interviews, and he demonstrated how the federal government knowingly allowed massive amounts of drugs and money to change hands at the expense of U.S. communities.

The "Dark Alliance" *Mercury News* series "might have vanished without a trace had the paper not chosen this story to create a splash for its website, complete with graphics and links to original source documents," wrote Dan Simon, editor of Webb's book and publisher of Seven Stories Press.

"It became, arguably, the first big Internet news story, with as many as 1.3 million hits on a single day. Talk radio picked it up off the Internet, and citizens' groups and media watchdogs soon followed. The CIA launched its own internal investigation. Gary's star had never shone more brightly

"The mainstream print media was ominously silent until October and November 1996," Simon continued, "when *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times* all finally picked up the story. But instead of launching their own investigations into whether the CIA had shielded drug traffickers, these papers went after Gary's reporting, although they 'could not find a single significant factual error,' as Gary's then-editor at *The Mercury News*, Jerry Ceppos, would write in an internal memo.

"But after that, the series was described frequently as 'discredited.' Soon the story and Gary himself were spoiled goods. Gary's editor switched sides and penned an apologia distancing the paper from the series. Gary was forced out of his job, even though the body of evidence supporting Gary's account was actually growing. Two years later, the CIA's internal investigation would prove to be a vindication of Gary's work."

### **African-American Outrage**

There was also an important social and political dimension to Webb's revelations. "The investigative series sparked protests in African-American and

congressional probes,” noted *Democracy Now!* “It also provoked a fierce reaction from the media establishment, which denounced the series. The *Los Angeles Times* alone assigned 17 reporters to probe Webb’s report and his personal life.

“Recently declassified CIA files show the agency used a ‘a ground base of already productive relations with journalists [at other newspapers]’ to counter what it called ‘a genuine public relations crisis.’

“Following the controversy, the *San Jose Mercury News* demoted Webb. He then resigned and pushed his investigation even further in his book, *Dark Alliance: The CIA, the Contras, and the Crack Cocaine Explosion*.

“The CIA’s inspector general later corroborated Webb’s key findings, but, by then, his career was wrecked. The newspapers that denounced Webb largely ignored the CIA’s own report, it was released in 1998 amid the scandal over President Bill Clinton’s affair with Monica Lewinsky.”

“The second CIA report not only vindicates me,” wrote Gary Webb to a fellow journalist in July 24, 1998, “but all the other reporters and activists who have been trying to bring this to the public’s attention for the last 13 years. It also proves that, once again, the CIA lied to the American public and was assisted in this effort by our national news media, which denigrated anyone who challenged the official denials.”

Rep. Maxine Waters, D-California, an outspoken member of the Congressional Black Caucus, recalled that “The night that I read [Webb’s] ‘Dark Alliance’ series, I was so alarmed, that I literally sat straight up in bed, poring over every word. I reflected on the many meetings I attended throughout South Central Los Angeles during the 1980s, when I constantly asked, ‘Where are all the drugs coming from?’ I asked myself that night whether it was possible for such a vast amount of drugs to be smuggled into any district under the noses of the community leaders, police, sheriff’s department, FBI, DEA and other law enforcement agencies

“The time I spent investigating the allegations of the ‘Dark Alliance’ series led me to the undeniable conclusion that the CIA, DEA, DIA, and FBI knew about drug trafficking in South Central Los Angeles. They were either part of the trafficking or turned a blind eye to it, an effort to fund the Contra war and that the drug money was used by both sides

“It may take time, but I am convinced that history is going to record that Gary Webb wrote the truth. The establishment refused to give Gary Webb the credit that he deserved. They teamed up in an effort to destroy the story, and very nearly succeeded. We will not let this story end until the naysayers and

opponents are forced to apologize for their reckless and irresponsible attacks on Gary Webb.”

### **A Disgraceful Episode**

Charles P. Pierce, a political writer for Esquire.com, said: “Of all the disgraceful episodes regarding the press and the Reagan administration, the discrediting of Gary Webb was probably the worst, given the fact that so much of the elite press was complicit in what was done to him.”

But Webb’s brave reporting had a lasting historical impact because it finally forced the Central Intelligence Agency to conduct a serious investigation of the Contra-cocaine problem and what the CIA knew about the scandal and what actions the agency took or didn’t take.

“[CIA Inspector General Frederick] Hitz completed his investigation in mid-1998 and the second volume of his two-volume investigation was published on Oct. 8, 1998. In the report, Hitz identified more than 50 Contras and Contra-related entities implicated in the drug trade. He also detailed how the Reagan administration had protected these drug operations and frustrated federal investigations throughout the 1980s,” reported journalist Robert Parry.

Andrew Hehir of Salon.com wrote: “Here’s the important thing to say about Webb’s big story: In general terms, and in most of its specifics, it was true. Virtually no one would deny that today; congressional commissions, internal CIA investigations and scholarly articles by historians have reached similar conclusions, shrouded in more lawyerly or diplomatic language.

“You can say that the CIA was apparently complicit in drug-dealing but not directly involved; you can say that the agency ‘turned a blind eye’ to evidence that smuggling revenue was being used to fund the Contras; you can say that ‘the CIA knew or should have known that some of its allies were accused of being in the drug business,’ in the exceedingly careful phrasing of *New York Times* media reporter David Carr.

“If the tone of Webb’s reporting was sometimes inflammatory, what he said happened pretty much happened. Webb never stated or implied that the CIA had deliberately imported crack cocaine into African-American neighborhoods; that construction or interpretation came later, from other people.”

Filmmaker Marc Levin noted at HuffingtonPost, “The idea that the CIA works with drug traffickers and other criminals and sometimes facilitates their operations and protects them as assets in return for their help in defeating our enemies (i.e. Communists during the Cold War and now Islamic fundamentalists) is not ‘an extraordinary claim.’ It’s a fact.”

## See the Movie

I believe each one of us can do something of value: we can go see the film, "Kill the Messenger," encourage others to do so, read and share the references in the "recommended reading" list below among others and come to our own conclusions.

This issue is not only about a movie and what it reveals, but it is about what *Alternet's* Don Hazen states has become a basic tenet of American politics: "that corporate power rules the roost. Nothing significant that will become law in America if corporate power, profits, global competitive advantage, military might, national security and privatization are in any significant way threatened."

DemocracyNow's Amy Goodman added: "That's really what will save us, is when we really know what's going on, not filtered through the lens or the microphone of the corporation."

In 2004, rejected by his profession, essentially unemployable, impoverished, divorced, alone, and facing eviction, the 49-year-old Webb prepared for his own cremation and sent suicide notes to family members. He was found dead at his Sacramento County, California home with two gunshot wounds to his head, an apparent suicide.

"Now when I reread the opening sentence of the 'Dark Alliance' series," writes book editor Dan Simon, "I realize Gary had found the big story, the one about the betrayal of a people by its own government. A monumental sadness remains."

Simon added, "The alternative media, to its credit, honored Gary. But the community of his peers in corporate journalism never again embraced him. He could never quite get over their betrayal. When you are an investigative reporter armed with the truth, the gun often fires backwards."

America is not what we think it is.

**Beverly Bandler's public affairs career spans some 40 years. Her credentials include serving as president of the state-level League of Women Voters of the Virgin Islands and extensive public education efforts in the Washington, D.C. area for 16 years. She writes from Mexico.**

## VIDEOS

**"Kill the Messenger"** Resurrects Gary Webb, Journalist Maligned for Exposing CIA Ties to Crack Trade" on *Democracy Now!* The video includes an extended clip from the 2012 documentary "Shadows of Liberty" that talks about how freedom of the

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for protecting the CIA from someone else's journalistic excesses.' "When Gary Webb committed suicide, French journalist, Paul Moreira, made a television documentary for France's Canal Plus. He interviewed Pincus and asked him why in October, 1998, he had not reported on the CIA's inspector general report admitting the agency worked with drug dealers throughout the 1980s. Pincus was unable to explain why he and other mainstream journalists completely ignored this report that helped to support Webb's case against the CIA."

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## Petraeus Spared Ray McGovern's Question

**Exclusive:** New York City police arrested ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern to prevent him from attending a public event where he planned to pose a pointed question to retired Gen. David Petraeus, another sign of how much U.S. neocons love democracy, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Former CIA analyst Ray McGovern, who was arrested by New York City police on Thursday night to prevent him from attending a speech by retired Gen. and ex-CIA Director David Petraeus, told me the day before that he was planning to ask a question during the Q-and-A.

McGovern, who writes regularly for Consortiumnews.com, compared his goal in New York to his famous questioning of then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in Atlanta in 2006 when McGovern pressed Rumsfeld on false statements he had made about Iraq's WMD and ties to al-Qaeda.

But the 75-year-old McGovern was blocked from entering the event at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y, was roughly put under arrest, and was held overnight in jail. He described his ordeal in an interview with RT, saying “I was warned as soon as I got to the ticket-taker, ‘Ray, you’re not welcome here.’”

McGovern, who was suffering from a shoulder injury, said he was caused sharp pain by being forcefully handcuffed. “If you’ve seen the footage, you can see me screaming in pain as they try to pin my left wrist around behind my back,” McGovern told RT.

He was hauled off to a local precinct and charged with resisting arrest, criminal trespass and disorderly conduct. He said he spent the night on a stainless steel cot.

In our conversation a day earlier, on Wednesday, McGovern said he was calling from the bus traveling between Washington and New York en route to speak at his alma mater, Fordham University. But he said he also planned to attend the Thursday speech by Petraeus, who was one of President George W. Bush’s favorite generals during the Iraq War. McGovern noted that prominent neocon theorist Max Boot was moderating the Petraeus talk.

During the Iraq War under President Bush and the Afghan War under President Barack Obama, Petraeus collaborated closely with leading neoconservatives as they pushed for escalations of the two conflicts. In 2009, Petraeus was part of a successful behind-the-scenes effort by Bush holdovers to trap Obama into a “surge” of 30,000 troops into Afghanistan.

“Before Obama’s decision to dispatch 30,000 troops, the Bush holdovers sought to hem in the President’s choices by working with allies in the Washington news media and in think tanks,” I wrote in 2010. “For instance, early in 2009, Petraeus personally arranged for Max Boot [a neocon on the Council on Foreign Relations], Frederick Kagan and Kimberly Kagan [two other leading neocons] to get extraordinary access during a trip to Afghanistan.

“Their access paid dividends for Petraeus when they penned a glowing report in the Weekly Standard about the prospects for success in Afghanistan if only President Obama sent more troops and committed the United States to stay in the war for the long haul.”

Upon their return, the three wrote: “Fears of impending disaster are hard to sustain, if you actually spend some time in Afghanistan, as we did recently at the invitation of General David Petraeus, chief of U.S. Central Command.

“Using helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, and bone-jarring armored vehicles, we spent eight days traveling from the snow-capped peaks of Kunar province near the

border with Pakistan in the east to the wind-blown deserts of Farah province in the west near the border with Iran. Along the way we talked with countless coalition soldiers, ranging from privates to a four-star general," the trio said.

## **A Manipulated Obama**

How Obama was manipulated into the Afghan "surge" by Bush's holdovers with the help of the neocons was chronicled, too, in Bob Woodward's 2010 book, *Obama's Wars*, which revealed that Bush's old team made sure Obama was given no option other than to escalate troop levels in Afghanistan. The Bush holdovers also lobbied inside neocon-friendly media for the troop increase behind Obama's back.

Woodward's book notes that "in September 2009, Petraeus called a Washington Post columnist to say that the war would be unsuccessful if the president held back on troops. Later that month, [Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, Adm. Mike] Mullen repeated much the same sentiment in Senate testimony, and in October, [Gen. Stanley] McChrystal asserted in a speech in London that a scaled-back effort against Afghan terrorists would not work."

This back-door campaign infuriated Obama's aides, including White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel, Woodward reported. "Filling his rant with expletives, Emanuel said, 'Between the chairman [Mullen] and Petraeus, everyone's come out and publicly endorsed the notion of more troops. The president hasn't even had a chance!'" Woodward reported.

Mouse-trapped by this clever maneuvering, Obama acquiesced to the 30,000-troop "surge" although he reportedly regretted his decision almost immediately. In the end the "surge" and Petraeus's counterinsurgency strategy that went with it had little impact on the Afghan War beyond extending the carnage and adding another 1,000 or so U.S. troops to the rolls of "the fallen."

Petraeus's cozy relationship with Boot was also underscored in 2010 when the four-star general accidentally found himself in a public-relations kerfuffle because some of his prepared testimony to Congress had contained a mild criticism of Israel.

Concerned that his standing in Official Washington might be jeopardized if he were deemed "anti-Israel," Petraeus begged Boot to help him head off the controversy. The e-mails from Petraeus to Boot revealed Petraeus renouncing his own testimony in March 2010 because it included the observation that "the enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbors present distinct challenges to our ability to advance our interests" in the Mideast.

Petraeus's testimony had continued, "Israeli-Palestinian tensions often flare

into violence and large-scale armed confrontations. The conflict foments anti-American sentiment, due to a perception of U.S. favoritism for Israel. Meanwhile, al-Qaeda and other militant groups exploit that anger to mobilize support.”

### **Running Scared**

Though the testimony was obviously true, many neocons regard any suggestion that Israeli intransigence on Palestinian peace talks contributed to the dangers faced by American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan or by the U.S. public from acts of terrorism at home as a “blood libel” against Israel.

So, when Petraeus’s testimony began getting traction on the Internet, the general turned to Boot at the high-powered Council on Foreign Relations, and began backtracking on the testimony. “As you know, I didn’t say that,” Petraeus said, according to one e-mail to Boot timed off at 2:27 p.m., March 18, 2010. “It’s in a written submission for the record.”

In other words, Petraeus was saying the comments were only in his formal testimony submitted to the Senate Armed Services Committee and were not repeated by him in his brief oral opening statement. However, written testimony is treated as part of the official record at congressional hearings with no meaningful distinction from oral testimony.

In another e-mail, as Petraeus solicited Boot’s help in tamping down any controversy over the Israeli remarks, the general ended the message with a military “Roger” and a sideways happy face, made from a colon, a dash and a closed parenthesis, “:-)”).

The e-mails were made public by James Morris, who runs a Web site called “[Neocon Zionist Threat to America](#).” He said he apparently got them by accident when he sent a March 19 e-mail congratulating Petraeus for his testimony and Petraeus responded by forwarding one of Boot’s blog posts that knocked down the story of the general’s implicit criticism of Israel.

Petraeus forwarded Boot’s blog item, entitled “A Lie: David Petraeus, Anti-Israel,” which had been posted at the Commentary magazine site at 3:11 p.m. on March 18. However, Petraeus apparently forgot to delete some of the other exchanges between him and Boot at the bottom of the e-mail.

McGovern was aware of this history and told me that he thought an opportunity to question Petraeus in such a setting with Boot might prove illuminating. After his arrest and release, McGovern told RT that he had planned to ask Petraeus, who was responsible for training the Iraqi army, about his failure to train those forces sufficiently to stand up to a recent offensive by the Islamic

State.

“Will you come out of retirement and try to do it better this time to train the Iraqi forces?” McGovern said, describing his intended question.

Petraeus retired from the U.S. Army in 2011 to become the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, which he left in disgrace in November 2012 after revelations that he had an extramarital affair with an admiring female biographer.

“This is no saint. This is actually no great strategist,” McGovern said of Petraeus. “He’s an embarrassment to the U.S. Army in which I used to be proud to have served.”

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

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## Big Media Has Betrayed the People

For years, Americans relied on the mainstream U.S. news media for information; some folks were even convinced the MSM was “liberal.” But the current reality is that the major papers have become mouthpieces for the national security state while amassing a sorry record of deception, writes Greg Maybury.

By Greg Maybury

In his farewell address to the American people in 1961, President Dwight Eisenhower delivered what turned out to be his most memorable public utterance, famously warning Americans about the perils of the growing “[military-industrial complex](#).” He went on to say: “Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals so that security and liberty may prosper together.”

Although it was the “military-industrial” bit that most folks remember, it was the “alert and knowledgeable” part that also needed to resonate. Unfortunately, instead of an “alert and knowledgeable citizenry,” which Ike suggested was the



only bulwark against the continued growth, power and influence of this monster within, much of the American citizenry remained oblivious to it all. They either fell asleep at the democratic wheel or chose to remain ignorant of the already disturbing implications of the military-industrial complex's encroaching reach into every aspect of the American demos and polity.

When the torch was passed to the new generation as John F. Kennedy declared in his Inaugural Address just days after Ike's warning – the “good life” beckoned. Few, it seemed, wished to rock the boat. More than a half century after Eisenhower's warning and nearly 15 years into what some like to call the New American Century, the growth of this “military-industrial complex” has far exceeded anything even the Old Warhorse could have imagined. Yet despite this, most Americans are still asleep at the wheel. There seems little evidence that is likely to change anytime soon.

And here we should ponder at least one of the main reasons why this is so.

For those folks who retain any faith or confidence that the mainstream or corporate media is providing us with all the insight we need to make sense of the world and the driving forces behind the big trends and developments, a reality check of the first order is in order. What was once called the Fourth Estate, a public institution of journalism intended to check on the powerful, has become a Fifth Column against democracy, a means for the Power Elites in business, finance and politics to manage the people, not a way for the people to keep tabs on the powerful.

The big fix is in on behalf of the Agenda Benders of the National Security State. The game is rigged. And it is decidedly not in favor of equality, democracy, freedom, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness of the majority; nor is it for that matter, designed to nurture “an alert and knowledgeable citizenry.”

The fundamental principles of journalism sound hunky-dory in theory. But when the rubber hits the road these standards are all too quickly deep-sixed in favor of more prosaic and less lofty goals. Professionalism becomes careerism. The “public interest” becomes “private gain.” But finally much of the public is figuring this game out.

The extraordinary growth of the independent and alternative media underscores this premise and surely points to more people looking for news, viewpoints and opinions outside the MSM. The “marketplace of ideas” isn't just expanding; the monopoly is breaking down and whole new niches are opening up.

This is of course a welcome development although no one should underestimate the residual power of the MSM and the difficulty of producing truly independent journalism. Although there are promising signs the MSM's readership is waning, there remain many folks implacably wedded to their daily fix of "*impropaganda*" from the establishment newsmakers and the "*opinionocracy*" whose positioning statement might well read: "*Here is the news we choose, to give you all today.*"

## **The Great Malaise**

Yet, as long as we are not relying on the MSM for our daily dose of context and perspective, examples underscoring the broader trend abound everywhere we care to look. Writer Ulson Gunnar reported in an article at the New Eastern Outlook website that Vladimir Putin's recent address to the Valdai Discussion Club was wide ranging and well worth reading.

But it is Gunnar's article that's pertinent here. After applauding Putin's willingness to point to Washington's hypocrisy in key foreign policy areas and noting the seemingly irreversible loss of "respect and legitimacy once commanded" by the U.S. in the international arena, Gunnar then cites the MSM's "utter failure to hold accountable, poor policy driven by corrupt, criminal special interests" as one of the main reasons:

"Leaving it to Putin to point out the sorry state of American foreign policy grants Russia the respect and legitimacy the US would have otherwise held onto were it capable of putting its own house in order. The inability of America's media to serve public interests is a symptom of America's greater malaise." [My Emphasis]

But the reality is even worse than that. The major U.S. media has not simply failed to hold U.S. officials accountable for their destructive arrogance. The MSM chose to mock Putin for his undeniably accurate remarks. For instance, *The Washington Post* published an editorial entitled (in print editions), "Putinoia on full display," which said, about Putin's Valdai remarks, "out poured a poisonous mix of lies, conspiracy theories, thinly veiled threats of further aggression and, above all, seething resentment toward the United States."

The *Post* editors then cited examples of Putin's "Putinoia" such as his statements that the United States had "declared itself the winner of the Cold War" and promoted a "unipolar world [that] is simply a means of justifying dictatorship over people and countries." Other examples of Putin's madness, according to the *Post*, included his observations that Washington's interventions have created chaos around the world and that the overthrow of Ukraine's elected President Viktor Yanukovich was a "coup d'etat." In other words, Putin made observations that were either obviously true or certainly arguably true but the

*Post* insisted on its own reality, one that grossly misleads its readers and implicitly sets the boundaries of MSM-approved debate.

For another exemplary case study of this MSM phenomenon of distortion and deception, we might look at the recently released "Kill the Messenger," a film treatment of the life and times of investigative journalist Gary Webb. Webb attempted in 1996 to shed light on the CIA's connections to, and knowledge of, cocaine distribution by the CIA-backed Nicaraguan Contras and their associates, and the consequent crack epidemic that spread across America throughout the 1980s.

Ultimately Webb's career was destroyed by a concerted, relentless character assassination and disinformation campaign by the Big Three of the U.S. print media *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times*, each one of which variously, yet ruthlessly distorted, and then refuted, Webb's claims, setting up straw men and then knocking them down. Several years later, in 2004, his career and marriage over, and financially destitute, Webb pulled the pin by committing suicide.

If Webb's fate had resulted from a rare manifestation of an unholy mix of journalistic *nonfeasance*, *misfeasance* and *malfeasance* in the history of reportage and public opinion-making, we might be tempted to view this case as an aberration. But sadly it is not. It is part of a pattern of covering up criminal nonfeasance, misfeasance and malfeasance at the highest levels of the U.S. government, especially in matters of "national security" or in Eisenhower's phrase, the "military-industrial complex."

In the Webb case, his destruction also camouflaged the MSM's own venality and incompetence, since the same Big Three newspapers had missed or disparaged reports of Contra-cocaine trafficking when the crimes were occurring in the 1980s (and when the American people needed to be informed of what the Reagan administration was doing and not doing). It is notable that it was not one but *three* of the so-called newspapers of record in established MSM circles that led the attack against a fellow journalist.

Taking into account the extraordinary significance of Webb's reportage, along with the fact it is now generally accepted he largely got his story right, his own personal and professional odyssey is a savage, wholly justifiable indictment on all things MSM in the Home of the Brave. Yet insofar as we can gather, none of them has openly or unequivocally acknowledged its complicity in covering up the details of Webb's revelations and/or for what they did in destroying his career, his family and ultimately his life. No one has been held to account, and no one has forthrightly apologized.

The fact that at least one of these papers the redoubtable *Washington Post* is still trying to defend the indefensible is surely another nail in the coffin of the *ancien régime* of the corporate-controlled media, information and news industry. It seems though the *Post* may only be rubbing salt into its own wounds, as any number of more independent media folk seem determined to set the record straight on Webb's behalf.

### **Weapons of Mass Disinformation**

As for the rest of the MSM cohorts who jumped onto the Big Three's "Get Gary Webb" bandwagon, it would appear they are letting sleeping dogs lie in the wake of the film's release. It's unknown if they are doing this to preserve whatever integrity they might have left over their own attacks on Webb and/or failure to undertake their own investigations, or whether it is because they really don't care one way or another. Webb may just have been collateral damage an "expendable" in the perennial War on Truth in mainstream media circles.

If Watergate was a high-water mark in investigative reportage and political news coverage in the U.S. and by some accounts there are compelling reasons after all these years to view this assessment with some skepticism then the Webb affair would have to qualify as a suitable case study at the other end of the spectrum.

As significant as the destruction of Gary Webb was in its implications for a free, fair and fearless mainstream press in America, this MSM behavior has now become the norm, not the exception. (Indeed, President George W. Bush was able to mislead the American people into the disastrous Iraq War with the MSM especially the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* aiding and abetting his WMD deceptions of the American people).

With this in mind, we can hardly expect that we are going to get the kind of news and information we need to remain "alert and knowledgeable" from the MSM in an age when being so has possibly never been more important in homo sap's sorry-ass history on the Big Blue Ball. There are now so many examples of that Unholy Trinity's nonfeasance, misfeasance and malfeasance in journalistic reportage that it's a challenge to list them all, from Vietnam to the Iran-Contra Scandal; from the first Gulf War to the Balkans War; from Iraq's WMDs to the War on Terror. And these only skim the surface. If these bastions of fair and fearless reportage are the newspapers of record, the record is patchy indeed. Tragically so.

Moreover, there can be no better example of the double standards that prevail in U.S. politics and in its relationship with the Fourth Estate than Obama's 2013 honoring of Ben Bradlee the iconic *Washington Post* editor who famously presided over the paper's coverage of the Watergate scandal, the outcome of which was the

downfall of an American president with a *Presidential* Medal of Freedom.

But the real irony is that Obama the president who has done more to curtail and then criminalize the activities of investigative journalists, leakers and whistle-blowers in ways that even Richard Nixon might never have contemplated extolled Bradlee's determination to ensure Americans are not denied the truth about what their increasingly secretive and subversive government does.

Obama's own home-grown hypocrisy in these matters is itself something to behold. We should recall this was a president whose government he promised would be truly accountable and more transparent than previous ones.

In an article in OpEdNews recently, contributor Sherwood Ross takes the President to task for his stance against investigative reporters in particular. Among other examples, Ross cites the case of James Risen, whose book *State of War* looks like it could land Risen in jail in the foreseeable future for refusing to betray a source. Briefly the case which has become something of a *cause celebre* in the mainstream and alternative media circles involves the Justice Department under first the Bush administration and now under Obama seeking to force Risen to reveal a key source for the book, which the journalist has refused to do.

To an investigative journalist revealing the identity of sources that provide information on condition of anonymity is akin to a priest revealing someone's confession in a sermon from the pulpit at Sunday Mass; to refuse to do so is an article of faith of the profession. But Risen's courage in reporting important facts about the national security state and resisting government pressure to surrender his source (and thus make other sources much less likely to talk) is now the exception in the MSM, not the rule. Many such stories simply go unwritten. Career-wise, that's a lot safer.

There is also the reality that as resources for real reporting continue to decline spending on public relations and other manipulation of the public continues to soar. The highly sophisticated multi-billion dollar lobbying and public relations industries in America are almost entirely employed on the dime of the Powers that Be (industry bodies, political parties, think tanks, Super PACs, sundry foundations, corporations and institutions etc.) Unless the ordinary news consumers go out of their way to seek out reliable sources of information, they don't hazard a chance in Hades of ever getting anything resembling credible, untainted insight into the zeitgeist, so as to be able to maintain whatever might remain of their "alert and knowledgeable" status.

Yet, the MSM still commands attention from many folks. Why in this day and age of accessible and independent-minded news sources is a mystery inside a

conundrum. Perhaps it's simply because of the MSM's size and inertia, living off its past reputation for supplying "responsible" news. Maybe people are too busy in their frantic lives or too afraid of being deemed "outside the mainstream," so they stick with what's considered traditional and safe.

But it's no longer possible for anyone who truly wants to be an "alert and knowledgeable" citizen to ignore the establishment media's lengthening reputation as one collective Weapon of Mass Disinformation.

**Greg Maybury is a freelance writer based in Perth, Western Australia.**

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## Using the Holocaust to Justify War

Since bursting onto the U.S. foreign policy stage in the 1980s, the neocons have been masters of "perception management," devising emotional (and often false) messaging to justify aggressive war, as Maidhc Ó Cathail sees in recent Holocaust-themed propaganda against Syria's government.

By Maidhc Ó Cathail

"The irony is that the Nazi holocaust has now become the main ideological weapon for launching wars of aggression," Norman Finkelstein tells Yoav Shamir in "Defamation," the Israeli filmmaker's award-winning 2009 documentary on how perceptions of anti-Semitism affect Israeli and U.S. politics. "Every time you want to launch a war of aggression, drag in the Nazi holocaust."

If you're looking for evidence in support of Finkelstein's thesis today, you need look no further than the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's exhibit of images of emaciated and mangled bodies from contemporary Syria.

The small exhibit, entitled "Genocide: The Threat Continues," features a dozen images said to be from an archive of 55,000 pictures allegedly smuggled out of the country by "Caesar," a mysterious source who claims to have defected from his job as a Syrian military photographer after having been ordered to take photos of more than 10,000 corpses.

Emphasizing the threat of an impending genocide, the reportedly conscience-stricken defector warns that a similar fate awaits the 150,000 people he says remain incarcerated by President Bashar Assad's government.

"They're powerful images, and viewers are immediately reminded of the Holocaust," Cameron Hudson, the director of the museum's Center for the

Prevention of Genocide, was cited as saying in an Oct. 15 Associated Press report. Hudson, whose intriguing career in genocide prevention includes a stint as intelligence analyst in the CIA's Africa Directorate, added, "They show a side of the Syrian regime that hasn't really been really seen. You might have heard about it, read about it, but when you're confronted with these images, they're impossible to ignore."

The museum's promotion of these impossible-to-ignore, Holocaust-recalling images dates from a few months earlier, however. In his July visit to Washington that included a series of meetings with U.S. government and congressional officials, Caesar's first stop was at the Holocaust Museum.

On July 28, Michael Chertoff, a member of the museum's governing board of trustees, presented the purported defector to a small group of reporters and researchers. According to the Washington Post's Greg Miller, this event was the first time that Caesar had appeared publicly to answer questions about the photos deemed by some human rights organizations as evidence of war crimes committed by Assad.

Chertoff, a co-author of the USA PATRIOT Act, hasn't hesitated to invoke the Nazis either in support of the neoconservative-conceived "global war on terror." In an April 22, 2007 Washington Post op-ed entitled "Make No Mistake: This Is War," the then-secretary of the Department of Homeland Security wrote, "Al-Qaeda and its ilk have a world vision that is comparable to that of historical totalitarian ideologues but adapted to the 21st-century global network."

Commenting on the former DHS secretary's close ties to Israel, Jonathan Cook notes in his book Israel and the Clash of Civilizations that Chertoff's mother was an air hostess for El Al in the 1950s. "There are reports that she was involved in Operation Magic Carpet, which brought Jews to Israel from Yemen," writes the Nazareth-based British journalist. "It therefore seems possible that Livia Eisen was an Israeli national, and one with possible links to the Mossad."

Among the other members of the Holocaust Memorial Council noted for their staunch support of Israel and American interventionism are the pardoned Iran-Contra neocon intriguer Elliott Abrams and Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel.

Writing in Foreign Policy's The Cable on April 23, 2012, Josh Rogin drew attention to Wiesel's pointed introduction of President Barack Obama at a ceremony in the Holocaust Museum. Comparing the Syrian president and then Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the perpetrators of the Nazi holocaust, Wiesel implicitly criticized Obama's supposedly obtuse inaction, "So in this place we may ask: Have we learned anything from it? If so, how is it that Assad

is still in power?"

As Rogin, a regular media conduit for anti-Assad interventionism, pointedly observed, the speech was reminiscent of another one Wiesel gave at the opening of the museum in 1993, when he urged then President Bill Clinton to take military action in Bosnia: "Similarly, that speech came at a time when the Clinton administration was resisting getting entangled in a foreign civil war but was under growing pressure to intervene."

In a revealing interview published on Aug. 11, 2013, by the Turkish newspaper Today's Zaman, Caesar's interpreter, who presided over a question-and-answer session at the museum, echoed Wiesel's criticism of President Obama's resistance to doing the bidding of the neocons and "liberal interventionists" seeking greater American intervention in Syria.

Asked by the Gāḏlen movement-aligned daily if America had forgotten the Syrian war, Mouaz Moustafa replied, "It is the President who is against action in Syria not the whole of the U.S. government. President Barack Obama has been very insular and cautious about Syria. The President does not seem to understand how important Syria is to U.S. national security [...] The President does not feel the need to explain to the American people or the world that the risks with any of the bad options that we have are far outweighed by the risks of inaction."

It is hardly a coincidence that Moustafa's rhetoric bears a striking resemblance to that of Israel's friends like Wiesel. Although one of best known media-promoted faces of the Syrian opposition in Washington has understandably sought to obscure his ties to Tel Aviv, the executive director of the Syrian Emergency Task Force has undeniable links to one of its American lobby's leading think tanks.

After it emerged that Moustafa's nonprofit had coordinated Sen. John McCain's May 2013 trip to meet with the so-called "moderate" Syrian rebels, an examination of the SETF executive director's background revealed that he was one of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy's "experts"; a contributor to WINEP's Fikra Forum, "an online community that aims to generate ideas to support Arab democrats in their struggle with authoritarians and extremists"; and had addressed the AIPAC-created think tank's annual Soref symposium entitled "Inside Syria: The Battle Against Assad's Regime."

Even more damningly, it was discovered that one of SETF's web addresses was "syriantaskforce.torahacademybr.org." The "torahacademybr.org" url belongs to the Torah Academy of Boca Raton, Florida whose key values notably include promoting "a love for and commitment to Eretz Yisroel."



When confronted with these embarrassing revelations, Moustafa responded via Twitter, “call me terrorist/Qaeda/nazi as others have but not Zionist Im [sic] denied ever entering palestine but it lives in me.” Dismissing the intriguing connection to a pro-Israel yeshiva in Florida, he claimed that the “url registration was due to dumb error by web designer.”

The Israel lobby-backed Moustafa also interpreted for Caesar, who was wearing dark glasses and a blue rain jacket with the hood pulled over his head, when he testified before a closed-door session of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs this July. At least some of its members would no doubt have recognized the interpreter, however.

As Foreign Policy’s The Cable reported on June 6, 2013, two leaders of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Reps. Ed Royce, R-California, and Eliot Engel, D-New York, dispatched aides to Turkey to meet leading members of the Syrian Free Army between May 27 and June 3. As The Cable had learned, the meeting had been coordinated by Moustafa’s Syrian Emergency Task Force.

(This September, staff from the Syrian Emergency Task Force and the House Foreign Affairs Committee reportedly facilitated a meeting in Turkey that led to more than 20 Syrian rebel commanders signing “a historic agreement” to unite in the quixotic fight against both ISIS and Assad.)

Interestingly, the FP article noted that “[t]he two lawmakers don’t exactly see eye-to-eye on the question of whether the United States should intervene more aggressively in the protracted civil war,” with Engel having “carved out one of the most hawkish positions in Congress on Syria, being the first to introduce legislation authorizing lethal assistance for the rebels.”

Moreover, as Rep. Engel pointed out in his opening remarks at the Syria briefing, he has “been personally focused on Syria for a long time.” In 2003, he passed the Syria Accountability Act, which imposed sanctions on the government of Hafez Assad.

In a reference to his introduction of the Free Syria Act in March 2013, which authorized the President to provide lethal assistance to those Engel described as “carefully vetted members of the moderate Syrian opposition,” the reflexively pro-Israel Democratic congressman from New York said, “If we had taken that approach a year and a half ago, we may have been able to stem the growth of ISIS and weaken the regime of Bashar Assad. But we didn’t, unfortunately, so we’ll never really know what would have happened if we had acted then.”

While Caesar and his American-based Palestinian-Syrian interpreter clearly have the enthusiastic support of Israel’s friends in Washington, the photos presented

as evidence of an alleged Syrian “holocaust” by Assad’s forces received their initial boost from one of Tel Aviv’s closest, albeit covert, Arab allies in their mutual war against the Syrian government.

As part of a review of the photos commissioned by the government of Qatar, David Crane, a former war-crimes prosecutor for Sierra Leone, reportedly spent hours interviewing Caesar. An Oct. 13 Yahoo News [report](#) by Michael Isikoff quotes Crane as saying that they document “an industrial killing machine not seen since the Holocaust.”

Like the director of the Holocaust Museum’s Center for the Prevention of Genocide, [Crane](#) has worked for the U.S. government, including in the field of military intelligence. His former posts include Director of the Office of Intelligence Review, assistant general counsel of the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Waldemar A. Solf Professor of International Law at the United States Army Judge Advocate Generals School.

Having ostensibly left the intelligence world behind him, Crane [founded](#) and directs the Syrian Accountability Project (SAP) at Syracuse University’s College of Law, which describes itself as “a cooperative effort between activists, non-governmental organizations, students, and other interested parties to document war crimes and crimes against humanity in the context of the Syrian Crisis.” According to its [website](#), SAP has “worked closely with the Syrian National Coalition” which is listed as one of its clients.

Founded in Doha, Qatar in November 2012, the Syrian National Coalition represents the Free Syrian Army, which has [reportedly](#) collaborated with the al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamist Ahrar al-Sham in massacres of Syrian civilians such as the one that occurred this March in the village of [Kassab](#), an ancestral home of Syria’s minority ethnic Armenians, on the Turkish border.

Professor Crane is also vice-president of [I Am Syria](#), whose mission statement describes it as “a non-profit media based campaign that seeks to educate the world of the Syrian Conflict.” I Am Syria’s president, [Ammar Abdulhamid](#), has been a fellow at two of the most prominent Washington-based pro-Israel think tanks, the Saban Center for Middle East Policy and the neocon Foundation for the Defense of Democracies; while one of its education directors, Andrew Beitar, is a regional education coordinator for the Holocaust Museum.

As the case of the mysterious Caesar and his trove of photos clearly shows, those who want to launch a war of aggression on Syria as they have succeeded in doing in Iraq and Libya have at every opportunity sought, as Finkelstein put it, to drag in the Nazi holocaust.

As more and more people become wise to this ruse, they should keep in mind the two words espoused by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum: “Never Again.”

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## 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 American 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.**

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## 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](#).**

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## 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 (né 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](mailto: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/> .]**

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