

Petraeus's New 'Killing Machine'

The CIA is now "one hell of a killing machine," said one CIA insider, as lethal drones hunt down "bad guys" selected for death by a ramped-up force of CIA target analysts. This shift in emphasis has transformed the spy agency that new director, retired Gen. David Petraeus, inherits, writes Gareth Porter.

By Gareth Porter

When David Petraeus settles into his new office at the Central Intelligence Agency, he will be taking over an organization whose chief mission has changed in recent years from gathering and analyzing intelligence to waging military campaigns through drone strikes in Pakistan, as well as in Yemen and Somalia.

But the transformation of the CIA did not simply follow the expansion of the drone war in Pakistan to its present level. CIA Director Michael Hayden lobbied hard for that expansion at a time when drone strikes seemed like a failed experiment.

The reason Hayden pushed for a much bigger drone war, it now appears, is that it had already created a whole bureaucracy in the anticipation of such a war.

During 2010, the CIA "drone war" in Pakistan killed as many as 1,000 people a year, compared with the roughly 2,000 a year officially estimated to have been killed by the Special Forces "night raids" in Afghanistan, according to a [report](#) in the Sept. 1 Washington Post.

A CIA official was quoted by the Post as saying that the CIA had become "one hell of a killing machine," before quickly revising the phrase to "one hell of an operational tool".

The shift in the CIA mission's has been reflected in the spectacular growth of its Counter-terrorism Center (CTC) from 300 employees in September 2001 to about 2,000 people today 10 percent of the agency's entire workforce, according to the Post report.

The agency's analytical branch, which had been previously devoted entirely to providing intelligence assessments for policymakers, has been profoundly affected.

More than one-third of the personnel in the agency's analytical branch are now engaged wholly or primarily in providing support to CIA operations, according to senior agency officials cited by the Post. And nearly two-thirds of those are analyzing data used by the CTC drone war staff to make decisions on targeting.

Some of that shift of internal staffing to support of the drone has followed the rise in the number of drone strikes in Pakistan since mid-2008, but the CIA began to lay the institutional basis for a bigger drone campaign well before that.

Crucial to understanding the role of internal dynamics in CIA decisions on the issue is the fact that the drone campaign in Pakistan started off very badly. During the four years from 2004 through 2007, the CIA carried out a total of only 12 drone strikes in Pakistan, all supposedly aimed at identifiable high-value targets of Al-Qaeda and its affiliates.

The George W. Bush administration's policy on use of drones was cautious in large part because the President of Pakistan, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, was considered such a reliable ally that the administration was reluctant to take actions that would risk destabilizing his regime.

Thus relatively tight constraints were imposed on the CIA in choosing targets for drone strikes. They were only to be used against known "high-value" officials of Al-Qaeda and their affiliates in Pakistan, and the CIA had to have evidence that no civilians would be killed as a result of the strike.

Those first 12 strikes killed only three identifiable Al-Qaeda or Pakistani Taliban figures, But despite the prohibition against strikes that would incur "collateral damage," the same strikes killed a total of 121 civilians, as revealed by a thorough analysis of news media reports.

A single strike against a madrassa on Oct. 26, 2006, that killed 80 local students accounted for two-thirds of the total of civilian casualties.

Despite that disastrous start, however, the CIA had quickly become deeply committed internally to building a major program around the drone war. In 2005, the agency had created a career track in targeting for the drone program for analysts in the intelligence directorate, the Sept. 2 Post article revealed.

That decision meant that analysts who chose to specialize in targeting for CIA drone operations were promised that they could stay within that specialty and get promotions throughout their careers. Thus the agency had made far-reaching commitments to its own staff in the expectation that the drone war would grow far beyond the three strikes a year and that it would continue indefinitely.

By 2007, the agency realized that, in order to keep those commitments, it had to get the White House to change the rules by relaxing existing restrictions on drone strikes.

That's when Hayden began lobbying President George W. Bush to dispense with the

constraints limiting the targeting for drone attacks, according to the account in New York Times reporter David Sanger's book *The Inheritance*. Hayden asked for permission to carry out strikes against houses or cars merely on the basis of behavior that matched a "pattern of life" associated with Al-Qaeda or other groups.

In January 2008, Bush took an unidentified first step toward the loosening of the requirements that Hayden sought, but most of the restrictions on drone strikes remained in place. In the first six months of 2008, only four strikes were carried out.

In mid-2008, however, Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell returned from a May 2008 trip to Pakistan determined to prove that the Pakistani military was covertly supporting Taliban insurgents – especially the Haqqani network – who were gaining momentum in Afghanistan.

A formal assessment by McConnell's staff making that case was produced in June and sent to the White House and other top officials, according to Sanger. That forced Bush, who had been praising Musharraf as an ally against the Taliban, to do something to show that he was being tough on the Pakistani military as well as on the Afghan insurgents who enjoyed safe havens in northwest Pakistan.

Bush wanted the drone strikes to focus primarily on the Afghan Taliban targets rather than Al-Qaeda and its Pakistani Taliban allies. And according to Sanger's account, Bush quickly removed all of the previous requirements for accurate intelligence on specific high-value targets and for assurances against civilian casualties.

Released from the original constraints on the drone program, the CIA immediately increased the level of drone strikes in the second half of 2008 to between four and five per month on average.

As Bob Woodward's account in *Obama Wars* of internal discussions in the early weeks of the Barack Obama White House shows, there were serious doubts from the beginning that it could actually defeat Al-Qaeda.

But Leon Panetta, Obama's new CIA director, was firmly committed to the drone war. He continued to present it to the public as a strategy to destroy Al-Qaeda, even though he knew the CIA was now striking mainly Afghan Taliban and their allies, not Al-Qaeda.

In his first press conference on Feb. 25, 2009, Panetta, in an indirect but obvious reference to the drone strikes, said that the effort to destabilize Al-Qaeda and destroy its leadership "have been successful."

Under Panetta, the rate of drone strikes continued throughout 2009 at the same accelerated pace as in the second half of 2008. And in 2010 the number of strikes more than doubled from 53 in 2009 to 118.

The CIA finally had the major drone campaign it had originally anticipated.

Two years ago, Petraeus appeared to take a somewhat skeptical view of drone strikes in Pakistan. In a secret assessment as CENTCOM commander on May 27, 2009, which was leaked to the Washington Post, Petraeus warned that drone strikes were fueling anti-U.S. sentiments in Pakistan.

Now, however, Petraeus's personal view of the drone war may no longer be relevant. The CIA's institutional interests in continuing the drone war may have become so commanding that no director could afford to override those interests on the basis of his own analysis of how the drone strikes affect U.S. interests.

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Ray McGovern on Cheney's Memoir

Former CIA analyst Ray McGovern discusses former Vice President Dick Cheney's memoir and the larger question of how information is twisted in modern America. Watch [the Video](#).

Rise of Another CIA Yes Man

Exclusive: The gross manipulation of CIA analysis under George W. Bush pushed a new generation of "yes men" into the agency's top ranks. Now one of those aspiring bureaucrats will be Gen. David Petraeus's right-hand man, writes ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern. **(Also, at end of article, see special comments from several CIA insiders.)**

By Ray McGovern

As Gen. David Petraeus prepares to take the helm at CIA in September, he can

expect unswerving loyalty from his likely deputy, Michael Morell, who has been acting director since July when Leon Panetta left to become Secretary of Defense.

Like many senior CIA officials in recent years, Morell's record is checkered, at best. He held key jobs in intelligence analysis over the past decade as the CIA often served as a handmaiden to the war propagandists.

As for Michael Morell, as with many other successful CIA careerists, his strongest suit seemed to be pleasing his boss and not antagonizing the White House. If past is precedent, his loyalty will be to Petraeus, not necessarily to the truth.

Forgive me if my thinking about loyalty to the facts seems "obsolete" or "quaint" or if it seems unfair to expect CIA analysts to put their careers on the line when politicians and ideologues are misleading the nation to war but those were the principles that analysts of my generation tried to uphold.

The recent tendency at CIA to give politicians what they want to hear rather than the hard truth is not healthy for the Republic that we were all sworn to serve.

And, if Petraeus's own past is precedent, loyalty to the four-star general will not always be synonymous with loyalty to the truth.

Burnishing an Image

However, you will get no indication of this troubling reality from the flattering, but thin, feature about Michael Morell, "Mr. Insider Will Guide Petraeus at the CIA," by Siobhan Gorman in the *Wall Street Journal* on Aug. 26.

Gorman is normally a solid reporter; but either she did not perform due diligence and let herself be snookered, or her editors stepped in to ensure her story was consonant with the image Petraeus and the Establishment wish to create for Morell.

Before her "rare" interview with Morell, Gorman should have taken a close look at former CIA Director George Tenet's memoir, *At the Center of the Storm*, to learn what Tenet says about Morell's record during the last decade's dark days of misleading and dishonest intelligence.

In Tenet's personal account of the CIA's failures around 9/11 and the Iraq War, Morell Tenet's former executive assistant is generally treated kindly, but Tenet puts Morell at the center of two key fiascos: he "coordinated the CIA review" of Secretary of State Colin Powell's infamous Feb. 5, 2003 address to the United

Nations and he served as the regular CIA briefer to President George W. Bush.

Putting Access Before Honesty

So, Morell was there as Bush blew off early CIA warnings about the possibility of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden being “determined to strike in the US” and while Bush and his neoconservative inner circle were concocting intelligence to justify invading Iraq.

Tenet credits Morell with suggesting to analysts that they prepare a report on the terrorist threat, which became the *President’s Daily Brief* that was handed to Bush on Aug. 6, 2001, at his ranch in Crawford, Texas. Bush brushed aside the warning with a reported comment to the CIA briefer, “all right, you’ve covered your ass,” and went off fishing.

Though Tenet said Morell got along well with Bush, it appears the President didn’t pay much heed to any CIA information coming from Morell, at least not anything that went against what Bush wanted to hear nor did Morell seem to risk offending the President by pushing these contrary points.

After the Aug. 6 *PDB* was delivered, Tenet wrote that he needed to follow it up, and did so with a trip to Crawford 11 days later, when Tenet remembers Bush driving him around in a pickup truck as Tenet made “small talk about the flora and fauna.”

Morell also was the CIA briefer with Bush in Florida on the morning of 9/11 when news arrived about the attacks on New York City’s Twin Towers. Later, Bush told Morell “that if we [the CIA] learned anything definitive about the attack, he wanted to be the first to know,” Tenet wrote, adding:

“Wiry, youthful looking, and extremely bright, Mike speaks in staccato-like bursts that get to the bottom line very quickly. He and George Bush had hit it off almost immediately. In a crisis like this, Mike was the perfect guy for us to have by the commander-in-chief’s side.”

However, it appears Morell was not willing to risk his rapport with Bush by challenging the President’s desire to pivot from retaliatory strikes against Afghanistan to a full-scale invasion of Iraq based on false and misleading intelligence.

Tenet also described Morell’s role in organizing the review of the “intelligence” that went into Powell’s speech, which let slip the dogs of war by presenting a thoroughly deceptive account of the Iraqi threat, what Powell later called a “blot” on his record.

Though the CIA embraced many of Powell's misleading assertions, Tenet recounted one exchange in which Morell stood up to John Hannah, an aide to Vice President Dick Cheney, regarding Iraq's alleged efforts to obtain yellowcake uranium from Niger.

"Hannah asked Mike Morell, who was coordinating the review of the speech for CIA, why the Niger uranium story wasn't in the latest draft," Tenet wrote. "'Because we don't believe it,' Mike told him. 'I thought you did,' Hannah said. After much wrangling and precious time lost in explaining our doubts, Hannah understood why we believed it was inappropriate for Colin to use the Niger material in his speech."

Despite that one pushback, the CIA analysts mostly bent to pressures coming from the White House for an alarmist treatment of allegations about the "weapons of mass destruction," which turned out not to be in Iraq.

Of the CIA's finished intelligence product, it was reportedly the *PDB* delivered by Morell that most exaggerated the danger.

Not Mistaken, Dishonest

It is sad to have to recall that this was not "erroneous," but rather fraudulent intelligence. Announcing on June 5, 2008, the bipartisan conclusions from a five-year study by the Senate Intelligence Committee, Sen. Jay Rockefeller described the intelligence conjured up to "justify" war on Iraq as "uncorroborated, contradicted, or even non-existent."

Rockefeller's comments call to mind what Tenet told his British counterpart, Sir Richard Dearlove, on July 20, 2002, after former Prime Minister Tony Blair sent Dearlove to the CIA to get the latest scoop on how the U.S. planned to "justify" the attack on Iraq.

According to the official British minutes of a cabinet-level planning session chaired by Blair on July 23, 2002, at 10 Downing Street, Tenet made clear to Dearlove that "the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy" to bring "regime change" to Iraq.

Could it be that Tenet would let the British in on this dirty little secret and keep George W. Bush's personal briefer, Michael Morell, in the dark? Seems unlikely.

But even if Morell were not fully informed about the high-level scheme for war, would he have been with his prized relationship with the President the most appropriate senior official to "coordinate the CIA review" of Powell's speech?

The 'Sinister Nexus'

In the *Wall Street Journal* feature, reporter Gorman was assured of something else about Morell's role in preparing the intelligence on Iraq. According to Gorman, "His [Morell's] team didn't handle the analysis that erroneously concluded the Iraqi government had weapons of mass destruction." I guess that depends on your definition of "team."

But what about alleged ties between Iraq and al-Qaeda, the second bogus issue used to "justify" attacking Iraq? There Morell seemed to be on better ground, telling Gorman that his "team" had concluded that there had been earlier contacts between Iraqi intelligence and al-Qaeda, but there were no links to al-Qaeda operations at the time.

Still, Morell didn't seem to have pressed this point very hard while coordinating the CIA's review of Powell's UN speech. If Morell had, one has to wonder why Powell was fed, and swallowed, the line about a "sinister nexus between Iraq and the al Qaeda terrorist network?"

ABC's Brian Ross shot down that canard just hours after Powell spoke. Citing a BBC report from London, Ross noted that British intelligence had concluded there was no evidence to support the theory that al-Qaeda and Iraq were working together.

Virtually all intelligence analysts with no axes to grind, after sifting through thousands of reports, had long since come to that same conclusion.

Did Secretary Powell have to learn about the Iraq/al-Qaeda disconnect from the BBC? Later, Powell was livid at having been led down the garden path by the likes of Tenet, Tenet's pandering deputy John McLaughlin, and Morell, a Tenet protégé.

Tenet and McLaughlin were also co-liars-in-chief regarding those mobile biological weapons factories, a yarn spun by the infamous source called "Curveball." In his memoir, Tenet doesn't describe Morell's role in promoting, or at least acquiescing in depicting, the charlatan "Curveball" as a reliable intelligence source for a key portion of Powell's speech.

And, if you think it's unfair to expect CIA bureaucrats to risk their careers by challenging the political desires of the White House, it's worth noting the one major exception to the CIA's sorry record during George W. Bush's presidency and how honest CIA analysts helped prevent another unnecessary war.

After former chief of State Department intelligence Tom Fingar was put in charge of National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs), a thoroughly professional NIE in late

2007 concluded unanimously and “with high confidence” that Iran had stopped working on a nuclear weapon in mid-2003.

President Bush’s own memoir leaves no doubt that this Estimate played a huge role in spiking White House plans for war on Iran. It’s a pity that the Estimate on Iran should be an exception to the rule.

Much to Be Humble About

Yet, in the *Wall Street Journal* feature, Michael Morell lectures Gorman on the basics and the limits of intelligence analysis.

“We end up having bits of information that have a multitude of possible explanations,” said Morell. “You’ve got to be really humble about the business we’re in.”

Well, yes indeed. The WSJ also ran a sidebar with a list of the following CIA failures and Morell’s facile potions for cures:

–2001, Sept. 11 attacks: A failure of both intelligence collection and analysis. Lesson: A need to better penetrate U.S. adversaries.

–2003, Iraq weapons of mass destruction: Analysts erroneously concluded Iraq had WMDs. Lesson: Analysts must describe confidence levels in conclusions, consider alternate explanations.

–2009, Bombing of CIA base in Khost, Afghanistan: Doubts about the asset-turned-suicide-bomber didn’t get to the right people. Lesson: Share information with the people who most need it.

Is this Morell fellow on the ball, or what?

Let’s address these one by one:

–9/11 need not have happened if Tenet and his protÃ©gÃ©s simply shared the information needed by the FBI and others. See, for instance, Consortiumnews.com’s [“Did Tenet Hide Key 9/11 Info?”](#) Or, Tenet and Morell might have risked their cozy relationship with Bush by challenging his casual dismissal of the existing multiple warnings.

–The WMD not in Iraq? How about promoting and rewarding honest analysts; no “fixing” allowed. Face down White House pressure. We used to do it all the time. We used to have career protection for doing it.

–On the tragedy at Khost? Well, how about some basic training in tradecraft, including rudimentary security precautions.

And speaking of rudimentary security precautions: Morell bragged to Gorman that he had recently flown to Kabul to brief Petraeus, carrying a blue briefing book emblazoned with the CIA seal and detailing the CIA's every critical program, organization and operation.

"It was the most highly classified guide that I've ever seen in my life" was Petraeus's wow-response.

The appropriate reaction, in my professional view, would have been to fire Morell on the spot for recklessness. He should know better. They down aircraft, blow up motorcades and shoot people in Afghanistan, you know. Is it really such a great idea to carry a briefing book with the CIA's most sensitive secrets into that environment?

Moreover, bragging about this cavalier approach to protecting sensitive documents sends shivers down the backs of foreign intelligence officers, adding to their reluctance to share delicate information with us.

Loosening Leashes on Dogs of War

There is ironic serendipity in the fact that the *WSJ* feature on Morell appeared on Aug. 26, exactly nine years after the fraudulent speech given by Vice President Dick Cheney before the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Nashville.

And just four days before the nation's bookstores host *In My Time*, Cheney's *apologia pro vita sua*. (The advance promotion includes his personal warning that the book will have "heads exploding" all over Washington.)

There are huge lessons in what happened and what did not happen immediately after Cheney's Aug. 26, 2002, thinly disguised call for an attack on Iraq, and how those who recognized the lies could not summon enough courage to try to stop the juggernaut toward war.

The Fawning Corporate Media and the cowering careerists at CIA were among the main culprits. But there were others who, if they have a conscience and are honest with themselves, may still be finding it difficult to look in the mirror nine years later.

In his August 2002 speech, Cheney launched the virulent propaganda campaign for an aggressive war against Iraq, telling the audience in Nashville:

"Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us."

This was no innocent mistake by the Vice President; it was a bald-faced lie, a

falsehood that opened the gates to a hellish conflict that has ripped apart Iraq, bringing untold death and destruction.

Nine years later it is well worth recalling this lie on behalf of the 4,500 U.S. troops killed in Iraq, the many more wounded, the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis killed, and the five million displaced from their homes.

Let it be widely understood that on Aug. 26, 2002, Dick Cheney set the meretricious terms of reference for war.

Hear No Evil, Speak No Truth

Sitting on the same stage that evening was former CENTCOM commander Marine Gen. Anthony Zinni, who was being honored at the VFW convention. Zinni later said he was shocked to hear Cheney's depiction of intelligence (Iraq has WMD and is amassing them to use against us) that did not square with what he knew.

Although Zinni had retired two years before, his role as consultant had enabled him to stay up to date on key intelligence findings.

"There was no solid proof that Saddam had WMD. ... I heard a case being made to go to war," Zinni told *Meet the Press* **three and a half years later**.

Zinni is normally a straight shooter with a good bit of courage. And so, the question lingers: why did he not go public when he first heard Cheney's lie?

What seems operative here, I fear, is an all-too-familiar conundrum at senior levels where people have been conditioned not to rock the boat, not to risk their standing within the Washington Establishment.

Almost always, the results are bad. I would bet a tidy sum that Zinni regrets having let his reaction be shaped, as it apparently was, by a misguided kind of professional courtesy and/or slavish adherence to classification restrictions.

After all, he was one of the very few credible senior officials who might have prevented a war of aggression, which the Nuremberg Tribunals after World War II branded the "supreme international crime."

Zinni was not the only one taken aback by Cheney's words. Then-CIA Director George Tenet said Cheney's speech took him completely by surprise.

In his memoir, Tenet wrote, "I had the impression that the president wasn't any more aware than we were of what his number-two was going to say to the VFW until he said it." But like Br'er Fox, Tenet didn't say nothing.

Tenet claims he didn't even check it all out with either Cheney or Bush after

Cheney's speech. Yet, could Cheney's twisting of the data not have been anticipated? Indeed, weren't Tenet and his CIA in on the determination to make a case for war?

In a way, that conclusion is a no-brainer. As mentioned above, just five weeks before Cheney's speech, Tenet himself had explained to his British counterpart that the President had decided to make war on Iraq for regime change and "the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy."

Cheney simply was unveiling the war rationale to the public. Several weeks later, when Senate Intelligence Committee Chair Bob Graham insisted on a National Intelligence Estimate before any vote in Congress, Tenet told his folks to prepare one that dovetailed with Cheney's unsupported rhetoric.

Sadly, my former colleagues did. And where was Michael Morell in this process? Clearly, he did nothing to destroy his career or put himself too much on the outs at the White House.

The Sales Job

When Bush's senior advisers came back to town after Labor Day 2002, the next five weeks were devoted to selling the war, a major "new product" that, as then-White House chief of staff Andy Card explained, one shouldn't introduce in the month of August.

Card, too, apparently had no idea that Cheney would jump the gun as "fixer-in-chief." At that point, the Tenets, McLaughlins and Morells of this world fell right into line.

After assuring themselves that Tenet was a reliable salesman, Cheney and then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld allowed him to play a supporting role in advertising bogus claims about aluminum tubes for uranium enrichment and mobile trailers for manufacturing biological warfare agents.

The hyped and bogus intelligence succeeded in scaring Congress into voting for war on Oct. 10 and 11, 2002.

In my view, it strains credulity to think that Michael Morell was unaware of the fraudulent nature of this campaign. Yet, like all too many others, he mostly kept quiet, and he got promoted. That's how it works in Washington these days.

This kind of malleability regarding twisting facts to support war has worked well for Petraeus, too.

Today, there is little chance Petraeus can be unaware of Morell's pedigree. Given Petraeus's own experience in climbing the career ladder, the general may

even harbor an admiration for Morell's extraordinary willingness to please.

The two will make a fine pair for Official Washington, though not for those "quaint" folks who put a high premium on integrity.

As for Dick Cheney who was once given the well-deserved sobriquet "Vice President for Torture" in a *Washington Post* editorial, I just wish he would disappear so he would stop bringing out the worst in everyone.

I found my own feelings mirrored in a plaintive comment from a good friend who prays a lot. She said, "I keep praying for Dick Cheney, especially when he goes into the hospital. But he always comes out again."

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Note: I sent a draft of the above article to former colleagues, intelligence officers who served in CIA more recently than I and left after clocking many years at very senior levels. The comments I received from them turned out to be so germane and incisive that I include them below for those wanting a better feel for what really goes on.

The first is from a recently retired Senior Intelligence Service officer.

Ray:

You make a good case that Morell isn't going to be the objective, unpoliticized deputy that Petraeus is going to need. He may be what Petraeus wants, but not what he needs to do a good job.

You make the case that, like McLaughlin, he's going to give the veneer of an analyst's integrity to decision making without any of the burdens (integrity, nonpoliticization, tradecraft, etc.) that make the analyst imprimatur meaningful. Like McLaughlin, he seems eager to play handmaiden to a predetermined agenda.

In fact, the case you make, correctly, is that Morell is the quintessential intelligence community bureaucrat who has survived and prospered by subscribing to a particular worldview and steering clear of the alternatives declared off-limits by the U.S. right wing.

A couple of more specific comments:

-Your use of the word "loyalty": Morell will be loyal to his boss i.e., he will not upset him the way McLaughlin was loyal to Tenet. That ignores, of course, that the deputy's job is to protect his boss from himself and from his own biases.

McLaughlin's "loyalty" to Tenet wound up screwing Tenet, and Morell's "loyalty" to Petraeus is going to do the same. A man like Petraeus shows up with HUGE blind spots, and Morell rather than help him see into those blind spots almost certainly will reinforce them.

Your use of the word "loyalty" conveys that it's a virus that will harm Petraeus. And that's what it is.

The "winds blowing from the White House" requires a little elaboration. Just as Panetta was captured, so has this White House been via the person of CIA veteran John Brennan on site. Brennan, of course, is the fellow who could not get confirmed as director because of his well known past history, so he's running things from the White House.

The number of Obama flip-flops on intelligence issues has been stunning. The "winds," you might say, have been blowing from CIA's own Tenet protégé Brennan.

I personally would say Morell, like McLaughlin, knows and accepts that the operations people and their rightwing allies in the Admin, at the Pentagon, and in the Congress (and there are many!) set the direction the wind blows; Morell will always urge his boss to tack accordingly.

In fact, the parallels with McLaughlin are strong, an analysis directorate fellow of modest capabilities, desperate for acceptance by the operations people and the rightwing downtown, jettisoning tradecraft and going with the flow.

The Gorman piece in the *WSJ* was disgraceful cooptation in action. The fact that she could list his many failures as "lessons learned" was amazing. It's as if the rightwing were signaling to Petraeus not to judge Morell by his repeated failures and repeated inaction; judge him by our right-wing love for him.

On the many failures, I don't have first-hand knowledge of Morell's role in the historic intelligence cook-job of WMD and the fateful State of the Union lies about yellow cake; all I know is that Alan Foley was the designated representative in that coordination.

But your sourcing of Tenet on that is compelling, and I think your sanity-check on Morell's performance is fair.

–Words like “wow-response” are also fair, and effective. The “wow” factor is used to shock and awe people to squeeze them into the tiny space in which conformity is expected and challenges rejected.

For me, particularly with a weak Administration with no policy bearings like this one, the problem is that operations are done for operations’ sake sans policy, sans review.

I’m reading Joby Warrick’s book, and his worship of targeters is somewhat jarring when there’s no discussion of the number of innocent people killed and no discussion of why this is an “intelligence” vice military mission. We know why, but his readers don’t making such worship rather cynical.

You’re probably right that it “strains credulity” that Morell didn’t know how fraudulent the whole National Intelligence Estimate on WMD in Iraq was. I just don’t know, however, whether he was able intellectually to see what was going on.

He was so close to power and so close to their mindset and so eager to stay in their good graces that he may have believed all the horse manure.

Wrapped up as he was, he may not have fully appreciated the thing was especially because key elements of the intelligence community funneling info to him were also true-believers, as were those in charge of community analysis.

Who could ever have been giving Morell an alternative view? The most senior people were all true-believers. It was very much frowned upon to ask real questions.

So how could a man of Morell’s background and capabilities ask them? If you preferred not to say outright that Morell was guilty of fraud, you could be somewhat more charitable and put it this way: He was surrounded by true-believers and didn’t have the fortitude or candlepower, or even perceived space, to question the bogus intelligence he was involved in validating.

Not a good harbinger for the future.

The second comment (on the remarks above) is from Larry C Johnson, former CIA intelligence officer.

Your observations provide important context. The lies that paved the road to war in Iraq are being revived this week as part of the 10-year anniversary of 9/11.

We have not learned a damned thing. Meanwhile, Iraq remains a deadly place for the various Iraq factions and our actions have completely disrupted the balance of power in the Middle East. Of course, neither the media nor the majority of

the pundits want to focus on that.

And a brief but important point made by first commenter in reaction:

And cranking up for Iran?

Comment from Mary McCarthy, former Senior Intelligence Service officer and White House official.

You asked if I knew Morell and what he is like. I do; you nailed it.

The only moment of discomfort is when you use Tenet as a compass point for the actual truth. Because, of course, Tenet often has his own version of the facts.

Pakistan Demands Veto on Drone Strikes

The U.S. commando raid that killed Osama bin Laden on May 2 aroused anger in Pakistan over unilateral American military actions. But bilateral tensions have been growing for years over U.S. drone strikes against Pakistani targets and have now reached a crisis stage, reports Gareth Porter for Inter Press Service.

By Gareth Porter

Pakistani civilian and military leaders are insisting on an effective veto over which targets U.S. drone strikes hit, according to well-informed Pakistani military sources.

The sources, who met with IPS on condition that they not be identified, said that such veto power over the conduct of the drone war is a central element in a new Pakistani demand for a formal government-to-government agreement on the terms under which the United States and Pakistan will cooperate against insurgents in Pakistan.

The basic government-to-government agreement now being demanded would be followed, the sources said, by more detailed agreements between U.S. and Pakistani military leaders and intelligence agencies.

The new Pakistani demand for equal say over drone strikes marks the culmination of a long evolution in the Pakistani military's attitude toward the drone war.

Initially supportive of strikes that were targeting Al-Qaeda leaders, senior Pakistani military leaders soon came to realize that the drone war carried serious risks for Pakistan's war against the Pakistani Taliban.

A key turning point in the attitude of the military was the unilateral U.S. decision to focus the drone war on those Pakistani insurgents who had already decided to make peace with the Pakistani government and who opposed the war being waged by Al-Qaeda and the Pakistani Taliban against the Pakistani military.

The Central Intelligence Agency was allowed to run the drone war almost completely unilaterally for years, according to former Pakistani military leaders and diplomats, and the Pakistani military has only mustered the political will to challenge the U.S. power to carry out drone strikes unilaterally in recent months.

Gen. Pervez Musharraf allowed the drone strikes from 2004 to 2007 in order to ensure political support from the George W. Bush administration, something Musharraf had been denied during the Bill Clinton administration, according to Shamshad Ahmad, who was Pakistan's foreign secretary and then ambassador to the United Nations from 1997 to 2002.

"Those were the days when we felt that we had to work with the Americans on Al-Qaeda," recalled Gen. Asad Durrani, a former director general of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence agency (ISI), in an interview with IPS.

The choice of targets "usually was done by the U.S. unilaterally," said Durrani. Two Pakistani generals confirmed that point in a separate interview with IPS.

The Musharraf regime even went so far as to provide cover for the drone strikes, repeatedly asserting after strikes that the explosions had been caused by the victims themselves making home-made bombs.

But that effort at transparent deception by the U.S. and Musharraf quickly fell apart when drone strikes were based on faulty intelligence and killed large numbers of civilians rather than Al-Qaeda leaders.

The worst such strike was an Oct. 30, 2006, drone attack on a madrassa in Chenagai village in Bajauer agency, which killed 82 people. Musharraf, who was primarily concerned with avoiding the charge of complicity in U.S. attacks on Pakistani targets, ordered the Pakistani military to take complete responsibility for the incident.

The spokesman for the Pakistani military claimed "confirmed intelligence reports that 70 to 80 militants were hiding in a madrassa used as a terrorist training facility" and said the Pakistani military had fired missiles at the madrassa.

But eyewitnesses in the village identified U.S. drones as the source of the attack and said all the victims were simply local students of the madrassa.

Local people compiled a complete list of the names and ages of all 80 victims, showing that 25 of the dead had been aged seven to 15, which was published in the Lahore daily The News International.

Senior military officers believed the CIA had other reasons for launching the strike in Bajaur. The day before the drone attack, tribal elders in Bajaur had held a public meeting to pledge their willingness to abide by a peace accord with the government, and the government had released nine tribesmen, including some militants.

Former ISI chief Durrani recalled that the strike “effectively sabotaged the chances for an agreement” in Bejaur. That was “a very clear message” from the CIA not to enter into any more such peace agreements, Durrani told IPS.

The Bejaur madrassa strike was a turning point for many officers. “So many of us went in and said this is stupid,” Durrani recalled.

When Musharraf was pressured to step down as Army chief of staff, and was replaced by Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani in November 2007, the unilateral character of the CIA’s drone war “pretty much continued,” according to Gen. Jehanger Karamat, who was ambassador to the United States from 2004 to 2006 after having retired as Army chief of staff in 1998.

The CIA’s drone war became more contentious in 2008, as the Bush administration concentrated the strikes on those who had made peace with the Pakistani government. Two-thirds of the drone strikes that year were on targets associated with Jalaluddin Haqqani and Mullah Nazeer, both of whom were involved in supporting Taliban forces in Afghanistan, but who opposed attacks on the Pakistani government.

Targeting the Haqqani network and his allies posed serious risks for Pakistan. When the Pakistani Army was fighting in South Waziristan, it had its logistic base in an area that was controlled by the Haqqani group, and it had been able to count on the security of that base.

Meanwhile, ISI had given the CIA accurate information on anti-Pakistan Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud’s location on four occasions, but the U.S. had failed to target him, according to a May 2009 column by retired Pakistani Gen. Shaukat Qadir.

In 2009, more of the drone strikes – almost 40 percent of the total – focused on the Taliban under Mehsud, and Mehsud himself was killed, which tended to mollify the Pakistani military.

But that effect did not last long. In 2010, only three strikes were aimed at

Mehsud's anti-Pakistan Taliban organization, while well over half the strikes were against Hafiz Gul Bahadur, an ally of Haqqani who had signed an agreement with the Pakistani government in September 2006 that he would not shelter any anti-Pakistani militants.

The Barack Obama administration had made a deliberate decision around mid-2010 that it didn't care if targeting the Haqqani network and other pro-Pakistani Taliban groups upset the Pakistanis, as the Wall Street Journal reported Oct. 23, 2010.

But two events caused Pakistani army chief Kayani to demand a fundamental change in U.S. policy toward the drone war.

The first was the arrest of CIA operative Raymond Davis on the charge of killing two Pakistanis in cold blood in January, which was followed by intense U.S. pressure for his release.

The second was a drone strike on March 17, just one day after Davis was released, which was initially reported to have been an attack on a gathering of Haqqani network officials.

It turned out that the drone attack had killed dozens of tribal and sub-tribal elders who had gathered from all over North Waziristan to discuss an economic issue.

A former U.S. official admitted that the strike was carried out because the CIA was "angry" over the fact that Davis had been kept in prison for seven weeks. "It was retaliation for Davis," the official said, according to an Aug. 2 Associated Press story.

That strike helped galvanize the Pakistani military leadership. ISI chief Shuja Pasha took it as a slap in the face, because he had personally intervened to get Davis out of jail. Kayani shocked the Americans by issuing the first denunciation of drone strikes by an Army chief.

When Pasha went to Washington in April, he took with him the first official Pakistani demand for an equal say in drone strike decisions.

Gareth Porter is an investigative historian and journalist specializing in U.S. national security policy. The paperback edition of his latest book, *Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam*, was published in 2006.

Murdering Iranian Scientists

U.S. and Israeli intelligence agencies have basked in their apparent success using a computer virus to sabotage Iran's nuclear program. But a darker side of this disruptive operation may be the assassinations of the scientists themselves, reports Lawrence Davidson.

By Lawrence Davidson

On July 23, it was announced that Dariush Rezai-Nejad was shot to death in Tehran by two men on motorbikes. The shooters also chased after his wife and shot her, too.

According to Al Jazeera, Rezai-Nejad was doing research in the field of electronics and had connections to the Iranian Department of Defense. It is not known if he was associated with Iran's nuclear program.

This is not the first such attack. In November 2010, the cars of two other Iranian scientists who had definite links to the country's nuclear program were rigged with bombs. One of them, Majid Shahriari, was killed outright and the other, Fereydoun Abbasi, again along with his wife, were injured.

There is a lot of speculation as to who is responsible for these attacks. One favorite Western theory is that the Iranian government is killing its own scientists because they are threatening to defect.

The only publicly identified Iranian scientist who may or may not have defected is Shahram Amiri. He claims to have been kidnapped by Saudi agents while on pilgrimage to Mecca in June 2009, and then forcibly taken to the United States. He later made his way back to Iran.

The notion that the Iranian government is now murdering some of their own scientists to assure the loyalty of the others seems farfetched. There are any number of less drastic ways to achieve this end.

Just about every independent source of analysis on this question agrees that the real perpetrators of these serial murders and attempted murders are the United States and Israel, perhaps with an assist from the UK.

These sources include Israel's own senior military correspondent, Yossi Melman, who once told the British paper The Independent that there are "endless efforts of the Israeli intelligence establishment along with its Western counterparts, Britain's MI6 and the CIA, to sabotage, delay and if possible stop Iran from reaching ... its first nuclear bomb." This effort includes the murder of Iranian

scientists.

Similar reports have come from France's Le Figaro, China's Xinhua news agency and the Jerusalem Post.

To most Americans it might sound wrong that Washington, classically described to them from birth to death as God's gift to good government, should be involved in campaigns of "official" murder. However, a brief look at recent history suggests that such practice is actually the norm.

For instance, during the Vietnam war the CIA initiated the Phoenix Program which managed to assassinate 26,369 suspected members of the Viet Cong. The program lasted from 1967 to 1972 when it was closed down due to negative publicity. Almost immediately it was replaced by a new secret, yet similar, operation code named "F-6."

During the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the CIA carried out or assisted in the assassination of thousands of individuals in Central and South America. The Agency reportedly tried to murder Fidel Castro hundreds of times.

Under George W. Bush's administration, kidnapping, torture and murder were standard operating procedures. And, finally, it appears that a sloppy form of assassination is still today's preferred tactic in the ongoing "war on terror." The U.S. now uses drones which not only "take out" the target but also everyone else who happens to be in the vicinity at the time of the attack.

This brief history should make it clear that the repeated reports of U.S. involvement in the attacks on Iranian scientists is quite consistent with past practice. More generally, one will find no "moral squeamishness" when it comes to Washington's use of murder as an element of foreign policy.

Contradiction

Now we come to the really amazing part of this story.

Readers may remember my analysis on June 10 regarding Iran and nuclear weapons. It laid out strong evidence that Iran's nuclear program was not aimed at the development of atomic weapons. It will be recalled that this was and still is the conclusion of no less than 16 U.S. intelligence agencies (including the CIA) as put forth in two National Intelligence Estimates.

In other words, one part of the United States government appears involved in an effort to kill Iranian scientists because of their alleged work on a program that another part of the United States government has reported does not to

exist.

We can reduce this even further. It appears the one part of the CIA is involved in the attacks on these scientists because of nuclear weapons research another part of the CIA tells us is not taking place.

What sort of schizophrenic game is being played out here?

First, complicity in the program of assassinations is a part of a policy that flows from a certain worldview. That worldview is anti-Iranian (this goes back to the 1978-79 Iranian revolution and the holding of American hostages), anti-Muslim (assuming a "clash of civilizations"), and pro-Israel (solidified by the power of the Zionist lobby).

The decision to pursue this policy is a political one made by a men and women in key foreign policy positions within the Congress and Executive Branch of government who share or at least acquiesce in this worldview.

In addition, all of these individuals adhere to or acquiesce in assumptions about Iran that are compatible with the worldview. Thus, it is assumed that present-day Iran is aggressive, ambitious and instinctively hostile to both American and Israeli interests.

Therefore, no matter how benign the Iranian quest for nuclear energy is demonstrated to be, it is metamorphosed into something malignant by the demands of the prevailing worldview and its standing assumptions. This, in turn, justifies the attacks on those involved in Iran's nuclear energy research.

Second, those who perform the professional intelligence analyses, such as those carried out by National Intelligence Estimates, are not motivated by this worldview and make no assumptions. The ability to approach the intelligence data with an open mind is part of what makes these people professionals.

So, they look at the intelligence intelligently, determine what it means in an objective fashion, and report accordingly. Obviously this sort of procedure is going to give a more honest and accurate assessment than one largely pre-determined by myriad assumptions.

Unfortunately, honesty and accuracy are not the priorities of policymakers captured by ideologically shaped worldviews and their accompanying assumptions.

Be it the Cold War or the War against Terror, it is ideology that defines reality. Intelligence estimates that give a different picture are most often found to be politically unacceptable.

Therefore, making clear the contradiction between policy driven by skewed assumptions, and that based on objective investigation is like putting a spotlight on all that is wrong with American foreign policy. Yet this is a message our policymakers cannot hear. That worldview also clogs up their ears.

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Bob Gates's 'Business' of Lying

A Special Report: As Defense Secretary Robert Gates prepares to retire in late June, he is routinely lauded as a "wise man" committed to telling it like it is, even making a frank comment this week about how "most governments lie to each other." But Gates's own record for honesty is a deeply checkered one, Robert Parry reports.

By Robert Parry

June 17, 2011

On Wednesday, Sen. Patrick Leahy asked departing Defense Secretary Robert Gates about future U.S. relations with Pakistan and other "governments that lie to us." Gates responded, in his flat Kansas twang, that "most governments lie to each other. That's the way business gets done."

Gates's Realpolitik answer before the Senate Appropriations Committee drew appreciative laughter from the audience and the usual press kudos for his "refreshing candor," but Gates's response could also be a reminder about his own dubious honesty regarding his role in major government scandals.

After all, if "most governments lie to each other," it follows that government officials do the lying and the U.S. government is not immune from the practice. So, if Gates felt that his work for past presidents while he was at the CIA or the White House needed to be protected by lying, would he lie?

Despite his current reputation for candor, Gates's honesty or lack thereof was a key issue during his earlier incarnation as a young, ambitious national security bureaucrat elbowing his way through the corridors of Washington power in the 1980s and early 1990s.

For various reasons, from his personal charm to his powerful patrons, Gates evaded serious investigations of his questionable activities in those years. Both in official testimony then and in his 1996 memoir, *From the Shadows*, Gates provided only sweeping denials of accusations coming from both U.S. government co-workers and international intelligence operatives.

Gates relied on his influential allies in the Executive Branch, Congress and the Washington press corps to shut down any full-scale examination of what he actually did. Thus, Gates emerged from several scandals mostly relating to secret dealings with Iran, Iraq and Israel relatively unscathed.

However, two decades ago, U.S. history could have taken a very different course if Gates and his cohorts had faced real accountability and their secrets had been exposed. That more contentious route was opened in 1991 when President George H.W. Bush nominated Gates, then Bush's deputy national security adviser, to become CIA director.

Indeed, Bush's selection of Gates represented its own mystery: Why would Bush risk adding fuel to still-smoldering investigative fires, especially since Gates's first nomination to head the CIA had been rebuffed by the Senate in 1987 because of doubts about his honesty regarding the Iran-Contra scandal?

Did Bush's stratospheric poll numbers after the Persian Gulf War create a sense of hubris, or was the President desperate, needing a co-conspirator at the CIA's helm to stop dangerous disclosures of incriminating information?

A Crossroads

In 1991, Gates's nomination stood at a crossroads of several intersecting scandals including:

–The Iran-Contra investigation led by special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh, who had just penetrated a long-running White House cover-up of the secret arms deals from 1985-86 and who had revealed the hidden role of the CIA where Gates had lurked in the background as the agency's deputy director.

–The October Surprise case, an Iran-Contra prequel of secret dealings with Iran dating back to the 1980 presidential campaign, an inquiry which finally had reached a critical mass of congressional interest amid belated mainstream press attention (with Gates and Bush linked to those allegations as well).

–Iraq-gate, suspicions that President Ronald Reagan and then-Vice President George H.W. Bush had covertly aided and armed Iraq's dictator Saddam Hussein in the 1980s, which represented an embarrassment given the just-completed Persian Gulf War against Hussein (with Gates again implicated in those secret dealings

on behalf of Reagan and Bush).

–Politicization of U.S. intelligence, a behind-the-scenes dispute at the CIA which was brought into the daylight by veteran CIA analysts who accused Gates of waging bureaucratic war on their independent judgment and giving the Reagan administration pre-cooked conclusions to support desired policies.

Besides his high poll numbers in 1991, President Bush had other reasons to feel confident about making his protégé, Gates, head of the CIA.

Though Democrats controlled Congress, they had little stomach for a pitched battle over national security issues. They had already retreated on the Iran-Contra Affair and the related Contra-cocaine scandal. By contrast, emboldened congressional Republicans were ready to fight any new investigative threat to their party's hold on the White House.

Also, after more than a decade of Reagan-Bush rule, the Washington press corps had gone from standing upright in the 1970s to being "on bended knee" before Reagan in the 1980s as author Mark Hertsgaard put it to nearly prostrate under Bush-41.

The smart play for an ambitious national journalist was to take the Reagan-Bush side on almost any topic and mock anyone who gave credence to allegations of serious government wrongdoing.

Indeed, the media Zeitgeist of 1991 was a preview of the behavior of Washington journalists a dozen years later when they fell in line behind President George W. Bush's progression toward war with Iraq and marched in lock step behind his false claims about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. In both cases, in 1991 and 2003, staying obedient was the smart career play.

In 1991, part of the media's role in running interference for Gates involved rejecting the testimony of witnesses who implicated Gates in various scandals starting with the alleged back-channel negotiations with Iran in 1980, through the arming of Iraq's Saddam Hussein in the mid-1980s, to the Iran-Contra scandal which broke open in late 1986.

Two Witnesses

Responsible for Gates's CIA confirmation in 1991, Sen. David Boren, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, brushed aside two witnesses who connected Gates to those illicit schemes, former Israeli intelligence official Ari Ben-Menashe and Iranian businessman Richard Babayan. Both offered detailed accounts about Gates's alleged links to the arms transfers.

In an interview with PBS "Frontline," Boren promised to question Babayan about his claims of secret U.S. support for Iraq's Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, but Boren reneged when Gates issued a denial of the Iraq-gate charges.

But who was lying, Babayan or Gates? The shoddiness of Boren's investigation became apparent four years later in January 1995 when Howard Teicher, one of Reagan's National Security Council officials, added more details about Gates's role in the Iraq shipments.

In a sworn affidavit submitted in a Florida criminal case, Teicher stated that the covert arming of Iraq dated back to spring 1982 when Iran had gained the upper hand in the war, leading President Reagan to authorize a U.S. tilt toward Saddam Hussein.

The effort to arm the Iraqis was "spearheaded" by CIA Director William Casey and involved his deputy, Robert Gates, according to Teicher's affidavit. "The CIA, including both CIA Director Casey and Deputy Director Gates, knew of, approved of, and assisted in the sale of non-U.S. origin military weapons, ammunition and vehicles to Iraq," Teicher wrote.

That same pro-Iraq initiative involved Donald Rumsfeld, then Reagan's special emissary to the Middle East. An infamous photograph from 1983 showed a smiling Rumsfeld shaking hands with Saddam Hussein. But Teicher described Gates's role as far more substantive than Rumsfeld's.

"Under CIA Director Casey and Deputy Director Gates, the CIA authorized, approved and assisted [Chilean arms dealer Carlos] Cardoen in the manufacture and sale of cluster bombs and other munitions to Iraq," Teicher wrote.

Even in 1995, during the Clinton administration (when Teicher's affidavit was submitted), the Iraq-gate allegations were not seriously examined.

After Teicher provided the affidavit to a federal court in Miami, it was classified a state secret and Teicher's credibility was attacked. Prosecutors saw the affidavit as disruptive to their case against a private company, Teledyne Industries, and one of its salesmen, Ed Johnson, for selling explosives to Cardoen, who then fashioned them into cluster bombs for Iraq. (With Teicher's affidavit kept from the jury, Johnson was convicted and sent to prison.)

An Israeli's Testimony

In 1991, Boren and his committee staff also swatted away Ben-Menashe's accounts of Gates as the point man for the CIA's covert supplying of Iraq in the 1980s.

In interviews with me, Ben-Menashe described a personal relationship with Gates dating back to the 1970s when both men were aspiring intelligence officers working for their respective governments. Ben-Menashe claimed that his mother even made meals for Gates when he was visiting Israel.

When Ben-Menashe began talking to the press in 1990 after he was arrested in the United States on charges of selling planes to Iran, Israeli authorities deemed him as an impostor who never worked for the government, but had to back track when I obtained documentary evidence showing that Ben-Menashe had served as an operations officer for a unit of Israeli military intelligence from 1977 to 1987.

Though Israel had to recant its initial lie – and Ben-Menashe won acquittal on the plane-sale charges in late 1990 – his credibility continued to be assailed, especially by neoconservatives in the U.S. press apparently upset that Ben-Menashe was exposing closely guarded secrets, including speaking with investigative reporter Seymour Hersh about Israel's nuclear-weapons program. [See Hersh's *The Sampson Option*.]

U.S. journalists with close ties to the Israeli Right, such as Steven Emerson, began parroting Israel's fallback position on Ben-Menashe, that he was only a "low-level translator." That talking point gained currency even though well-placed Israeli officials privately dismissed it as just another cover story.

But Ben-Menashe's claimed relationship with Gates represented a real test of his credibility. Some well-respected journalists, including Hersh, doubted Ben-Menashe's story about knowing Gates because Gates had been a Soviet analyst during his early career at the CIA and thus, presumably, would have no reason to become operationally involved with an Israeli intelligence officer.

I, too, was skeptical of Ben-Menashe's claims about Gates. But I later learned from Gates's CIA co-workers that his duties as a Soviet analyst involved Moscow's policies toward the Middle East, offering a plausible reason for Gates to have spent time meeting intelligence officials in Israel.

It also struck me as odd that Ben-Menashe would have dredged up Gates's name during interviews with me and other journalists in 1990 because by then Gates had slipped back into relative obscurity as a deputy director at Bush-41's National Security Council staff. If the Israeli had wanted to puff himself up about knowing someone important in the U.S. government, why pick Gates?

Tripping Up a Source

My trying to disprove Ben-Menashe's claims about Gates and thus punch a major hole in the Israeli's credibility became a regular feature in my periodic

contacts with Ben-Menashe.

Once when I met Ben-Menashe's aging mother during a visit to the United States, I popped a question about whether she recalled making meals for Robert Gates. Her eyes immediately brightened and she responded in the affirmative. "Yes, Bobby Gates," she said.

I thought I had Ben-Menashe tripped up another time after he insisted he had met with Gates in April 1989 during a trip to Paramus, New Jersey. I even pinned the time down, to the afternoon of April 20, 1989 because Ben-Menashe had been under Customs surveillance that morning.

Since Gates denied knowing Ben-Menashe at all, it was a perfect test for determining which one was lying.

It was before Gates's CIA confirmation, so I brought the information about the alleged New Jersey meeting to Senate Intelligence Committee staffers. They checked on Gates's whereabouts and came back to me, laughing. They said Gates had a perfect alibi for that day. They said Gates had been with Sen. Boren at a speech in Oklahoma.

But when I cross-checked that claim, it turned out that Gates's Oklahoma speech had been on April 19, a day earlier, and that Boren had not been present. I also discovered that Gates had returned to Washington by that evening.

So where was Gates the next day? Could he have taken a quick trip to northern New Jersey?

Since senior White House national security officials keep detailed daily calendars, it should have been easy for Boren's investigators to check Gates's scheduled meetings and corroborate his alibi with a few interviews.

After I pointed out their screw-up on the Oklahoma speech, the committee staffers agreed to check again on the right date. They later called me back saying that Gates's personal White House calendar showed no trip to New Jersey and that Gates had denied taking such a trip. That was good enough for the committee, they said.

But the investigators couldn't (or wouldn't) tell me where Gates was that afternoon or with whom. They also acknowledged that they interviewed no alibi witnesses. And they rebuffed my later request to review their copy of Gates's calendar, which they claimed to have returned to him.

For his part, Gates wrote in his memoir that "the allegations of meetings with me around the world were easily disproved for the committee by my travel

records, calendars, and countless witnesses.” But none of Gates’s supportive evidence was made public by Gates, by the Intelligence Committee, or by later inquiries into the Iran-hostage allegations or the Iraq-gate scandal.

Not one of Gates’s “countless witnesses” who could vouch for Gates’s whereabouts was identified. Perhaps most galling for those of us who were trying to assess Ben-Menashe’s credibility was the committee’s failure in 1991 to fully test Ben-Menashe’s claim about the April 20, 1989, meeting.

Calendar Revealed

It wasn’t until 2007 after Gates had become George W. Bush’s Defense Secretary (replacing Donald Rumsfeld) that I finally secured a copy of Gates’s calendar from the National Archives, via a Freedom of Information Act request.

I quickly leafed through the FOIA packet and pulled out the April 20, 1989, page. I finally thought I had the proof to confront Ben-Menashe with a clear-cut lie.

The calendar showed Gates with a full slate of White House meetings through the afternoon, including a public signing ceremony for the Space Council at 1:05 p.m., an Oval Office meeting with Belize’s Prime Minister Manuel Esquivel at 3 p.m., and a session with two journalists John Cochran and Sandy Gilmore at 4 p.m.

However, before I challenged Ben-Menashe to his face, I thought I should check out the calendar as best I could, given the lapse of 18 years and the likelihood that memories of Gates’s routine meetings with White House staff might be especially hazy.

Still, I could ask the archivists at the George H.W. Bush Library to check for photos of the public signing event. A picture of Gates would surely nail down that part of the time window. There also are sign-in sheets for Oval Office meetings like the one with the prime minister, so that would cover mid-afternoon. And the reporters might recall a White House sit-down with Gates.

It didn’t seem likely that Ben-Menashe could slip away from such conclusive proof.

So, at my request, the archivists located both still photos and video footage of the Space Council event. The images covered pretty much the entire room, but to my surprise, Gates was nowhere to be seen. I then got the sign-in sheet for the Oval Office meeting. Gates’s name was missing.

When I tracked down the two reporters, neither had any recollection of the

interview with Gates.

In other words, there were still holes in Gates's alibi for the time frame that Ben-Menashe had indicated for their meeting in northern New Jersey. Although these lapses do not prove that Gates did sneak off for a quick trip, the gaps did kill my plan of confronting the Israeli with hard evidence that he had lied.

The flawed alibi also represents another indictment of the Senate Intelligence Committee under Boren and his then-chief of staff George Tenet. In 1991, it would have been simple to check with Gates's alibi witnesses whose memories would have been much fresher and who could have easily checked their notes.

Instead, Boren and Tenet essentially accepted Gates's word and the reliability of his calendar entries, which at least in several instances appeared to be false.

In his 1996 memoir, Gates thanked his friend, David Boren, for pushing through his CIA nomination. "David took it as a personal challenge to get me confirmed," Gates wrote.

Fouling Investigations

The dismissal of Ben-Menashe's claim that he met with Gates in April 1989 had consequences for other related investigations, since Ben-Menashe also had placed Gates, along with George H.W. Bush, at a secret meeting between Republicans and Iranians in Paris in October 1980. That was when Jimmy Carter was still president and 52 Americans were being held hostage in Iran.

According to Ben-Menashe, Israeli intelligence officers were in Paris to coordinate arms shipments to Iran that the Republicans would approve once Ronald Reagan entered the White House in January 1981. In October 1980, Bush was Reagan's vice presidential running mate, and Carter was desperate to gain freedom for the hostages before the November 1980 election.

As part of the alleged Paris deal, the Iranians were to release the hostages only after Carter lost reelection. (As it turned out, Iran let the hostages go immediately after Reagan was sworn in on Jan. 20, 1981.)

The repudiation of Ben-Menashe's credibility helped shut the door on a 1992 congressional inquiry into the so-called October Surprise case, despite a good deal of corroborating evidence of a Republican-Iranian deal in Paris.

The House October Surprise Task Force was wrapping in December 1992 with a finding of Reagan-Bush innocence when a flood of evidence incriminating the Republicans arrived late (enough to prompt chief counsel Lawrence Barcella [to](#)

unsuccessfully request an extension of the inquiry).

Instead, the task force leaders Reps. Lee Hamilton, D-Indiana, and Henry Hyde, R-Illinois chose to press ahead with the previous conclusion, that there was no credible evidence implicating Reagan, Bush, Gates or Casey, who had been Reagan's campaign chief in 1980.

But there was still one more twist for the task force. In January 1993, just days before the task force findings were due for release, an extraordinary report was delivered from the Russian government, responding to an earlier request for information from Hamilton.

According to this Russian report, Soviet-era intelligence records revealed that Bush, Gates and Casey participated in secret contacts with Iranian officials to delay release of the U.S. hostages in Iran.

"R[obert] Gates, at that time a staffer of the National Security Council in the administration of Jimmy Carter, and former CIA Director George Bush also took part" in a meeting in Paris in October 1980, according to the Russian report.

Despite its explosive information, the Russian Report was kept hidden by the House October Surprise Task Force, which went ahead with its exculpatory findings. Later, I discovered the report when I gained access to some of the task force's unpublished files.

Years later, Hamilton told me that he had never seen the report, although it was addressed to him. Barcella acknowledged that he might never have forwarded the report to Hamilton. [For the text of the Russian report, click [here](#). To view the actual U.S. embassy cable that includes the Russian report, click [here](#).]

Weapons Shipments

Despite lingering uncertainties about the details of the October Surprise case, what is beyond dispute is that once in office, President Reagan did permit weapons to flow to Iran via Israel. One of the Israeli planes carrying an arms shipment was shot down over the Soviet Union on July 18, 1981, after straying off course, but the incident drew little attention at the time.

The secret arms flow continued, on and off, until late 1986 when the Iran-Contra scandal another case of arms-for-hostages dealing with Iran broke into public view. [For more details, see Robert Parry's *Secrecy & Privilege*.]

Regarding the Iran-Contra scandal which might be viewed as the sequel to the October Surprise case independent counsel Walsh chose not to indict Gates, though Walsh's final report didn't endorse Gates's credibility either. After

recounting discrepancies between Gates's Iran-Contra recollections and those of other CIA officials, Walsh wrote:

"The statements of Gates often seemed scripted and less than candid. Nevertheless, given the complex nature of the activities and Gates's apparent lack of direct participation, a jury could find the evidence left a reasonable doubt that Gates either obstructed official inquiries or that his two demonstrably incorrect statements were deliberate lies."

For his part, Gates also denied any wrongdoing in the Iran-Contra arms-for-hostage deal and expressed only one significant regret that he acquiesced to the decision to withhold from Congress the Jan. 17, 1986, presidential intelligence "finding" that gave some legal cover to the Iran arms shipments.

Besides the questions about whether Gates lied to protect himself and his superiors in these scandals involving Iran, Iraq and Israel, Gates also faced charges from senior colleagues inside the CIA's analytical division that he corrupted their standards for providing honest assessments to U.S. policymakers.

Once Casey became Reagan's CIA director in 1981, Gates was put on the fast track for career success. Shoving aside more senior officials, Gates rose quickly to head the CIA's analytical division, where he reversed decades of CIA traditions regarding objective analysis.

In that job and later as Casey's deputy director Gates oversaw an analytical division that began exaggerating dangers abroad to justify Reagan's massive military buildup. Instead of seeing the signs of a coming Soviet collapse, Gates's analytical product conjured up a Soviet empire gaining on all fronts.

To fit with Reagan's geopolitical needs, Gates's CIA also downplayed real dangers that ironically would emerge as greater threats today. For instance, analysts who warned about Pakistan's secret work on a nuclear bomb were ignored and even punished, apparently because the Reagan administration needed Pakistan's help in supporting anti-Soviet mujahedeen rebels in Afghanistan.

At Gates's confirmation hearings in 1991, former CIA analysts, including renowned Kremlinologist Melvin A. Goodman, took the extraordinary step of coming out of the shadows to accuse Gates of politicizing intelligence. [For details, see Consortiumnews.com's ["The Mysterious Robert Gates."](#)]

'Wise Man'

Despite this checkered record for wisdom and truth-telling, Gates today is renowned across Washington as a modern "wise man." In 2009, Washington Post columnist David Broder, the late "dean of the Washington press corps," [hailed](#)

Gates as “incapable of dissembling.”

Now, as Gates prepares to retire as Defense Secretary in late June, he is being showered with rose petals of official praise. His insights like the one about governments lying to one another are greeted with appreciative chuckles and appreciation for his “candor.”

At Wednesday’s hearing before the Senate Appropriations Committee, which was billed as his last congressional appearance as Defense Secretary, Gates was depicted in the media as a straight talker who had run out of patience with America’s erstwhile allies and the political posturing of Congress.

Despite his curt responses to questions from Leahy and others, the New York Times [reported](#) that “Wednesday’s hearing ... was in fact mostly a lovefest as members of the committee lavished praise on Mr. Gates. On June 30 he is to walk out of the Pentagon and into a life of writing books lakeside near Seattle.

“‘Secretary Gates, I look forward to you coming home to our home state,’ Senator Patty Murray, Democrat of Washington, said at one point in the hearing. ‘I know you must be looking forward to that.’

“‘Fifteen days,’ Mr. Gates replied, to laughter.”

It is probably not likely that Gates will use his book writing to tell the full truth and nothing but the truth about what he did as a government official. After all, as Gates has made clear, lying is “the way business gets done.”

[For more on these topics, see Robert Parry’s *Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, now available in a two-book set for the discount price of only \$19. For details, [click here.](#)]

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at neckdeepbook.com. His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & ‘Project Truth’* are also available there.

Making the US Economy ‘Scream’

Exclusive: Over the past several decades, Republican methods for winning national power have come to resemble CIA techniques for destabilizing an enemy country – through the use of black propaganda, political skullduggery and economic disruptions. Now, heading toward Election

2012, the Republicans appear poised to make the U.S. economy “scream,” observes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

June 3, 2011

Modern Republicans have a simple approach to politics when they are not in the White House: Make America as ungovernable as possible by using almost any means available, from challenging the legitimacy of opponents to spreading lies and disinformation to sabotaging the economy.

Over the past four decades or so, the Republicans have simply not played by the old give-and-take rules of politics. Indeed, if one were to step back and assess this Republican approach, what you would see is something akin to how the CIA has destabilized target countries, especially those that seek to organize themselves in defiance of capitalist orthodoxy.

To stop this spread of “socialism,” nearly anything goes. Take, for example, Chile in the early 1970s when socialist President Salvador Allende won an election and took steps aimed at improving the conditions of the country’s poor.

Under the direction of President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, the CIA was dispatched to engage in psychological warfare against Allende’s government and to make the Chilean economy “scream.”

U.S. intelligence agencies secretly sponsored Chilean news outlets, like the influential newspaper El Mercurio, and supported “populist” uprisings of truckers and housewives. On the economic front, the CIA coordinated efforts to starve the Chilean government of funds and to drive unemployment higher.

Worsening joblessness could then be spun by the CIA-financed news outlets as proof that Allende’s policies didn’t work and that the only choice for Chile was to scrap its social programs. When Allende compromised with the Right, that had the additional benefit of causing friction between him and some of his supporters who wanted even more radical change.

As Chile became increasingly ungovernable, the stage was set for the violent overthrow of Allende, the installation of a rightist dictatorship, and the imposition of “free-market” economics that directed more wealth and power to Chile’s rich and their American corporate backers.

Though the Allende case in Chile is perhaps the best known example of this intelligence strategy (because it was investigated by a Senate committee in the mid-1970s), the CIA has employed this approach frequently around the world. Sometimes the target government is removed without violence, although other times a bloody coup d’etat has been part of the mix.

Home to Roost

So, it is perhaps fitting that a comparable approach to politics would eventually come home to roost in the United States, even to the point that some of the propaganda funding comes from outside sources (think of Rev. Sun Myung Moon’s Washington Times and Australian media mogul Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp.)

Obviously, given the wealth of the American elites, the relative proportion of the propaganda

funding is derived more domestically in the United States than it would be in a place like Chile (or some other unfortunate Third World country that has gotten on Washington's bad side).

But the concept remains the same: Control as much as possible what the population gets to see and hear; create chaos for your opponent's government, economically and politically; blame if for the mess; and establish in the minds of the voters that their only way out is to submit, that the pain will stop once your side is back in power.

Today's Republicans have fully embraced this concept of political warfare, whereas the Democrats generally have tried to play by the old rules, acquiescing when Republicans are in office with the goal of "making government work," even if the Republicans are setting the agenda.

Unlike the Democrats and the Left, the Republicans and the Right have prepared themselves for this battle, almost as if they are following a CIA training manual. They have invested tens of billions of dollars in a propaganda infrastructure that operates 24/7, year-round, to spot and exploit missteps by political enemies.

This vertically integrated media machine allows useful information to move quickly from a right-wing blog to talk radio to Fox News to the Wall Street Journal to conservative magazines and book publishing. Right-wing propagandists are well-trained and well-funded so they can be deployed to all manner of public outlets to hammer home the talking points.

When a Democrat somehow does manage to get into the White House, Republicans in Congress (and even in the Courts) are ready to do their part in the destabilization campaign. Rather than grant traditional "honeymoon" periods of cooperation with the president's early policies, the battle lines are drawn immediately.

In late 1992, for instance, Bill Clinton complained that his "honeymoon" didn't even last through the transition, the two-plus months before a new president takes office. He found himself facing especially harsh hazing from the Washington press corps, as the mainstream media seeking to shed its "liberal" label and goaded by the right-wing media tried to demonstrate that it would be tougher on a Democrat than any Republican.

The mainstream press hyped minor "scandals" about Clinton's Whitewater real estate investment and Travel-gate, a flap about some routine firings at the White House travel office. Meanwhile, the Right's rapidly growing media was spreading false stories implicating Clinton in the death of White House aide Vince Foster and other "mysterious deaths."

Republicans in Congress did all they could to feed the press hysteria, holding hearings and demanding that special prosecutors be appointed. When the Clinton administration relented, the choice of prosecutors was handed over to right-wing Republican Appeals Court Judge David Sentelle, who consciously picked political enemies of Clinton to oversee zealous investigations.

Finally Winning

The use of scandal-mongering to destabilize the Clinton administration finally peaked in late 1998 and early 1999 when the Republican-controlled House voted impeachment and Clinton had to endure (but survive) a humiliating trial in the Senate.

The Republican strategy, however, continued into Campaign 2000 with Vice President Al Gore facing attacks on his character and integrity. Gore was falsely painted as a delusional braggart, as both right-wing and mainstream media outlets freely misquoted him and subjected him to ridicule (while simultaneously bowing and scraping before Republican candidate George W. Bush).

When Gore managed to win the national popular vote anyway and would have carried the key state of Florida if all legally cast ballots were counted the Republicans and the Right rose up in fury demanding that the Florida count be stopped before Bush's tiny lead completely disappeared. Starting a minor riot in Miami, the Republicans showed how far they would go to claim the White House again.

Five Republican partisans on the U.S. Supreme Court wanting to ensure that the new president would keep their side in control of the courts and recognizing that their party was prepared to spread disorder if Gore prevailed stopped the counting of votes and made Bush the "winner." [For details, see the book, *Neck Deep*.]

Despite this partisan ruling, Gore and the Democrats stepped back from the political confrontation. The right-wing press cheered and gloated, while the mainstream news media urged the people to accept Bush as "legitimate" for the good of the country.

For most of Bush's disastrous presidency, this dynamic remained the same. Though barely able to complete a coherent sentence, Bush was treated with great deference, even when he failed to protect the country from the 9/11 attacks and led the nation into an unprovoked war with Iraq. There were no combative investigations of Bush like those that surrounded Clinton.

Even at the end of Bush's presidency when his policies of deregulation, tax cuts for the rich and massive budget deficits combined to create the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression the prevailing message from the Establishment was that it was unfair to lay too much blame on Bush.

Shortly after Barack Obama took office in 2009, a Republican/right-wing talking point was to complain when anyone took note of the mess that Bush had left behind: "There you go again, blaming Bush."

Getting Obama

Immediately, too, the Republicans and the Right set to work demonizing and destroying Obama's presidency. Instead of allowing the Democrats to enact legislation aimed at addressing the financial and economic crisis, the Senate Republicans launched filibuster after filibuster.

When Obama and the Democrats did push through emergency legislation, such as the \$787 billion stimulus package, they had to water it down to reach the 60-vote super-majority. The Republicans and the Right then quickly laid the blame for high unemployment on the "failed" stimulus.

There also were waves of propaganda pounding Obama's legitimacy. The Right's news media pressed bogus accusations that Obama had been born in Kenya and thus was not constitutionally eligible to be president. He was denounced as a socialist, a Muslim, a fascist, an enemy of Israel, and pretty much any other charge that might hit some American hot button.

When Obama welcomed American students back to school in 2009, the Right organized against his simple message urging young people to work hard as if it were some form of totalitarian mind control. His attempt to address the growing crisis in American health care was denounced as taking away freedoms and imposing "death panels."

Soon, billionaires like oil man David Koch and media mogul Murdoch, were promoting a "grassroots" rebellion against Obama called the Tea Party. Activists were showing up at presidential speeches with guns and brandishing weapons at rallies near Washington.

The high-decibel disruptions and the "screaming" economy created the impression of political chaos. Largely ignoring the role of the Republicans, the press faulted Obama for failing to live up to his campaign promise to bring greater bipartisanship to Washington.

Hearing the discord framed that way, many average Americans also blamed Obama; many of the President's supporters grew demoralized; and, as happened with Allende in Chile, some on the Left turned against Obama for not doing more, faster.

By November 2010, the stage was set for a big Republican comeback. The party swept to victory in the House and fell just short in the Senate. But Congress was not the Republicans' true goal. What they really want is the White House with all its executive powers.

However, following Obama's success in killing Osama bin Laden on May 2 and with what is widely regarded as a weak Republican presidential field, the Right's best hope for regaining complete control of the U.S. government in 2012 is to sink the U.S. economy.

Already, the Republican success in limiting the scope of the stimulus package and then labeling it a failure combined with deep cuts in local, state and federal government spending have helped push the economy back to the brink where a double-dip recession is now a serious concern.

Despite these worries and a warning from Moody's about a possible downgrade on U.S. debt if Congress delays action on raising the debt limit the Republicans are vowing more brinksmanship over the debt-limit vote. Before acting, they are demanding major reductions in government spending (while refusing to raise taxes on the rich).

A Conundrum

So, Obama and the Democrats face another conundrum. If they slash spending too much, they will further stall the recovery. However, if they refuse to submit to this latest round of Republican blackmail, they risk a debt crisis that could have devastating consequences for the U.S. economy for years even decades to come.

Either way, the right-wing media and much of the mainstream press will put the blame on Obama and the Democrats. They will be held accountable for failing to govern.

The Republican propaganda machine will tell the American people that they must throw Obama and the Democrats out of office for stability to return. There will be assurances about how the "magic of the market" will bring back the bright days of prosperity.

Of course, the reality of a new Republican administration, especially with a GOP Congress, would be the return of the old right-wing nostrums: more tax cuts for the rich, less

regulation of corporations, more military spending, and more privatization of social programs.

Any budget balancing will come at the expense of labor rights for union employees and shifting the costs for health care onto the backs of the elderly. Yet, all this will be surrounded by intense propaganda explaining the public pain as a hangover from misguided government "social engineering."

There is, of course, the possibility that the American people will see through today's Republican CIA-style strategy of "making the economy scream." Americans might come to recognize the role of the pseudo-populist propagandists on Fox News and talk radio.

Or Republicans might have second thoughts about playing chicken on the debt limit and running the risk of a global depression. Such a gamble could rebound against them. And, it's hard to believe that even their most ardent billionaire-backers would find destruction of their stock portfolios that appealing.

But there can be a momentum to madness. We have seen throughout history that events can get out of hand, that thoroughly propagandized true believers can truly believe. Sometimes, they don't understand they are simply being manipulated for a lesser goal. Once the chaos starts, it is hard to restore order.

That has been another bloody lesson from the CIA's operations in countries around the world. These covert actions can have excessive or unintended consequences.

Ousting Allende turned Chile into a fascist dictatorship that sent assassins far and wide, including Washington, D.C. Ousting Mossadegh in Iran led to the tyranny of the Shah and ultimately to an extreme Islamist backlash. Ousting Arbenz in Guatemala led to the butchery of some 200,000 people and the rise of a narco-state. Such examples can go on and on.

However, these CIA-type techniques can be very seductive, both to U.S. presidents looking for a quick fix to some international problem and to a political party trying to gain a decisive edge for winning. These methods can be especially dangerous when the other side doesn't organize effectively to counter them.

The hard reality in the United States today is that the Republicans and the Right are now fully organized, armed with a potent propaganda machine and possessing an extraordinary political will. They are well-positioned to roll the U.S. economy off the cliff and blame the catastrophe on Obama.

Indeed, that may be their best hope for winning Election 2012.

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Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at neckdeepbook.com. His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost*

The Reality of Robert Gates

Defense Secretary Robert Gates is leaving government with accolades from all over Official Washington. Only a few dissenting voices note that the reality of Gates's four-plus years at the Pentagon's helm doesn't match the image, as former CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar observes in this guest essay.

By Paul R. Pillar

May 28, 2011

Lawrence Korb's [unflattering review](#) of Robert Gates's tenure as secretary of defense addresses one of the greater discrepancies between reputation and reality in the record of a prominent public servant.

Given the extremely favorable reputation that Gates enjoys as he is about to leave office, such a discrepancy still leaves room for a good amount of the positive to go along with the negative.

Gates unquestionably is a very smart and talented bureaucrat. But part of his being smart has always been to have a good feel for what sells well, either to his superiors in government or to the public.

Much of what Korb describes from Gates's tenure at the Department of Defense reflects Gates's career-long emphasis on saying and doing the sorts of things that tend to win applause as tough-minded management, whether or not those things really improved how well the organization he was managing performed its mission.

Early in his career, when the audience Gates needed to impress was not the public but instead his immediate superior, the key superior was William J. Casey, who was Ronald Reagan's director of central intelligence in the 1980s.

Casey catapulted the young Gates into senior positions, including eventually that of deputy director of central intelligence. Casey also was, as aptly described in Gates's own memoir, *From the Shadows*, an ideologically driven Cold Warrior who largely obliterated the distinction between policy advocacy and objective intelligence.

What Gates did not describe is how much he himself, a protege who owed his meteoric rise largely to Casey's patronage, was involved in the politicization.

Gates was twice nominated to be director of central intelligence. On the first occasion, he withdrew when it became clear he would not be confirmed. His second

nomination made it through the Senate, but with 31 negative votes.

The opposition was based partly on the politicization but even more so on continued uncertainties about Gates's role in the Iran-Contra affair.

Many senators found it hard to believe that he did not have a significant part in a scandal in which officials directly above and below him had been implicated, and in which he was especially close to the person above him.

Remarkably, when George W. Bush nominated Gates to become secretary of defense in 2006, almost none of this background was mentioned, and Gates was easily confirmed.

This was in part because Gates was not Donald Rumsfeld, which at the time would have been the biggest qualification for almost anyone nominated to be secretary of defense. But it also was a tribute to Gates's superlative ability to preserve and nurture his own reputation.

The single biggest theme in that nurturing, the chapter that Gates could expertly write in any how-to-get-ahead book, is that he has always posed as a reformer who has been above whatever organization he has been charged with running, rather than ever being of the organization, no matter how long he has been running it.

He has always bragged of being, in his words, an "agent of change" who would come in to whack away ruthlessly at the stodginess and ineptitude of whatever organization he was appointed to head.

This posture has served two purposes for Gates. First, it involves themes that always win applause, especially when applied to government bureaucracies that are routinely and automatically assumed to be stodgy and inept.

Second, it enables him to present himself, no matter what failures occur on his watch, more as part of the solution than as part of the problem.

By quickly assuming the role of one who cracks heads, or rolls them, he protects his own head. In brief, it enables him to shift responsibility for failure or misjudgment downward.

This pattern was in evidence in one of the subjects Korb addresses: the war in Afghanistan, and Gates's handling of the field commanders he assigned to the war.

One of those commanders, David McKiernan, requested more troops, had his request quashed by Gates, and then after the president subsequently decided to send more troops, was fired by Gates and replaced by Stanley McChrystal.

Another episode that Korb does not mention was the mistaken loading of nuclear warheads on a B-52 that flew from North Dakota to Louisiana in 2007. Gates's principal response was to fire the Secretary of the Air Force and the Air Force Chief of Staff, citing "cultural" problems in the service.

The incident certainly raised serious questions about procedures for handling nuclear weapons, but where exactly should the responsibility lie?

The service secretary and chief of staff were several levels removed from the faulty inventory of ordnance on the flight line in North Dakota. To fire them requires a concept of accountability for senior officials that holds them responsible for everything that takes place under their command, regardless of what they did or what they knew.

And if that is the concept, why should the responsibility stop at their level? The Air Force is, after all, part of the Department of Defense.

Gates's posture of the tough-minded, crusading reformist whipping into shape an organization that supposedly was in sad shape when he took it over was in full bloom in a speech he gave a few days ago at the American Enterprise Institute.

In remarkably self-serving language, Gates talked of how "in the course of doing everything I [note the first person singular] could to turn things around first in Iraq and then in Afghanistan, from the early months I ran up against institutional obstacles in the Pentagon – cultural, procedural, ideological – to getting done what needed to get done."

He went on to talk about the requirement for "fundamentally reshaping the priorities of the Pentagon and the uniformed services and reforming the way they did business."

Four and a half years on the job, and the divide between the reformer with the whip and the whipped organization was as deep as ever.

Everything good in the Pentagon was depicted as a result of what "I" accomplished; everything that was still bad in the department which he has been running was supposedly due to cultural, procedural, and ideological obstacles of the institution.

Awareness of the gap between reputation and reality matters not just to make an accurate historical judgment on one official. It is also partly a matter of fairness to those, such as David McKiernan, whose careers or reputations may have suffered as Gates strove to protect his own.

Most important is that it is the reality of how departments are run and operate

that counts, not whatever image the person at the top of it has managed to cultivate.

What best serves the image is not necessarily what best serves the organizational mission and the national interest. Korb cites some very important matters for which this is true, such as defense spending.

There are many others, including effects on morale and cohesion in an organization whose head never really joins the organization but instead lords over it.

Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is now a visiting professor at Georgetown University for security studies. (This article first appeared in The National Interest.)
