

The Glorious Return of Condi Rice

Exclusive: The failure to impose meaningful accountability on the Iraq War's architects allows them to return as "wise" advisers to be consulted by media outlets and today's politicians, as with Condoleezza Rice, notes James W Carden.

By James W Carden

Condoleezza Rice, the National Security Adviser at the time of the Iraq invasion and then President George W. Bush's Secretary of State, has returned to the public eye, out promoting her new book, entitled *Democracy: Stories from the Long Road to Freedom*.

In late March, Rice met at the White House with President Donald J. Trump, who she previously had said "should not be president." Rice's return to the public eye would seem to prove the truth of Professor Stephen Walt's axiom that being a neocon means never having to say your sorry.

It seems like a lifetime ago, but there was a time when Rice's star was ascendant. An August 1999 profile of Rice in *National Review* dubbed Rice as "George Bush's foreign policy czarina" and described her in rapturous terms. Rice, according to the *NR*'s Jay Nordlinger, was the "very picture of American overachievement"; "If she becomes secretary of state or even something lesser, she will be big. Rock-star big"; "She is, all agree, an immensely appealing person: poised, gracious, humbly smart"; "Her television appearances have prompted marriage proposals"; "And she is very much a jock."

Nordlinger was also of the opinion that Rice was on the cusp of becoming "A major cultural figure, adorning the bedroom walls of innumerable kids and the covers of innumerable magazines."

But it was not to be. By the end of the Bush years, Rice's reputation lay largely in tatters. "There was a time when," *New York Times* correspondent Helene Cooper wrote in September 2007, "perhaps more than Hillary Rodham Clinton or Barack Obama, Condoleezza Rice seemed to have the best shot at becoming the first woman or the first African-American to be president."

Accounts of the early Bush years, particularly following 9/11, showed that Rice was an incompetent manager of the National Security Council process, unable or unwilling to withstand the onslaught of wondrously reckless and short-sighted advice provided by Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz.

Seeking Redemption

Rice's new book would seem to be (yet another) shot at redemption. (Rice had previously toured the country in support of her memoir, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*.)

Writing in the *New York Times*, Walter Russell Meade, the editor of the neoconservative *American Interest*, called Rice's *Democracy* an "important new book."

"Her faith in the benefits and strategic importance of democracy promotion," writes Meade "is as strong as, or stronger than, it was when she joined the George W. Bush administration in 2001." Meade, a sympathetic reviewer who shares many of Rice's assumptions about the beneficent power of the U.S. military, approvingly observes that her new book is an "attempt to hammer home the idea of democracy promotion as a key goal for American foreign policy."

A child of segregated Alabama, Rice says that her foreign policy views are shaped by the ideals that animated the American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. For Rice, U.S. foreign policy should be a continuation that movement, i.e., the U.S. should use its power to advance a *global* struggle for human and civil rights. It's an idea that has intuitive appeal, yet when put into practice, the results have been little short of disastrous.

A Devastating Death Toll

The period of the last 18 years – from NATO's ill-conceived intervention on behalf of Kosovar Muslims in Serbia in 1999 through to the present day – has been marked by an optimistic and at times unshakable faith on the part of the American political establishment in its duty and right to intervene in foreign civil conflicts under democratic or humanitarian pretexts.

The intellectual framework for this "golden age of intervention" was set forth not by an American, but by a young, dynamic British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, during the course of NATO's bombing of Serbia in 1999. In April of that year, Blair traveled to Chicago and attempted to justify the war on humanitarian grounds. In some ways, Blair's speech heralded the era of humanitarian intervention and global democracy promotion in which we still find ourselves.

Blair declared that "We are all internationalists now, whether we like it or not. ...We cannot turn our backs on conflicts and the violation of human rights within other countries if we want still to be secure." The Prime Minister continued, stating his belief that "if we can establish and spread the values of liberty, the rule of law, human rights and an open society then that is in our national interests too."

Initially, Rice was slow to sign on to such a transformational project; after

all, according to the author James Mann, Rice “had risen to prominence as heir to the foreign policy traditions of Henry Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft. At Stanford and during the first Bush administration, she had been an avowed proponent of the doctrine of realism.”

In an essay entitled “Promoting the National Interest” in *Foreign Affairs* in January 2000, Rice wrote presciently that “an overly broad definition of America’s national interest is bound to backfire.” As late as 2002, her Stanford colleague and fellow Russia specialist Michael McFaul (who served as Ambassador to Russia under President Obama) said of Rice, “She believes in realpolitik, that the main driving force of international relations is balance of power politics and that what happens internally [sic] inside a country should not be part of foreign policy.”

Creeping Neoconservatism

Yet even before 9/11 and the emergence of George W. Bush’s “Freedom Agenda,” Rice had slowly been inching away from the realism of her mentor Scowcroft towards a conception of international affairs not markedly different from that of Tony Blair or the neoconservatives like William Kristol who once distrusted her.

It was during the period between 9/11 and commencement of the Iraq war that Rice’s transformation from realist to a kind of “soft” neoconservative became complete. Thereafter, she became, like Bush, Blair, Hillary Clinton and Samantha Power, an emblematic figure of the age of intervention.

By mid-2003, Rice had become a true believer. In a speech in London that June, Rice asked “Why would anyone who shares the values of freedom seek to put a check on those values? Democratic institutions themselves are a check on the excesses of power.” “Power in the service of freedom,” said Rice, “is to be welcomed.”

A valedictory piece in Foreign Affairs in July 2008, showed what a long way she traveled in eight years, from warning, on the eve of Bush’s presidency, that an “overly broad definition of America’s national interest is bound to backfire” to now expressing her belief that “cooperation with our democratic allies ... should not be judged simply by how we relate to one another. It should be judged by the work we do together to defeat terrorism and extremism, meet global challenges, defend human rights and dignity, and support new democracies.”

For Rice, “Democratic state-building is now an urgent component of our national interest.” Indeed, it is “America’s job to change the world, and in its own image.”

Today, when Rice talks about Iraq, or foreign policy in general, as she did recently with NPR's Rachel Martin, she is given a respectful hearing. Apparently it would be a breach of decorum or the rules of the game to ask Rice whether she was concerned, embarrassed (or aware) that the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq was ultimately responsible for the rise of ISIS.

Unchallenged, Rice is allowed to paint the war and its aftermath in the most anodyne of terms. Today, according to Rice, Iraq "has a legislature that tries to function. It has a prime minister who is accountable. ... They have a very free and functioning press." In her telling, Iraq is in many ways *better* now because "it's not an authoritarian state any longer, and it's not a totalitarian state in the way that it was under Saddam Hussein."

And in perhaps the most astoundingly obtuse statement since Gary Johnson's "what's an Aleppo?" Rice told the apparently somnolent Martin that "It's very different to be Iraqi today than to be Syrian." Tell that to the residents of Mosul, the Iraqi city that was overrun by Islamic State extremists in 2014 and is now the scene of a bloody assault by Iraqi forces backed by U.S. and allied airstrikes.

The point here is that Rice shouldn't be let off the hook so easily; after all, the costs of Bush's Middle East adventures have been staggering. Ten years after the 2003 invasion, Brown University's Cost of War project estimated that the war had killed roughly 190,000 people and cost \$2.2 trillion. By 2016, the costs of the combined military actions in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan had grown. According to the latest figures from the project:

" -Over 370,000 people have died due to direct war violence, and at least 800,000 more indirectly

-200,000 civilians have been killed as a result of the fighting at the hands of all parties to the conflict

-10.1 million - the number of war refugees and displaced persons

-The US federal price tag for the Iraq war is about 4.8 trillion dollars"

Excusing Wars of Supremacy

Through the years - from her time as a NSC staffer for Bush the Elder, through her disastrous tenure as NSC adviser (followed by a marginally less-bad tenure as Secretary of State) during the administration of Bush the Lesser - Rice has developed what I have called a "soft-neoconservatism" which attempts to disguise and excuse the American will to global supremacy by camouflaging it in the "soft" language of human rights.

Her approach to global affairs marries a credulous belief in the power of “democracy promotion” with a belief in the efficacy of U.S. military power. Rice’s embrace of “democracy promotion” is no doubt wholehearted and genuine. But it is all the more troubling and dangerous because of it.

One wonders: is there really any difference between the vacuous, happy pieties of “soft-neoconservatism” of which Rice, Hillary Clinton and Madeleine Albright are such ardent adepts, or the “hard” neoconservatism of Beltway Caesars like Sen. Tom Cotton, Robert Kagan and Elliot Abrams, or the outright militarism of the current crop of Trump appointees like Defense Secretary James Mattis and NSC adviser H.R. McMaster?

An equally urgent question as concerns Rice in particular and the Bush crowd generally: why have they suffered no serious consequences for the disastrous decisions that were made on their watch?

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William & Mary Honors War Criminal

Exclusive: Condoleezza Rice has crossed the threshold into esteemed celebrity a welcomed speaker at this year’s College of William and Mary commencement despite her record as the liar who sold the illegal war in Iraq and choreographed torture at CIA “black sites,” writes ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern.

By Ray McGovern

Nothing better illustrates the extent to which the United States has turned its back on the rule of law than when the likes of Condoleezza Rice are asked to address graduates and receive doctoral degrees *honoris causa* at university commencements. Ms. Rice in my view a war criminal was accorded those honors Saturday by the College of William and Mary, the second-oldest college in the U.S.

Unlike Rice’s other university appearances in recent years, there was not the slightest sign of unhappiness, let alone protest. Most of the graduating seniors were not yet ten years old in 2003 when Rice played a key role helping President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney launch a war of aggression against Iraq. So, the graduates’ ignorance may perhaps be understandable, but it does

not speak well for their grasp of recent history.

It is far less excusable for the patrician leadership of William and Mary to have bestowed this honor on Rice. Did the news not penetrate their ivory tower that last year Ms. Rice was prevented from being accorded similar honors by irate students at Rutgers University, who were sickened at the thought that their commencement would be sullied by Rice's presence?

One of the leaders of the "No Rice" campaign at Rutgers last year (a senior at the time), Carmelo Cintr3n Vivas, told Amy Goodman of Democracy Now! that the "students felt that war criminals shouldn't be honored. ... Someone who has such a tainted record as a public servant in this country should not ... get an honorary law degree for trying to circumvent the law. ... That's not fair to any student graduating or not graduating at Rutgers University."

He found "ludicrous" the familiar argument that Rice's academic achievements outweigh her political positions: "If we look into a lot of international criminals and just bad people in history, a lot of them had great academic careers or great medical careers. ... Your career is one thing, and the way you act as a person, as a human being, is another one. And that's why we make this an issue about human rights."

How to explain the contrast between the apathy prevailing at William and Mary and the awareness and activism at Rutgers? Perhaps one clue is the marked difference between the costs of attending. Tuition and fees are significantly higher at William and Mary, located in Williamsburg, Virginia. Another clue might be seen in the remarkable "tradition" of asking predominantly conservative Republican speakers to do the honors, and to get the honors, at commencement.

In contrast to the scene at William and Mary, this year's commencement at Rutgers awarded an honorary doctorate in humane letters to Frances Fox Piven, a highly respected scholar and advocate for poor working people. Piven's recent books include *The War at Home: The Domestic Costs of Bush's Militarism*. Piven also won the Shirley Chisholm Award for "leadership toward social and economic justice."

Looking at the assembled graduates at William and Mary, I could not help but mourn the fact that they were being sent off into life by Rice instead of Piven. I would expect Piven to address the pressing challenges facing the "99 percent" and the injustices behind the growing unrest in Baltimore, St. Louis and other troubled cities. Rice did not mention any of that on Saturday. It was all about her a reflection, perhaps, of the fact that, although black in Birmingham, Alabama, she nonetheless grew up relatively privileged.

Worse Still: War Crimes

Rather than some profile in courage or a person of steadfast principles, Condoleezza Rice represents malleability in the face of criminality and evil. She is a profile in cowardice and expediency, the opposite sort of lesson in how to live one's life than Piven or many other worthy commencement speakers would be expected to present.

When President George W. Bush told Ms. Rice to scarf up any and all "evidence," no matter how sketchy or deceptive, to prove that Iraq had "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD), she led the fraudulent campaign to present the "intelligence" needed to deceive Congress into supporting a war that fits the post-World War II Nuremberg Tribunal's definition of a "war of aggression as the supreme international crime, differing from other war crimes only in that it contains the accumulated evil of the whole."

Rice played her role as drum majorette for war with exceptional enthusiasm conjuring up the danger of "mushroom clouds" from Iraq's (nonexistent) nukes; "yellowcake" uranium from darkest Africa (based on crudely forged documents); and aluminum tubes (that turned out to be standard Iraqi artillery tubes) but she said were for refining uranium.

Rice led the parade, with Dick Cheney's indispensable help, promoting the various manufactured "evidence" against Iraq. The fraudulent nature of those spurious claims was laid bare in a July, 23, 2002 British document, The Downing Street Memorandum, published by The London Times on May 1, 2005. Established as authentic, the memo exposed the unconscionable attempt to "fix" the intelligence to justify a U.S./U.K. attack for "regime change" in Iraq.

It was widely known at the time that, despite Dick Cheney's repeated claims, Iraq had no functioning nuclear weapons program. But that did not stop Condoleezza Rice from warning in September 2002 that "we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud." Her drumbeating for war was greatly assisted by the compliant "mainstream media," but she led the charge.

Suppressing Dissent

The dissents to the Bush-Cheney-Rice "big lie" such as the warnings issued by us Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) were repressed. Some of our pre-war warnings were written in Memoranda for the President. There were three before the attack on Iraq: (1) "Today's Speech by Secretary Powell at the UN" (Feb. 5, 2003, warning of week intelligence and catastrophic consequences from an attack on Iraq); (2) "Cooking Intelligence for War" (March 12, 2003); and (3) "Forgery, Hyperbole, Half-Truth: A Problem With the Intelligence, Mr. President"

(March 18, 2003).

With those memos and copious other warnings on the record, I can be perhaps forgiven for taking offense on Saturday as Ms. Rice piously urged reason, courage, honesty, humility and optimism on the graduates. Without apparent irony, she advised them to avoid being caught in an echo chamber, don't think you are absolutely right, seek out people to challenge you, be wary of a constant Amen to everything you say.

The above is almost verbatim, since I was able to take good notes while watching the commencement event via live stream. The friends who invited me had "forgotten" to tell me who the commencement speaker was and stressed that tickets were available only to immediate family. My hosts were prompted by a (not unreasonable) fear that I would be constitutionally unable to sit quietly watching Condoleezza Rice give hypocrisy a bad name.

But aggressive war was only one of George W. Bush's abuses of power. There also were kidnapping, black prisons, torture, unconstitutional surveillance in violation of the Fourth Amendment, etc. What role did Ms. Rice play in those?

In spring 2008, ABC News, citing inside sources, reported that beginning in 2002, at President Bush's behest, National Security Advisor Rice convened his most senior aides (Cheney, Powell, Rumsfeld, Ashcroft, and Tenet) dozens of times in the White House during 2002-03 to sort out the most efficient mix of torture techniques for individual captured "terrorists."

The torture advisers planned and approved the use of various methods even choreographing some of them including near drowning (waterboarding), sleep deprivation, physical assault, subjection to extremely cold temperatures to cause hypothermia and so-called stress positions.

At one point Attorney General John Ashcroft expressed aloud his misgivings: "Why are we talking about this in the White House? History will not judge this kindly."

Rice herself personally conveyed the White House group's order to the CIA to commence waterboarding of prisoners, telling the CIA: "Go do it. It's your baby" in July of 2002, even before Bush administration lawyer John Yoo wrote his famously faulty "torture memo" to "legalize" what they were doing. Such memos were an attempt to provide what a later Justice Department lawyer would label a "golden shield" from future criminal accountability for everyone involved. Other lawyers aptly describe Yoo's memos as a kind of "get-out-of-jail-free card."

Initially, ABC News attempted to insulate the President from this sordid activity. But Bush spurned the protection, bragging that he knew all about these

activities and approved.

Torture Photos

After photos leaked depicting horrible inhumane abuses of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and Major General Antonio Taguba was assigned to investigate, he called the interrogation program that Rice and other officials had devised a “systemic regime of torture.” The list of approved techniques for the CIA had migrated down the military chain of command via Rumsfeld, one of the main participants at the White House meetings. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Misguided Honor for Condi Rice.”](#)]

In 2008, the top Bush administration official in charge of deciding whether to bring Guantanamo Bay detainees to trial, Judge Susan J. Crawford, was forced to dismiss war crime charges against an important 9/11 suspect when she [concluded that the U.S. military tortured](#) the Saudi national by interrogating him with techniques that included sustained isolation, sleep deprivation, nudity and prolonged exposure to cold, leaving him in a “life-threatening condition.”

The difficulty that university officials experience in giving proper weight to these sordid facts about Condi Rice may stem in part from a political decision the one made by President Barack Obama to “look forward as opposed to looking backward.” That decision could hardly be seen as based on adherence to the law, since all accountability for crime inherently requires examining past actions.

Rice’s leading role as White House action officer for torture was reiterated recently in a new book *The Great War of Our Time*, by Michael Morell, a former deputy director of the CIA. Morell writes: “After the CIA presented a range of possible [interrogation] techniques to the White House, National Security Advisor Rice told us one of the techniques crossed the White House moral line and it was not to be used” (page 275).

Wherever that moral line was it apparently didn’t exclude waterboarding, which was among the tactics approved.

Almost seven decades ago, Robert H. Jackson, a U.S. Supreme Court Justice and the Chief U.S. Prosecutor at Nuremberg provided these prescient remarks to serve as what he believed would turn out to be a necessary guide for the future. He included this in his opening address:

“I am too well aware of the weaknesses of juridical action alone to contend that in itself your decision under this Charter can prevent future wars. Judicial action always comes after the event. Wars are started only on the theory and in the confidence that they can be won. Personal punishment, to be suffered only in the event the war is lost, will probably not be a sufficient deterrent to

prevent a war where the war makers feel the chances of defeat to be negligible.

“But the ultimate step in avoiding periodic wars, which are inevitable in a system of international lawlessness, is to make statesmen responsible to law. And let me make clear that while this law is first applied against German aggressors, the law includes, and if it is to serve a useful purpose it must condemn aggression by any other nations, including those which sit here now in judgment.”

A Bad Precedent

The William and Mary experience on Saturday is hardly the first time a university has succumbed to the “prestige virus” and given some powerful celebrity high honors at a commencement despite the person’s deplorable actions. There are, sad to say, numerous examples, including an earlier one involving Ms. Rice.

Condoleezza Rice gave the commencement address at Boston College on May 22, 2006, and was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (yes, George Orwell, that is ironic.). This was while she was serving as Secretary of State after her deceptive sales job for the Iraq War but before the ABC News revelations in 2008 about her direct oversight role in torture.

Ten days before the commencement at BC, Steve Almond, adjunct professor of English, resigned in protest. Here are excerpts from his letter to BC’s president, Rev. William P. Leahy, S.J.: “I am writing to resign as a direct result of your decision to invite Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to be the commencement speaker at this year’s graduation.

“Many members of the faculty and student body already have voiced their objection to the invitation, arguing that Rice’s actions as secretary of state are inconsistent with the broader humanistic values of the university and the Catholic and Jesuit traditions from which those values derive.

“But I am not writing this letter simply because of an objection to the war against Iraq. My concern is more fundamental. Simply put, Rice is a liar. She has lied to the American people knowingly, repeatedly, often extravagantly over the past five years, in an effort to justify a pathologically misguided foreign policy.

“This is the woman to whom you will be bestowing an honorary degree, along with the privilege of addressing the graduating class of 2006. Honestly, Father Leahy, what lessons do you expect her to impart to impressionable seniors? that it is acceptable to lie to the American people for political gain?

"I cannot, in good conscience, exhort my students to pursue truth and knowledge, then collect a paycheck from an institution that displays such flagrant disregard for both. I would like to apologize to my students and prospective students. I would also urge them to investigate the words and actions of Rice, and to exercise their own First Amendment rights at her speech."

Professor Almond was hardly alone. About a third of Boston College's faculty members signed a letter objecting to Rice's appearance. And here is how the *New York Times* reported the commencement event:

"Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice delivered the commencement address on Monday at Boston College to an audience that included dozens of students and professors who stood, turned their backs and held up signs to protest the war in Iraq.

"A small plane flew overhead twice, pulling a sign that said, in red letters, 'Your War Brings Dishonor.' Outside Alumni Stadium, where 3,234 students received diplomas, protesters marched up Beacon Street holding signs reading 'No Blood For Oil' and 'We're Patriotic Too.'"

"Inside, however, Ms. Rice received a standing ovation when she was introduced, and she drew applause throughout her address."

In his 1987 autobiography, *To Dwell in Peace*, Daniel Berrigan wrote of "the fall of a great enterprise", the Jesuit university. He recorded his "hunch" that the university would end up "among those structures whose moral decline and political servitude signalize a larger falling away of the culture itself."

Berrigan lamented "highly placed" churchmen and their approval of war, "uttered with sublime confidence, from on high, from highly placed friendships, and White House connections."

"Thus compromised," warned Berrigan, "the Christian tradition of nonviolence, as well as the secular boast of disinterested pursuit of truth, these are reduced to bombast, hauled out for formal occasions, believed by no one, practiced by no one."

Fr. Berrigan was particularly concerned with the devolution of Jesuit universities like Boston College. But, clearly, his observations apply not only to "highly placed" churchmen, but also to others like the highly placed folks responsible for inviting Condoleezza Rice to the commencement exercises at William and Mary.

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Infantry/Intelligence officer and then a CIA analyst for 30 years, and is now on the Steering Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).

Hiding the Political Subtext of Sterling Trial

Whenever lawyers for ex-CIA officer Jeffrey Sterling sought to illuminate the political context for his prosecution as a leaker, prosecutors objected with the support of the federal judge, but politics has always lurked in the case's background, writes Norman Solomon.

By Norman Solomon

Continuing to deliberate as this week gets underway, the jurors in the CIA leak trial might ponder a notable claim from the government: "This case is not about politics."

The prosecution made that claim a few days ago in closing arguments, begun with a somber quotation from former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice about the crucial need to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. Of course prosecutor Eric Olshan was not foolish enough to quote Rice's most famous line: "We don't want the smoking gun to become a mushroom cloud."

During the seven days of the trial, which received scant media coverage, Rice attracted the most attention. But little of her testimony actually got out of the courtroom, and little of what did get out illuminated the political context of the government's case against former CIA officer Jeffrey Sterling.

A heavy shroud over this trial, almost hidden by news media in plain sight, has been context: the CIA's collusion with the Bush White House a dozen years ago, using WMD fear and fabrication to stampede the United States into making war on Iraq.

And part of the ongoing context of the Sterling case has been the Obama administration's unrelenting pursuit of Sterling for allegedly leaking classified information, revealed in the last chapter of a book by James Risen, about a now-15-year-old CIA operation that's far more suitable for Freedom of Information Act disclosures than criminal prosecution. The jury is weighing nine felony counts, including seven under the atrociously misapplied Espionage Act.

It was just six weeks after the invasion of Iraq when, at the end of April 2003, Rice then President George W. Bush's national security adviser hosted a meeting at the White House to tell representatives of the *New York Times* that the newspaper should not report on Operation Merlin, the CIA's ill-conceived and dangerous maneuver that had provided a flawed design for a nuclear weapon component to Iran three years earlier.

The Times management caved within a week. Only Risen's book *State of War*, published in January 2006, finally brought Operation Merlin to light.

Rice was in her usual smooth form at the Sterling trial. Emphatic that the CIA's Operation Merlin was hardly known to anyone, Rice testified: "This program was very closely held. It was one of the most closely held programs during my tenure." Yet the CIA manager in charge of Operation Merlin ("Bob S," who appeared at the trial behind a screen) testified that the operation was known to more than 90 people.

Helping to lay groundwork for the Iraq invasion, Rice was a key enabler for the CIA's slam-dunk mendacity about Saddam Hussein's purported weapons of mass destruction. More than a decade later, she has used the Sterling trial as an opportunity for more distortion of the historical record, as though her quash-the-Merlin-story meeting at the White House in 2003 was free of self-service.

The prosecution helped Rice settle into her stance:

Question: "Now, was the purpose of your convening this meeting out of any sort of embarrassment that it would get out that there had been a botched operation?"

Rice: "My concern in convening this meeting was that we had a very sensitive, extremely important program for the security of the country that was about to be compromised . . . That was my concern."

But one of the prosecution's main concerns, no doubt shared by Rice, had to do with insulating the trial from intrusive context, a context that could explain why any whistleblower or journalist might want to expose and debunk Operation Merlin, an operation targeting a supposed nuclear weapons program in Iran, a country that the Bush administration was eager to attack with the goal of regime change.

When the time came for Rice to face cross-examination, defense lawyer Barry Pollack tried to blow away some fog:

Question: "[P]reventing working nuclear weapons from falling into the hands of rogue states is one of the most important missions of your, the administration you worked for certainly "

Rice: "Yes."

Question: " and any other administration, correct?"

Rice: "That's correct."

Question: "And certainly counterproliferation was of great interest at this particular time, correct?"

Rice: "That's correct."

Question: "The United States had invaded Iraq the earlier month?"

Prosecutor Olshan: "Objection."

Judge Leonie Brinkema: "Well, we've heard that before. Let's just move this along, Mr. Pollack. Sustained."

A week later, in the closing arguments, Pollack, who noted that "the government has great lawyers", told the jury: "Make no mistake. This is a very important case for the government." He pointedly reminded jurors that the last chapter in Risen's book "made the CIA look bad."

Minutes later, wrapping up the prosecution's closing statement, Assistant U.S. Attorney James Trump declared: "This case is not about politics. It's not about salvaging the reputation of the CIA."

But, no matter how great the government's lawyers may be, the case of *United States of America v. Jeffrey Alexander Sterling* has everything to do with politics and the CIA's reputation.

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How CIA Got NYT to Kill Iran-Nuke Story

When reporter James Risen called CIA to ask about a covert scheme to slip flawed nuclear blueprints to Iran, the Bush administration brought out some big guns to get the New York Times to rein in Risen, showing how cozy those relationships can be, writes Norman Solomon.

By Norman Solomon

Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who also served as President George W. Bush's national security adviser, made headlines when she testified Thursday at the leak trial of former CIA officer Jeffrey Sterling, underscoring that powerful people in the Bush administration went to great lengths a dozen years ago to prevent disclosure of a classified operation.

But as The Associated Press noted, "While Rice's testimony helped establish the importance of the classified program in question, her testimony did not implicate Sterling in any way as the leaker."

Few pixels and little ink went to the witness just before Rice, former CIA spokesman William Harlow, whose testimony stumbled into indicating why he thought of Sterling early on in connection with the leak, which ultimately resulted in a ten-count indictment.

Harlow, who ran the CIA press office, testified that Sterling came to mind soon after *New York Times* reporter James Risen first called him, on April 3, 2003, about the highly secret Operation Merlin, a CIA program that provided faulty nuclear weapon design information to Iran.

Harlow testified that he tried to dissuade Risen without confirming the existence of Operation Merlin, first telling the reporter "that if there was such a program, I didn't think a respectable newspaper should be writing about it." The next day, when Risen called back, "I said that such a story would jeopardize national security."

Not until cross-examination by a defense attorney did Harlow acknowledge something that he'd failed to mention when describing his initial conversation with Risen: In fact, Harlow had told Risen that only Al Jazeera would be willing to cover the story he was pursuing.

As a prosecution witness, Harlow volunteered some information that may come back to haunt the prosecutors. With alarm spreading among CIA officials, Harlow testified, someone at the agency mentioned to him that Sterling had worked on the Operation Merlin program. In his testimony, Harlow went on to say that Sterling's name was familiar to him because Sterling, who is African American, had filed a race discrimination lawsuit against the CIA.

Left dangling in the air was the indication that Harlow thought of Sterling as a possible leaker because he'd gone through channels to claim that he had been a victim of racial bias at the CIA. Sterling's complaint had received substantial coverage in several major news outlets. (The CIA eventually got the suit thrown out of court on the grounds of state secrets.)

According to Harlow's testimony, everything he heard about Operation Merlin at

the CIA was that it was going swimmingly. The only words otherwise came from Risen, who told him the Iranians were already aware of the flaws in the nuclear weapons design that the CIA had arranged to be passed along to them. Harlow testified that it was the first time he'd heard any assertion that Operation Merlin was not well run.

Along the way, on the witness stand Thursday afternoon, the veteran PR operative for the CIA let some paternalism slip: "I did think there was a way to dumb the story down so it would be appropriate to put in the paper," Harlow said.

But his hopes to block the story or water it down enough to render it insignificant were clearly failing. Risen showed no sign of backing off. So the CIA called in big guns. Twenty-seven days after Risen's first call on the subject to Harlow, national security adviser Rice hosted a meeting that included CIA Director George Tenet and other government officials as well as Risen and *Times* Washington bureau chief Jill Abramson.

The pressure worked. Within 10 days, the *Times* told the National Security Council that it would not publish the story. "I was relieved when I learned the story was not running," Rice testified on Thursday, "and I was grateful to the *Times*."

Her relief lasted almost three years, until Risen included a chapter about Operation Merlin in his 2006 book *State of War*. But Rice has never had a reason to rescind her gratitude to the *New York Times*; the newspaper never published the story. Information about the dangerous CIA program only reached the public because Risen took the risk of putting it in a book.

Norman Solomon is the executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy and the author of *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death*. He is a co-founder of RootsAction.org. [This article originally was published by ExposeFacts.org]

'Justice' Hidden Behind a Screen

Exclusive: Behind a physical (and perhaps metaphorical) screen, the U.S. government is putting on its case to pin ten felony charges on ex-CIA officer Jeffrey Sterling for allegedly leaking secrets to a U.S. journalist about a risky and convoluted covert op against Iran, as ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern reports.

By Ray McGovern

The federal government claims it is prosecuting former CIA officer Jeffrey Sterling for leaking information to a journalist about a risky covert operation in which the spy agency funneled flawed nuclear-bomb schematics to Iran. But the opening days of the trial suggest that the government may be using the case more to overcome its reputation for shoddy intelligence work.

In opening statements and testimony on Wednesday, prosecutors seemed more concerned about refuting journalist/author James Risen's assessment of the CIA's scheme as botched and dangerous than in connecting Risen to Sterling. Eliciting testimony from a nuclear engineer testifying behind a screen, prosecutors sought to portray the phony-blueprint gambit as meticulous and careful.

The dispute seems to center on whether the Russian operative code-named "Merlin," who was assigned to deliver the documents to Iranian representatives, easily detected the flaws, as Risen wrote in his 2006 book, *State of War*, or simply noticed that some pages were missing. An internal team of CIA experts when asked to examine the schematics spotted about 25 percent of the errors, but there is a clash of opinions over whether that showed how easy it was to unmask the fraud or how difficult it was to spot the flaws.

None of that, however, relates to whether Sterling was or was not a source for Risen regarding the "Merlin" operation, proof that may prove difficult for U.S. prosecutors to establish because Risen, a New York Times' national security reporter, has an array of sources within the intelligence community from whom to draw. Since the Justice Department has dropped attempts to force Risen to identify his sources, prosecutors may find it hard to substantiate that Sterling was one of the sources for the "Merlin" disclosures.

But the real subtext of the Sterling case is how the politicization of the CIA's analytical division over the past several decades has contributed to multiple intelligence failures, especially efforts to "prove" that targeted regimes in the Middle East were amassing weapons of mass destruction.

The false Iraq-WMD case provided the key rationale for a war that has spread devastation not only across Iraq but has prompted terrorism and other violence throughout the Middle East and into Europe. "Operation Merlin" hatched during the Clinton administration was part of a similar effort to show that Iran was engaged in an active program for building a nuclear bomb and thus would have interest in the flawed schematics that the CIA was peddling.

Yet, in the Sterling case, federal prosecutors seem to want to have it both ways. They want to broaden the case to burnish the CIA's reputation regarding

its covert-op skills but then to narrow the case if defense attorneys try to show the jury the broader context in which the “Merlin” disclosures were made in 2006 how President George W. Bush’s administration was trying to build a case for war with Iran over its nuclear program much as it did over Iraq’s non-existent WMDs in 2002-2003.

Judge Leonie Brinkema appears to be bending to the U.S. government’s wishes, allowing the prosecutors to polish up the “Merlin” gambit but then slip back to insisting on narrow relevance if defense attorneys try to broaden the frame to include the reasons why Risen considered it important to publish the story in the first place. Then, the case is just about the narrow question of whether Sterling gave classified information to Risen.

But the two issues the bogus Iraq-WMD intelligence and the pressure to create another casus belli on Iran are inextricably linked, as Risen himself explained in his affidavit submitted in connection with the Sterling case.

Risen wrote, “I believe I performed a vitally important public service by exposing the reckless and badly mismanaged nature of intelligence on Iran’s efforts to obtain weapons of mass destruction, so that the nation would not go to war once again based on flawed intelligence, as it had in Iraq.”

Behind the Screen

In the federal courthouse in Alexandria, Virginia, there was a huge screen between those of us from the public and the proceedings, to permit a number of the witnesses to testify without their identities being revealed. Some witnesses even used partial or fake names.

The 12-foot-tall screen seemed like a metaphor for all the smoke and mirrors that we could hear but not see during the first “public” day of Sterling’s trial on ten felony charges. Another scheduled witness was Bush’s national security adviser Condoleezza Rice, who famously helped sell the Iraq WMD claims by warning that she didn’t want “the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud.”

Another phrase from that era “not authentic” kept going through my mind, the words that Mohammed ElBaradei, head of the UN International Atomic Energy Agency, applied to forged documents supposedly proving that Iraq was hard at work on a nuclear-weapons program.

Those forged documents purportedly showed that Iraq was seeking “yellow-cake” (very low refined) uranium from the African country of Niger, a claim that President Bush referenced in his 2003 State of the Union Address as he sought to seal the deal on his Iraq invasion two months later.

No wonder the U.S. government wanted ElBaradei out as IAEA chief and a more pliable bureaucrat inserted to replace him. Then, the IAEA could be used to hype allegations about Iran's alleged nuclear-weapons program to justify ratcheting up U.S. sanctions and even possibly a bombing campaign. That is where leaked cables from Pvt. Bradley (now Chelsea) Manning to Wikileaks come in.

According to leaked U.S. embassy cables from Vienna, Austria, the site of IAEA's headquarters, American diplomats in 2009 were cheering how they had replaced ElBaradei with Japanese diplomat Yukiya Amano who had agreed to push U.S. interests on Iran in ways that ElBaradei wouldn't. After thanking the Americans for getting him his job, Amano put his hand out for more U.S. money to his office. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[America's Debt to Bradley Manning](#)."]]

But ElBaradei's phrase "not authentic" could have been applied much more broadly to what was passing for an intelligence product during those years. For me, "not authentic" brought a horrid flashback to those embarrassing days before the attack on Iraq, when my profession of intelligence analysis was corrupted by Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and eager-to-please CIA Director George Tenet.

Commenting on the 2008 findings of a five-year bipartisan Senate Intelligence Committee investigation of the pre-Iraq War intelligence, then-Chairman Jay Rockefeller described much of it as "uncorroborated, contradicted, or even non-existent."

UN weapons inspector Hans Blix put it this way: "I found it peculiar that those who wanted to take military action could with 100 percent certainty know that the weapons existed and turn out to have zero knowledge of where they were." (I had a rare opportunity to raise that issue with Rumsfeld in May 2006 at [a public session](#) in Atlanta, Georgia.)

The Iran Group Think

It was within the context of another "group think" the Inside-the-Beltway certainty that Iran was rushing to build a nuclear bomb that the CIA's eager-beaver practitioners of covert action adopted an overly clever way to sabotage the equally ephemeral nuclear weapons program of Iran. It was a scarcely believable story of over-imaginative sophomores with lots of money plotting to set back a "program" that, in all probability, did not exist.

The most definitive study of a post-Iraq "uncorroborated, contradicted, or even non-existent" nuclear weapons program, this time in Iran, is presented in Gareth Porter's [Manufactured Crisis](#) published a year ago (and viewed as untouchable by reviewers in the fawning corporate media). Porter brings together the results

of his many years of research into the issue, including numerous interviews with former insiders.

He shows that the origins of the Iran nuclear "crisis" were not in an Iranian urge to obtain nuclear weapons but, rather, in a sustained effort by the United States and its allies to deny Iran its right, as guaranteed in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to have any nuclear program at all.

The book highlights the impact that the U.S. alliance with Israel had on Washington's belligerent policy toward Iran and sheds new light on the U.S. strategy of turning the IAEA into a tool of that policy, especially the mysterious intelligence from a laptop computer that supposedly "proved" Iranian duplicity but that has since been traced to a possible Israeli covert op to plant "not authentic" evidence.

Here's how Hans Blix describes the disclosures in Porter's book: "National intelligence presented or peddled is often problematic as evidence. In the case of Iraq, defective intelligence contributed to a war against weapons of mass destruction that did not exist. Could unreliable or cooked intelligence one day lead to an attack on Iranian intentions that may not exist?"

"I feel grateful to Gareth Porter for his intrusive and critical examination of intelligence material passed to the IAEA. When security organizations do not shy away from assassinating nuclear scientists we can take it for certain that they do not for a moment hesitate to circulate false evidence."

The allusion to the assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists, killings widely ascribed to Israeli intelligence services, is clear enough. And that is only a small part of the essential role played by Israel in building a case to "bomb-bomb-bomb" Iran. To his credit, Porter pulls no punches in exposing chapter and verse of this story.

So, the trial against Jeffrey Sterling seems to have multiple purposes beyond simply proving that Sterling leaked some secrets to James Risen. It is a chance for the CIA to contest the widespread impression that is some bumbling intelligence agency that comes up with harebrained schemes. It is also an opportunity to intimidate any other potential whistleblowers who would dare expose to the public more evidence that the CIA is just such a bumbling intelligence agency.

And, it would provide some protection for the next time the U.S. government needs some made-to-order "intelligence" to justify another conflict like the Iraq War. In that way, the prosecution of Jeffrey Sterling is a deterrent to future officials, who might be tempted to commit the unpardonable sin of putting

loyalty to their conscience and the Constitution ahead of the non-disclosure contract they signed earlier as a condition of employment.

As Lord Acton, the Nineteenth Century English politician and historian, once said, "Everything secret degenerates, even the administration of justice; nothing is safe that does not show how it can bear discussion and publicity."

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He was a CIA analyst for 27 years, and now serves on the Steering Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).

Misguided Honor for Condi Rice

U.S. officials lecture others about respecting international law and punishing human rights crimes, but those principles are ignored when the violators are U.S. officials. Offenders like ex-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice even get honors, as Coleen Rowley and Todd E. Pierce note.

By Coleen Rowley and Todd E. Pierce

Some of us predicted when Condi Rice left office that she would become intent on revising history. Faustian bargains don't end that quickly!

It's now come to pass that universities around the country, including Rutgers and the University of Minnesota, are willing to heap praise upon Rice and pay her huge speaking fees to hear her talk about her struggle for civil rights.

Her speech is not entitled what she usually likes to talk about: why war is good, but rather "Keeping Faith with a Legacy of Justice: the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964." Does it sound like she's hit upon another "noble cause" rationale for why she helped launch war on Iraq and initiate torture policies?

The University of Minnesota Humphrey Institute officials who arranged for Rice's appearance cleverly framed their invitation as promoting academic freedom and free speech. But it's not about free speech. A student group, which saw through this red herring, responded as follows:

"First, by rescinding her invitation, the university would not be limiting Dr. Rice's free speech (ironically named, as she will be receiving \$150,000 for the talk). We understand that university campuses are meant to be places where

multiple viewpoints are heard, where students can be exposed to many opposing viewpoints. We firmly believe in this tradition.

“As you can imagine, given her prominent former positions as both the National Security Advisor and Secretary of State, Dr. Rice will have no shortage of platforms on which to express herself. Rescinding her invitation has nothing to do with limiting Dr. Rice’s right to free speech. Instead, it is about the University of Minnesota, continuously seeking to be perceived as a global university, tying itself to Dr. Rice’s abhorrent conduct on behalf of the American people.

“By extending this invitation, the University has condoned Dr. Rice’s authorization of so-called ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ and her using the threat of a mushroom cloud to push the United States into war with Iraq. The only appropriate action regarding Dr. Rice’s invitation is to rescind it. Only this would send the correct message: that the University of Minnesota stands with the people of the world against torture and unjustified war.”

A few weeks ago, the Faculty Councils at two Rutgers University campuses voted in support of a resolution to rescind Dr. Rice’s invitation to deliver the commencement address there.

Anyway we have sent the following letter on Wednesday in an effort to educate and inform some of the faculty, students and administration at the University of Minnesota who have invited Condi Rice to give their “Distinguished Northrop Lecture” on April 17.

Some of the faculty and students will be voting Thursday afternoon on a resolution asking that Rice be disinvited and we thought it important that the facts about her involvement in planning and ordering torture, at least what is currently known, be shared. Our letter reads:

“Dear Humphrey School Faculty, Fellows, Staff and PASA members: Former Vice President Mondale is on record as saying there should be some form of accountability for government officials’ use of torture in the so-called ‘war on terror.’ He said that otherwise it’s like laying a ‘loaded gun’ on the table that in the future could be picked up and used again.

“Unfortunately by inviting Condi Rice to give a distinguished Northrop lecture, the University of Minnesota just reached over the table and cocked that loaded gun. Strong reasons exist to oppose University officials’ decision to give the distinguished podium to someone, albeit a former high official, so credibly accused of serious war crimes. Planning and ordering of torture is a *jus cogens* crime of the highest magnitude under both domestic and international law, not protected by the First Amendment or even academic freedom.

"This is not about politics. This is not about facilitating an educational discussion via controversial speakers. This IS about criminality and whether our country is willing to follow the rule of law or make exceptions for past (or in fact, future) leaders' actions.

"Despite efforts to keep the facts secret, enough truth has come out to establish that beginning in 2002, Rice convened dozens of top secret meetings of the National Security Council's 'Principals Committee' (whose members also included Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Colin Powell, George Tenet and John Ashcroft). The 'Principals' planned and approved the use of various tortures, even choreographing some, to include near drowning (waterboarding), sleep deprivation, physical assault, subjection to extremely cold temperatures to cause hypothermia and use of stress positions.

"At one point Attorney General Ashcroft even questioned the group, 'Why are we talking about this in the White House? History will not judge this kindly.'

"It was Rice herself who personally conveyed this White House group's order to the CIA to commence waterboarding of prisoners, telling the CIA: 'Go do it. It's your baby' in July of 2002, even before [Bush administration] lawyer John Yoo was tasked with writing his famously faulty 'torture memo' to 'legalize' what they were doing. The torture memos were an attempt to provide what a later Department of Justice lawyer would label a 'golden shield' from future criminal accountability for everyone involved. Other lawyers aptly describe Yoo's memos as a kind of 'get out of jail free' card.

"After photos leaked depicting horrible inhumane abuses of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and Major General Antonio Taguba was assigned to investigate, he called the 'interrogation program' that Rice and other officials had devised a 'systemic regime of torture.' The list of approved tortures for the CIA had migrated down the military chain of command via Donald Rumsfeld, one of the main 'Principals' at the White House meetings.

"In 2008, the top Bush administration official in charge of deciding whether to bring Guantanamo Bay detainees to trial, retired Judge Susan J. Crawford, was forced to dismiss war crime charges against an important 9-11 suspect when she concluded that the U.S. military tortured the Saudi national by interrogating him with techniques that included sustained isolation, sleep deprivation, nudity and prolonged exposure to cold, leaving him in a 'life-threatening condition.'

"The difficulty University officials experience in understanding these facts about Condi Rice's sordid history probably stems from a political decision, however, the one made by Obama when he took office to 'not look backward, only look forward.' That decision was not based on adherence to the law, as all

accountability for crime inherently requires examining past actions.

“As a result, infighting still persists between the CIA and the Senate Intelligence Committee which has spent over \$40 million of taxpayers’ money on a nearly five-year-long investigation that reviewed millions of government documents. The Senate investigation, launched after it was discovered the CIA illegally destroyed 92 videotapes of its waterboarding torture sessions, produced a 6,300 page report a year ago. It’s expected that a summary of that torture investigation will finally be released in the near future.

“In fact a declassification vote on the torture report will now likely occur on April 3 –coincidentally the very same day the University of Minnesota Faculty Senate votes whether to disinvite Condi Rice. But in the meantime, Senate Chair Diane Feinstein accused the CIA of having illegally removed documents from her Committee’s computers, apparently attempting to thwart legislative oversight. The torture investigation has thus reached a zenith in producing a constitutional crisis. Clearly these issues are contentious and the full truth has not yet emerged but that’s because such serious crimes are implicated!

“Unfortunately the legal artifice of the torture memos has worked thus far to protect Ms. Rice so she remains unrepentant and even continues to publicly shill for more pre-emptive wars. But University and Carlson Foundation officials should not be endorsing her past actions. They shouldn’t help her bury the truth and revise history.

“Since in fact there has been almost no accountability on the use of torture whether through congressional investigation, appointed commission or independent prosecutor and the courts, perhaps the state of Minnesota can provide at least a small measure of accountability by withdrawing its invitation.”

Coleen Rowley is a retired FBI agent and former Minneapolis Division legal counsel who writes on ethical and legal issues. Todd E. Pierce retired as a Major in the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps in 2012. He was assigned as Defense Counsel in the Office of Chief Defense Counsel, Office of Military Commissions from 2008-2012. [This article was written for Coleen Rowley’s blog at HuffingtonPost.]

Dangerous ‘Toughness’ on Ukraine

A grave danger from false narratives like the one on Ukraine now dominating the U.S. news media is that they give rise to disastrous policies, such as the idea

that the only possible response to the crisis is American “toughness” against Russia, as ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar explains.

By Paul R. Pillar

The rhetorical drumbeat from rightward portions of the commentariat, to the effect that Russia’s moves in Ukraine should be attributed to a supposed pusillanimous “retreat” of American power and to adversaries responding by becoming more aggressive, shows no signs of abating.

It continues even though, as Robert Golan-Vilella nicely explains and I have noted, the historical evidence simply does not show that the world works that way and that other governments make foreign policy decisions that way.

The impetus for the drumbeat includes broader habits of exceptionalist thinking about American power and the more specific political objective of disparaging Barack Obama by blaming him for just about everything going wrong in the world. The theme regarding the latter objective is that Obama is weak and unassertive, this notion being basically a continuation of the mythical “apology tour” that Mitt Romney used to talk about.

An opinion piece by Condoleezza Rice illustrates another, complementary motivation, which is to try to paint over the failures of past policies that have laid claim to being strong and assertive. Rice’s message is a simple one that more military spending, more obduracy, more militancy, and more deployments of armed forces are a good thing, and always will make others cower in the face of U.S. power.

There is nary a bit of analysis, even of the limited sort that would fit in the confines of an op-ed, as to exactly how any specific policy implied by what she is saying would be, with respect to any of the topics that she quickly mentions, better than the alternatives.

Rice even still seems to be in regime change mode. She says, “We should reach out to Russian youth, especially students and young professionals. ... Democratic forces in Russia need to hear American support for their ambitions. They, not Putin, are Russia’s future.”

So what conclusion is Putin supposed to draw, and how exactly is that supposed to influence his behavior or the behavior of any adversary anywhere else? Is he going to pull back from Crimea because our “reaching out” would cause his regime to totter? Hardly.

Give Rice credit for having the audacity to try to go on the argumentative offensive on some of the very topics on which she ought to be most defensive.

One is the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008. The invasion, which was, as with Crimea, a Russian use of military force in a former Soviet republic, is Exhibit A for the proposition that the ostensibly tough policies that Rice favors do not dissuade people like Putin from doing things like that.

The invasion occurred in the last year of the George W. Bush administration, after nearly eight years of such policies. Yet Rice would have us believe that by sending U.S. warships to the Black Sea and airlifting Georgian troops back home from Iraq, a Russian goal of toppling the Georgian government was foiled (“an admission made to me by the Russian foreign minister”).

She blames the Russian military occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia on lily-livered Europeans unwilling to take tougher anti-Russian actions, later exacerbated, of course, by Obama’s policies. She makes no mention of just what threat of military action was being communicated by U.S. moves, whether any such threat was credible given the consequences if it were executed, and what those consequences would be (a U.S.-Russian land war in the Caucasus?)

Rice says “signs that we are desperate for a nuclear agreement with Iran cannot be separated from Putin’s recent actions.” That’s an odd formulation to begin with, given that Russia is part of the diplomatic coalition, as a partner of the United States, that is negotiating the agreement, so Russia must be just as “desperate.”

And if one looks at the negotiations as not just an exercise in demonstrating toughness or weakness but instead in terms of their actual objective of placing strict and verifiable limits on Iran’s nuclear program, Rice again is quietly whitewashing recent history. The Bush administration, uninterested in doing any business with Iran, blew an opportunity to limit that program when there were only a fraction of the Iranian centrifuges spinning that there are now.

The preliminary agreement reached last November is the farthest-reaching restriction on the Iranian program ever achieved, with only minimal sanctions relief in return. If that’s desperation, we need more of it.

In trying to connect assorted messiness in the Middle East to Obama’s “retreat,” Rice refers to a “vacuum being filled by extremists such as al-Qaeda reborn in Iraq and Syria.” Al-Qaeda in Iraq was born, not reborn, as a direct consequence of the Bush administration’s war in Iraq. It didn’t exist there before, and since the U.S. invasion it never went away.

Now, in the form of the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Shams (ISIS), it has become as well the most extreme participant in the violence in Syria.

If one were to try to make an argument about connections between the crisis in

Ukraine and reputations nurtured by previous U.S. policies, a more plausible argument, more plausible than the one about lack of toughness encouraging tough guys to make trouble, involves the Iraq War.

That act of U.S. aggression is recent enough that it still is a prominent detriment to U.S. credibility whenever the United States tries to complain about someone else's use of military force against another sovereign state, including Putin's use of force in Crimea. This damage is, along with ISIS and heightened sectarian conflict in the Middle East, part of the mess from his predecessor that Obama is having to deal with today.

As national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice had one of the most egregious failures that anyone holding that position could have: the absence of any policy process leading to a foreign policy decision as major as launching an offensive war. No meeting or option paper ever considered whether launching the war was a good idea.

Had there been a policy process, maybe the likelihood of some of the resulting mess would have been considered. That horrendous failure cannot be undone, but we can at least resist Rice's later revision of history.

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 as a [blog post](#) at The National Interest's Web site. Reprinted with author's permission.)

Blurring the Blame for the Iraq War

Exclusive: The myth that bad intelligence led to the Iraq War won't die, but the evidence is clear that President George W. Bush decided to invade after 9/11, though Iraq had nothing to do with it, and intel was assembled to sell the invasion to a scared U.S. public, as ex-CIA analyst Melvin A. Goodman explains.

By Melvin A. Goodman

Last Sunday, the *Washington Post*, which itself shares blame for the disastrous Iraq War, used the memoirs of President George W. Bush and other key members of his administration to let those principals express their self-serving views about how specious intelligence had led them to a decision to invade Iraq a decade ago. In their books, they opportunistically portray themselves as misled by bad intel, just like everyone else.

Yet, since the war was, in reality, a deadly undertaking paved by lies and deceit at all levels, it would have been far more useful for the *Post's* Feb. 3 retrospective to try to glean from the memoirs the real reasons for the use of force against Saddam Hussein in 2003. To be fair to the *Post*, the memoirs by President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice did not provide much insight; they were noteworthy for being hopelessly unapologetic about their decision to go to war, their conduct of the war, and their handling of the post-invasion situation.

Further, the memoirs provided little sense of the true inside-the-White-House back story, the strategic reasoning behind the urgency of a preemptive war against Iraq, though the participants still claim that the war was "worth the costs." What self-reflection there is about the prosecution of the war comes mostly in the form of finger-pointing.

Indeed, the memoirs of Cheney, Rumsfeld and Rice were surprising in their direct criticisms of President Bush, a break with tradition from the memoirs of high-ranking principals from other administrations who generally shield their presidents from criticism even while score-settling with rivals.

In the memoirs from the Bush years, the high-level principals express fondness for the President but fault him for management failures such as allowing too many hands on the policy steering wheel. Rumsfeld described National Security Council (NSC) meetings that ended without precise objectives for the way ahead, even with Bush presiding. Cheney and Rice cite the President's inability to clearly or firmly resolve key differences within the NSC, which only the President could do.

In their memoirs, Cheney and Rumsfeld particularly eviscerate Powell and Rice for their roles in the Iraq debacle. Cheney is critical of the State Department for failing to conduct post-war planning, although State's efforts were undercut by the fact that Rumsfeld forbade his subordinates from taking part in inter-agency meetings on the future of Iraq.

Rumsfeld blames Powell for using his State Department deputy, Richard Armitage, to attack the Defense Department; Powell blames Rumsfeld for using his Defense Department deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, to attack the State Department. Cheney and Rumsfeld cite Rice's failure to resolve differences within the policy community and to present President Bush with clear choices.

Cheney also puffs up his role in framing the policy choices for President Bush (the self-proclaimed "Decider"), noting that he (Cheney) received the CIA briefings before the President. That was why high-level CIA officials referred

to Cheney as “Edgar” (i.e., Edgar Bergen, the puppet master for the dummy Charlie McCarthy, with Bush playing the dummy in this metaphor).

But all the caviling among the principals misses the larger point. The seeds for disarray within the administration began in the run-up to the war in 2002, when the White House (with help from the Central Intelligence Agency) politicized the intelligence on Iraq and Saddam Hussein, and made no plans for the post-war situation.

Some policymakers favored ousting Hussein, followed by a quick handover to the Iraqis, while others wanted a long-term nation-building project. Only after the start of the war did President Bush name Paul Bremer to head the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance and manage the transition in Iraq during the post-invasion phase. Cheney, Rumsfeld and Rice blame Bremer for botching the occupation and blame Bush for enabling Bremer to ignore the chain of command and “pick and choose” his subordinates. Bremer’s decision-making was opaque, even to the secretaries of state and defense.

But the *Washington Post* should not have relied on these memoirs to explain any aspect of the war because of the key issues that Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and Rice do not address. For instance, there is no explanation of how the actual decision to invade Iraq was made; no indication that the pros and cons of such an invasion were debated; no sign of a policy process that allowed all views to be heard; and no references to any after-action reviews investigating how the failure of intelligence had enabled such a catastrophic misreading of the fact that Saddam Hussein had destroyed his biological and chemical weapons a decade earlier and had no active nuclear weapons program.

The Early Days

The memoirs do provide some new information about how 9/11 became a pretext for the Iraq War. Even before 9/11, Rumsfeld said he had sent a memorandum to Cheney, Rice and Secretary of State Colin Powell, suggesting a principals’ meeting to develop policy toward Iraq “well ahead of events that could overtake us.”

Unintentionally, the memoirs also demonstrate the chicanery of these principals in taking uncertain and ambiguous intelligence and exaggerating it to create their own facts. But the memoirs do not discuss the key fact that, the day after 9/11, the President asked Richard Clarke, the NSC’s leading specialist on counter-terrorism, to “see if Saddam did this. See if he’s linked in any way.”

Every agency and department of government understood that there had been no cooperation between Saddam and al-Qaeda; a memorandum to that effect was sent to

the President. But the Pentagon's focus had already shifted from al-Qaeda to Iraq, reflecting the views of Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz, who believed that Iraq was the state sponsor for both the attack on the World Trade Center in 1993 as well as 9/11.

Of course, the memoirs don't contain admissions that the Bush administration first decided to invade Iraq and then looked for rationalizations that could be sold to a frightened public to justify war. Predictably, all the principals claim innocence and blame faulty intelligence, which supposedly convinced them that Saddam Hussein possessed WMD and might share it with al-Qaeda, thus forcing Bush's hand.

But the speeches of the President and the Vice President made clear their readiness to go beyond evidence to justify an invasion of Iraq. The speeches themselves testify to the willingness of senior leaders to present phony and exaggerated intelligence to the Congress and the American people.

When CIA Director George Tenet made his infamous remark that it would be a "slam dunk" to provide intelligence to justify going to war against Iraq, he was responding to the President's demands for intelligence to convince the American people and the international community about the need for war, not to support the Bush administration's decisions regarding the use of force against Iraq. That decision to invade was made long before the intelligence was in. What Tenet was saying was that it would be a "slam dunk" to pull together some scary material that could be sold to the public.

Nearly ten years after the start of this egregious and unconscionable war, it should be the job of the U.S. news media to focus on the immoral and illegal aspects of the decision to take the country to war, and not just on the political food fight surrounding Secretary of State Powell's infamous speech to the United Nations several weeks before the war began.

But that would require some soul-searching among the major news organizations. The media, particularly the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, made it too easy for the United States to go to war against Iraq. Any retrospective must scrutinize the conventional wisdom that dominated the run-up to that war as well as the deceit of the nation's highest leaders.

Melvin A. Goodman, a former CIA analyst, is a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy and adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins University. His most recent book is *National Insecurity: The Cost of American Militarism* (City Lights Publishers).

How the Iraq War Was Sold

Exclusive: As George Bush and his national security team marched the U.S. off to war in Iraq, they were aided by key news outlets, especially the neocon-dominated Washington Post. Now a decade later, the Post still won't take a hard, honest look at what was done, writes ex-CIA analyst Melvin A. Goodman.

By Melvin A. Goodman

The *Washington Post* continues to allow former members of the Bush administration, including President George W. Bush, to distort the case for going to war against Iraq in 2003 and to blame the intelligence from the Central Intelligence Agency for the decision to use force.

In the "Outlook" section on Feb. 3 ("Still Fighting over a flawed case for war"), the *Post* cites memoirs from six key decision-makers, who are unwilling to acknowledge that the Iraq War was a deadly undertaking paved by lies and deceit.

It was never a case of whether the White House distorted the intelligence it received on Iraq or whether the Central Intelligence Agency provided bad intelligence to the White House. In fact, both the White House and the CIA had a hand in the distortion of intelligence and both contributed to making the phony case for war to the Congress and the American people.

The article revolves around former Secretary of State Colin Powell's anger with CIA officials who failed to inform him that his speech to the United Nations in February 2003 included unsupported claims and with himself for failing to "sniff out" the weaknesses of the CIA intelligence case for war. [Powell's *It Worked for Me: In Life and Leadership*]

Powell fails to mention that the director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research did his best to stop the Secretary of State from relying on CIA intelligence for his UN speech, let alone spending four days and nights at CIA headquarters in drafting the speech, and alerted him to the phony National Intelligence Estimate of October 2002 that was used to craft Powell's speech.

Similarly, Powell paid no attention to the numerous authoritative CIA sources that denied the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraqi inventories, and ignored the warning of the former director of IAEA, Hans Blix, who charged "Never before has a nation had 100 percent confidence about its intelligence with 0 percent information."

Former CIA director George Tenet acknowledges that “flawed information” made its way into Powell’s speech because the CIA had spent too much time “getting the garbage out of a White House draft” for the Secretary’s UN speech. [Tenet’s *At the Center of the Storm: the CIA During America’s Time of Crisis*]

In fact, the White House draft was prepared by Lewis “Scooter” Libby and Steve Hadley, and Secretary of State Powell instantly pronounced, “I’m not reading this. This is bullshit.” No time was lost at the CIA dealing with Libby’s fatuous draft.

Former Vice President Dick Cheney is critical of Powell for rejecting the White House draft prepared by Libby and Hadley, particularly for discarding the information on Saddam Hussein’s ties to terrorism, which included “charges that would stand the test of time.” [Cheney’s *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir*]

In fact, the primary source for intelligence linking Iraq to training in chemical and biological weapons to al Qaeda was a fabricator, which was known to the Defense Intelligence Agency a full year before Powell gave his speech. Another source was rendered by the United States and tortured by the Egyptians; he recanted his claims in February 2004, seven years before Cheney produced his memoir.

The “Outlook” account does not include former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s order to military commanders several hours after the 9/11 attacks to “judge whether [intelligence] good enough [to] hit S.H. [Saddam Hussein] @ same time—not only UBL [Osama bin Laden].” [Rumsfeld’s *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*]

A military aide conceded that it was “hard to get a good case,” but the Pentagon would “sweep it all up. Things related and not.” (This is reminiscent of CIA Director Tenet’s exclamation to President Bush that it would be a “slam dunk” to provide intelligence to the American people to make the case for war.)

The *Post* merely cites Rumsfeld as stating “I did not lie. The far less dramatic truth is that we were wrong.”

Similarly, President Bush in his *Decision Points* argues that Powell’s speech “reflected the considered judgment of intelligence agencies at home and around the world,” which totally distorts the intelligence picture.

Along those same lines, former national secretary adviser Condoleezza Rice contends that the CIA believed that Saddam Hussein reconstituted his biological and chemical weapons capability and even Iraq’s nuclear capability, although the intelligence community repeatedly told the Bush administration that the Iraqis were several years away from developing a nuclear weapon. [Rice’s *No Higher*

Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington]

The sole source on intelligence on the mobile biological labs was an agent code-named "Curveball," who was in fact trading disinformation to the Germans in order to obtain citizenship. The Germans warned the CIA against using Curveball's information, but they were ignored.

When David Kay, the chief of the Iraq Survey Group, told Tenet that Curveball was a liar and that Iraq had no mobile labs or other illicit weapons, Kay was assigned to a windowless office without a working telephone.

All of these memoirs by senior Bush administration officials blame faulty intelligence for the decision to go to war, but the speeches of these principals, including the President and the Vice President, confirm that they were willing to go beyond evidence to justify a state of "permanent war" against terrorism.

The speeches, which were given careful review inside the White House as well as in the intelligence community, provide excellent evidence of the Bush administration taking phony intelligence to the Congress, the American people, and the international community.

The *Washington Post* could have used the memoirs to depict a President presiding over a national security process marked by incoherent decision-making and policy drift, a dysfunctional national security process riven by tensions between the Pentagon and the State Department, and a politicized Central Intelligence Agency.

Instead, the *Post* used the memoirs to present the "fighting" over the case for war as a food fight between the President and his key decision-makers. Nearly a decade after the start of the unconscionable Iraq War, the American people are entitled to know more about the deceit of its key leaders and the national security decision-making process.

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Growing Doubts About Susan Rice

Exclusive: Republicans have blasted U.S. Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice for her TV comments about the fatal attack in Benghazi, Libya, but her real unfitness to be Secretary of State rests in her excessive careerism and insufficient compassion, says ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern.

By Ray McGovern

Ten days ago in "Why to Say No to Susan Rice," I tried to delve beneath the political posturing to show that President Barack Obama would be making another avoidable personnel mistake if he nominates Susan Rice, presently U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, to be Secretary of State.

Yet, to avoid one more of these unforced personnel errors, Obama must overcome his pathological need to surround himself with advisers of thoroughbred Establishment pedigree. He might instead try the novel approach of picking someone possessing integrity and courage. Of course, that would disqualify pretty much everyone with Establishment pedigrees since very few individuals have displayed honorable qualities over the past few decades, spoken truth to power and kept their inside-the-Beltway credentials.

Integrity and courage in opposing such bloody misadventures as the invasion and occupation of Iraq would have cost you dearly in the corridors of Washington power and left you outside looking in for a "senior fellowship" at many of the most prestigious think tanks in the capital. Even center-left ones like the Brookings Institution and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace sought to maintain their "credibility" in the last decade or so by recruiting war hawks (e.g. Michael O'Hanlon at Brookings and Robert Kagan at Carnegie).

For her part, Susan Rice could be a case study in how an ambitious foreign policy expert maneuvers within the boundaries of Washington's permissible thought, no matter how wrongheaded the conventional wisdom might be. Through her careful positioning on Iraq and other war policies, she maintained her Establishment credentials but didn't distinguish herself as a Profile in Courage.

True, Rice is not alone in this craven behavior. If she were to become Secretary of State, she would be following the well-worn path of her immediate predecessors, the likes of Hillary Clinton, Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell, Madeleine Albright, et al.

Hillary Clinton not only voted for the Iraq War a decade ago but keeps hyping

the “threat” from Iran today. Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell were lead singers in the chorus of lies and deceptions that serenaded us into the Iraq invasion. Madeleine Albright famously judged that economic sanctions killing some 500,000 young Iraqi children were “worth it.” In scouring Susan Rice’s public record, it is hard to find examples of her publicly challenging these Establishment views no matter how misguided, immoral, criminal or dishonest.

Indeed, at no time in my 50 years in Washington has lying been more accepted as *de rigueur*, not just tolerated as some necessary evil but embraced as a prerequisite for ascending the ladder of success and “esteem.” When in recent years has shaving the truth or outright lying done real harm to the reputation of an American diplomat or Secretary of State?

Mark Twain’s old observation could be applied to this modern reality in spades. He described diplomacy as “the art of nearly deceiving all your friends, but not quite deceiving all your enemies.”

Republican Vendetta

Yet, rather than challenging Susan Rice’s dubious record on the war in Iraq and other real tests of her judgment, Republicans have gone after Susan Rice for her recitation of inaccurate CIA “talking points” when she appeared on the Sunday talk shows after the Sept. 11, 2012, attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya. That assault left Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans dead.

Responding to the intense Republican criticism of Rice’s TV performance, Obama accused Republican senators of trying to “besmirch” Rice’s reputation. However, when it comes to Susan Rice, Republicans had no need to gin up a scandal about her clueless presentation on the Sunday talk shows.

She has done an excellent job of besmirching herself by what she did and did not do during her work in the White House and as Assistant Secretary of State for Africa under President Bill Clinton, during her sojourn in the private sector when George W. Bush was president, and at the U.N. under Obama.

Rice has an unenviable record, especially in what has been her specialty, African affairs. Like the secretaries of state she hopes to follow, Rice suffers from Compassion Deficit Disorder (CDD), especially it seems in places like Rwanda, Ethiopia and Congo.

After I was asked late Tuesday evening to appear early Wednesday on Amy Goodman’s Democracy Now!, I felt a need to dig deeper into Rice’s record. A half-hour of Googling yielded the realization (surprise, surprise) that if one relies on the Establishment media, it is difficult to know much about the role

she has played in very significant events especially in U.S. policy toward Africa. I didn't know the half of it.

Instead of critical examinations into her role as a reliable foot soldier in recent marches of folly, the mainstream media has mostly defended Susan Rice with her supporters jumping to the conclusion that her travails are the result of sexism and/or racism. Also afoot has been the proverbial "damning with faint praise."

The Washington Post editorial section on Nov. 23 echoed President Obama's claim nine days earlier that Rice "had nothing to do with Benghazi," which might be true in the narrow sense regarding the events of last Sept. 11. The larger truth, however, is that by virtually all accounts she was in the forefront of those misguided policymakers advocating last year's excellent adventure in Libya which has left chaos and a strengthened "affiliate" of al-Qaeda in its wake.

In a trivial but nonetheless instructive example of the Post's determination to leave no stone unturned, the editors on Nov. 27 ran a letter of recommendation from Rice's high-school history teacher at Washington's elite National Cathedral School. The letter made it sound like Susan Rice were applying to Stanford all over again. The teacher, John Wood, gave her high marks for "superb essays" and excellent performance in an Advanced Placement course, and added that her "social skills" were exemplary.

Perhaps one of the Post's purposes in publishing the letter was to allay fears that, at least in high school, she was inclined to flip the bird at those annoying her. Precisely this she is reported to have done literally as well as figuratively to the late Washington Establishment diplomatic fixture, Richard Holbrooke, well after her privileged education.

The story of her extended middle finger has been making the rounds again in recent weeks. Less known is her reported effort to keep Holbrooke out of Obama's inner circle. According to an account widely circulating before Holbrooke's death, Rice arranged a "peace breakfast" with Holbrooke, after which the highly touted diplomat gave her his private cell number and was crestfallen when she did not reciprocate. The don't-call-me-we'll-maybe-call-you brush-off was seen as a token of Rice's determination to keep Holbrooke away from Obama, since she saw her own ambitions reflected in the ambitious Holbrooke and felt threatened.

Like Rice's old history teacher, Obama laid it on a little too thick in publicly extolling her virtues on Nov. 14, insisting that Rice "has done exemplary work ... with skill and professionalism, and toughness and grace." All the more embarrassment for the President, should he deem a Senate confirmation game not worth the candle and decide to drop his apparent plan to nominate her for

Secretary of State.

Rice and Africa

The more that comes to light about Susan Rice's career, the harder it will be for the President, or anyone else, to carry the fight on her behalf. Even the Washington Post may eventually join the New York Times in spreading the kind of truth that puts huge dents into Rice's Teflon armor. Last Sunday, the Times ran a damaging op-ed titled "Susan Rice and Africa's Despots," exposing how she has carried water for dictators in Africa.

Some Americans are already familiar with her caving in to President Clinton's reluctance to label "genocide" the slaughter of 800,000 Rwandans in 1994. Less known is her coddling of Rwanda's President Paul Kagame, who came into power in Rwanda after the massacre and has supported more violence across the border in Congo.

As Times reporter Helene Cooper noted Monday in "U.N. Ambassador Questioned on U.S. Role in Congo Violence," more than three million people have died in Congo in more than a decade of fighting there. Rwandan President Kagame is widely regarded as the main culprit because of his support for a rebel group known as M23. Diplomats at the U.N. say Rice has taken the lead in trying to shield the Rwandan government and Kagame himself.

Cooper reports, for example, that France's U.N. Ambassador Gerard Araud met with Rice and their British counterpart two months ago to discuss Rwanda's support for the M23 rebel group. According to a Western diplomat with knowledge of the meeting, Ambassador Rice strongly objected to Araud's proposal for "naming and shaming" President Kagame and the Rwandan government and for considering sanctions to press Kagame to stop stoking the conflict in Congo.

Rice's reply reportedly was dismissive. According to the diplomat quoted by Cooper in the Times, Rice replied: "Listen Gerard, this is the D. R. C. (Democratic Republic of the Congo). If it weren't the M23 doing this, it would be some other group." Yet, Ambassador Rice has continued to water down U.N. Security Council resolutions condemning Rwanda's support for M23.

Why so much violence in Congo? Since Congo is not in the news very much, it is easy to forget that what was once (1908-1960) the Belgian Congo is incredibly rich in natural resources (cobalt, copper, industrial diamonds, for example), while its 66 million citizens remain among the poorest in the world. The Congolese economy has been the antithesis of "trickle down."

An account of what has been going on in Congo can be found in a piece titled "Kagame's Hidden War in the Congo" by Columbia University Professor (and former

New York Times correspondent) Howard French in the Sept. 24, 2009, issue of the New York Review of Books. French recently noted that Susan Rice has played an influential role in adding a new generation of dictators in Africa.

It also turns out that Rwandan President Paul Kagame was a major client of Susan Rice at the "security analysis" firm Intellibridge, where Rice was a Managing Director from 2001 to 2002. Intellibridge is noted for its jobs program for former Clinton administration officials, providing them with out-of-government employment. But this kind of work can also create a clear conflict-of-interest over the longer term. (Rice moved on to the Brookings Institution for the rest of Bush's term.)

As ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar recently noted: "Consulting firms whose shingles feature former senior officials who recently left office are selling influence and access at least as much as they are selling expert advice. Relationships that are ones of advocacy, trust, and taking action on behalf of the client's interests are not relationships that can be turned on and off like a light switch."

The Children's Future

I sit here Wednesday evening, having just snuggled and story-read the two youngest of our eight grandchildren into bed. As I left the two precious little girls, I found myself even more saddened and concerned for their future.

My thoughts turned to the Obama administration's abnegation of responsibility at the recent U.N. conference on climate change in Doha and more to the point here the prospect that Obama may cave in to the corporations and banks expecting to reap huge profits from the Keystone XL pipeline.

And I found myself wondering if, 20 years from now, our two beautiful granddaughters will be forced to think long and hard about bringing new children into the world on a planet on life support. How painful to even think about the tortured decisions that await them! What overarching pain!

Hillary Clinton's successor as Secretary of State will have a key role to play in decisions on the Keystone XL pipeline and other global environmental issues determining how soon the planet may run out of clean water to drink, clean air to breathe, arable land to raise crops, and dry land to live on.

In the pipeline issue, multi-millionaire Susan Rice has a substantial financial conflict of interest. According to the Washington Post, she and her Canadian husband, with net worth of between \$24 million and \$44 million, own substantial stock in each of three companies involved in projects to extract oil from Canada's oil sands region. They also own a stake in the Canadian railway that

runs to that region, as well as shares in Canadian banks said to be involved in financing the pipeline project.

Thus, should Rice follow Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State, these investments in corporations and banks expecting to reap huge profits from the Keystone XL pipeline project pose a real (not apparent) conflict of interest.

This places in jeopardy the chance of a decent life for future generations and should ring alarm bells for those of us who care about the ability of our planet to support our children's children. There has been no suggestion that Rice would divest from those companies; nor has she said she would recuse herself from the fateful decision on Keystone.

There is such a thing as "too late," as Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., warned us in relation to other social evils that our country belatedly mustered the energy and compassion to confront. Climate change, arguably, is an even more transcendent, all-embracing problem.

As was written centuries ago, "without vision the people perish." Surely, President Obama can find an experienced, competent candidate with vision as well as courage and integrity someone not so deeply beholden to the One Percent and not afflicted with Compassion Deficit Disorder to nominate for Secretary of State.

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