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Dick Cheney's "Executive Assassination Ring".

Was British Weapons Expert Dr. David Kelly a Target ?

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Antifascist Calling...

Revelations that the Central Intelligence Agency launched a world-wide assassination program, and then concealed its existence from the U.S. Congress and the American people for eight years, carries an implication that death squads may have been employed against political opponents.

The Wall Street Journal **reported** July 13 that "A secret Central Intelligence Agency initiative terminated by Director Leon Panetta was an attempt to carry out a 2001 presidential authorization to capture or kill al Qaeda operatives, according to former intelligence officials familiar with the matter."

Investigative journalist Siobhan Gorman writes, "The precise nature of the highly classified effort isn't clear, and the CIA won't comment on its substance."

The Washington Post however, **revealed** July 16 that the assassination plan was sanctioned by President Bush. Unnamed "intelligence officials" told the newspaper that "a secret document known as a 'presidential finding' was signed by President George W. Bush that same month, granting the agency broad authority to use deadly force against bin Laden as well as other senior members of al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups."

According to *Post* reporter Joby Warrick, Bush's finding "imposed no geographical limitations on the agency's actions" and that the CIA was "not obliged to notify Congress of each operation envisaged under the directive." This implies that targets could be hit anywhere, including on the soil of a NATO ally or *inside the United States itself*.

According to the ***Los Angeles Times*** the program "was kept secret from lawmakers for nearly eight years at the direction of former Vice President Dick Cheney."

Despite these reports and hand-wringing amongst congressional Democrats, there's something fishy here. After all, isn't the whole point of America's "global war on terror" to "capture or kill" al-Qaeda suspects? What's so secretive or controversial about *that*?

The descriptions of the operation that have so far emerged however, bear a striking resemblance to charges laid earlier this year when investigative journalist Seymour Hersh said that the Bush administration stood-up an "executive assassination ring."

During a "Great Conversations" event at the University of Minnesota in March the veteran journalist **told** the audience: "After 9/11, I haven't written about this yet, but the Central

Intelligence Agency was very deeply involved in domestic activities against people they thought to be enemies of the state. Without any legal authority for it. They haven't been called on it yet. That does happen."

The program was allegedly shut down by Panetta on June 23, a day after leaning of the agency's clandestine initiative. What make these revelations all the more significant is that the CIA Director only learned of the program fully *four months* after assuming office.

"The implications," socialist analyst Bill Van Auken **writes**, "are clear. The CIA maintained the secrecy ordered by Cheney even after the latter had left office, and continued to conceal the existence and nature of the covert operation not only from Congress, but from the Obama administration itself."

But was the program shut down? *The Washington Post* further revealed that the plan, allegedly "on the agency's back burner for much of the past eight years, was suddenly thrust into the spotlight because of proposals to initiate what one intelligence official called a 'somewhat more operational phase'."

Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, a former top aide to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell hints that the program was in a "somewhat more operational phase" years earlier, despite repeated denials by CIA officials and congressional staffers.

Wilkerson told MSNBC's ***Rachel Maddow Show*** July 14, "What I suspect has happened is what began to happen while I was still in the government, and that was we're killing the wrong people. And we're killing the wrong people in the wrong countries. And the countries are finding out about it, or at least there was a suspicion that the countries might find out about it, and so it was shut down. That's my strong suspicion."

According to Wilkerson, the teams may have been dispatched under deep cover, using Joint Special Operations Command as a cut-out, a confirmation of charges made by Seymour Hersh in March. When U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was queried by the State Department, "after some hemming and hawing, which was Rumsfeld's forte, he finally admitted that he had dispatched some of these teams," Wilkerson explained.

Powell's former aide told Maddow, "It's laughable that the CIA has never lied to Congress. "They lie to Congress on a routine basis." Much the same can be said of General Powell who lied to the entire world "on a routine basis" during the run-up to the invasion of Iraq.

It must also be said there is precedence for the CIA's alleged death squad activities during the Bush era. In Vietnam for example, the CIA and U.S. Special Forces jointly ran a secret assassination program that targeted Vietnamese dissidents. As author Douglas Valentine revealed in his definitive study, ***The Phoenix Program***, Operation Phoenix "was a computer-driven program aimed at 'neutralizing', through assassination, kidnapping, and systematic torture, the civilian infrastructure that supported the insurgency in South Vietnam."

Those programs never died and have since morphed into above top secret "Special Access Programs" used with deadly effect in Central- and South America during the 1980s and across the Middle East today.

One Scandal Leads to Another

The latest scandal comes on the heels of revelations that the Bush administration's massive secret surveillance programs targeting the American people went far beyond well-publicized warrantless wiretapping.

A new 38-page **declassified report** issued July 10 by inspectors general of the CIA, National Security Agency, Department of Justice, Department of Defense and the Office of National Intelligence, collectively called the acknowledged "Terrorist Surveillance Program" and cross-agency top secret "Other Intelligence Activities" the "President's Surveillance Program."

The IG's report failed to disclose what these programs actually did, and probably still do today under the Obama administration. Shrouded beneath impenetrable layers of secrecy and deceit, these undisclosed programs lie at the dark heart of the state's war against the American people and perhaps, other regime opponents.

The CIA's Office of Inspector General said that "the program was an additional resource to enhance the CIA's understanding of terrorist networks and to help identify potential threats to the U.S. homeland," and that the "PSP was one of many tools available to them, and that the tools were often used in combination." However, "some officers told the CIA OIG that there was insufficient legal guidance on the use of PSP-derived information." (pp. 33-34)

But with a thin reed provided by President Bush's executive orders, presidential findings and 2001 congressional authorization for war against al-Qaeda, why would there be "insufficient legal guidance"? If "PSP-derived information" was used to target alleged al-Qaeda operatives there wouldn't be need for additional legal guidance. If however, the CIA "was very deeply involved in domestic activities" as Seymour Hersh averred, and used NSA information for political dirty tricks it would be a violation of the CIA's charter, one that comes with serious consequences including jail time.

Investigative journalists James Risen and Eric Lichtblau, who broke the NSA spy story in ***The New York Times*** in 2005, **reported** July 11 that intelligence officials "'had difficulty citing specific instances' when the National Security Agency's wiretapping program contributed to successes against terrorists."

True enough as far as it goes, but perhaps these programs were highly efficacious in silencing those who were deemed politically suspect, even within the defense and security apparatus itself.

While major media in the United States insist that the Agency's assassination program was meant to target al-Qaeda assets, one question inevitably raises its head: did the CIA and allied intelligence services murder political opponents? Were covert actions carried out by the CIA–at home or on the soil of America's allies–"against people they thought to be enemies of the state," as Hersh revealed?

More pointedly, was the British bioweapons expert Dr. David Kelly, who leaked information to the press that the British and American governments had falsified the case for the 2003 invasion of Iraq, murdered for exposing the fraudulent evidence for war or worse, planning an exposé on the West's continued development of offensive biological weapons?

The David Kelly File

Dr. David Kelly was an unlikely dissident. In fact Kelly wasn't a dissident at all, but a prominent figure in Britain's bioweapons defense establishment.

The former head of the microbiology department at Porton Down, the UK's secret biological and chemical warfare research facility, at the time of his 2003 death Kelly was a consummate insider, a trusted keeper of state secrets; dangerous and deadly secrets that could topple governments.

A civilian employee of Britain's Ministry of Defence (MoD), Dr. Kelly was a biological weapons expert and former United Nations weapons inspector in Iraq. His off-the-record conversations with journalist Andrew Gilligan about the British government's fraudulent claim that Iraq possessed "weapons of mass destruction" set off a firestorm that continues to smolder.

While David Kelly wasn't a spy, he did enjoy unprecedented access to the world of secret intelligence. Indeed, **according** to author Gordon Thomas Kelly had helped orchestrate the defection of a top Russian microbiologist Vladimir Pasechnik (who turned up dead in 2001, allegedly from a stroke) and played a part in the FBI's investigation into the 2001 anthrax attacks in the United States by trying to identify the origin of the Ames strain used in the fatal mailings.

In 2008, the multiyear, multimillion dollar "Amerithrax" investigation was closed when the Bureau claimed that Dr. Bruce Ivins was the killer. Ivins, a top anthrax expert at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) at Ft. Detrick in Maryland committed suicide. According to the FBI version, the scientist killed himself just as the Bureau was about to arrest him for the crime.

Many were unconvinced that Ivins was the anthrax "lone gunman." Indeed, Sen. Patrick Leahy, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and a target of the 2001 attacks, charged FBI Director Robert Mueller with staging a cover-up.

During 2008 hearings, Leahy angrily **chided** Mueller: "If he is the one who sent the letter, I do not believe in any way, shape or manner that [Ivins] is the only person involved in this attack on Congress and the American people. I do not believe that at all. I believe there are others involved, either as accessories before or after the fact, I believe there are others who can be charged with murder."

Richard Spertzel, Ivins' former boss at Ft. Detrick told investigative journalists Bob Coen and Eric Nadler, "He's dead and they can close the case and he can't defend himself. Nice and convenient isn't it?"

Thomas claims that Kelly had worked with two American scientists, Benito Que and Don Wiley, who also turned up dead under highly suspicious circumstances.

It was originally claimed by authorities that Que was bludgeoned to death during an attempted carjacking in Miami. "Strangely enough," *The Toronto Globe & Mail* **reported** in 2002, "his body showed no signs of a beating. Doctors then began to suspect a stroke."

Wiley, according to the Canadian newspaper "was an expert on how the immune system responds to viral attacks such as the classic doomsday plagues of HIV, ebola and influenza." After planning a trip to Graceland with his son police "found his rental car on a bridge outside Memphis, Tenn. His body was later found in the Mississippi River. Forensic experts

said he may have had a dizzy spell and have fallen off the bridge."

As it turned out, the pair were "engaged in DNA sequencing that could provide 'a genetic marker based on genetic profiling'." Thomas writes: "The research could play an important role in developing weaponized pathogens to hit selected groups of humans–identifying them by race. Two years ago, both men were found dead, in circumstances never fully explained."

Coincidence, or something more sinister?

By summer 2003, it was obvious that Saddam Hussein's regime did not possess WMDs and that the entire pretext for invading Iraq was based on a lie, concocted by the American regime, and in particular by Vice President Richard Cheney and the neoconservative mafia in control of America's defense and security apparatus.

Tasked to the Defence Intelligence Staff, Kelly read a draft of the Joint Intelligence Committee's (JIC) dossier on Iraq's reputed WMDs. He was unhappy with many of the report's conclusions, according to multiple press reports. He disputed the infamous claim that the Iraqi Army was capable of launching battlefield biological and chemical weapons within "45 minutes" of an order from Saddam. This dubious claim, one of many, was inserted into the report at the insistence of MI6 political masters acting through the JIC.

During a trip to Iraq in June 2003, Kelly inspected what were alleged by the Bush administration to be "mobile weapons laboratories," a claim infamously made by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell at the United Nations in February 2003. *The Observer* **reported** that a British scientist, who turned out to be David Kelly, told the newspaper: "They are not mobile germ warfare laboratories. You could not use them for making biological weapons. They do not even look like them. They are exactly what the Iraqis said they were–facilities for the production of hydrogen gas to fill balloons."

One of the key pieces of evidence to emerge was the JIC's, and Kelly's, involvement with Operation Rockingham, a secret program for weapons inspections in Iraq.

Former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter told the ***Sunday Herald*** that Operation Rockingham was a "dirty tricks" unit "designed specifically to produce misleading intelligence that Saddam has weapons of mass destruction to give the UK a justifiable excuse to wage war on Iraq."

Describing the unit as "dangerous," Ritter told investigative journalist Neil Mackay, "Rockingham was spinning reports and emphasizing reports that showed non-compliance (by Iraq with UN inspections) and quashing those which showed compliance. It was cherry-picking intelligence."

A political firestorm ensued, which threatened the viability of Prime Minister Tony Blair's Labour government. Heads would have to roll; one of those heads as it turned out, would be David Kelly's.

After an appearance before Parliament's Foreign Affairs Select Committee on July 15, 2003, Kelly was visibly upset by his shoddy treatment by MPs. In an email to *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller, a serial-fabricator who had stitched-up evidence that Iraq was reconstituting its nuclear weapons program, Kelly said there "were many dark actors playing games."

During the whitewash known as **The Hutton Inquiry**, a British ambassador David Broucher reported a conversation he had with Kelly in Geneva. The ambassador asked Kelly what would happen if Iraq were invaded? The bioweapons expert replied, "I will probably be found dead in the woods."

Two days after giving testimony before Parliament he was.

"A Wet Operation, a Wet Disposal"

In ***The Strange Death of David Kelly***, Liberal-Democratic MP Norman Baker builds a strong case that the scientist was murdered. Despite Lord Hutton's dubious findings that Kelly killed himself, several troubling facts intruded to upend the British government's apple cart. To summarize:

The lack of fingerprints found on the knife allegedly used by the scientist to slit his wrists; the lack of blood found at the scene, despite a verdict that he had sliced open an artery; unexplained contusions on Kelly's scalp; the position of the body discovered by searchers differed markedly from that alleged by detectives; bottled water, knife and wristwatch said to be found by detectives were not observed by the searchers who actually discovered the body; eight computers removed from Kelly's home and office by MI6 agents; missing dental records; the level of painkillers found in Kelly's stomach was "less than a third" of what is considered a fatal overdose by medical experts. On and on it goes…

One source told Baker that Dr. Kelly's death was "a wet operation, a wet disposal," a term used in intelligence circles to denote an assassination.

Six years after Kelly's murder, a group of British doctors have announced that "they were mounting a legal challenge to overturn the finding of suicide," *The Mail on Sunday* **reports**.

A 12-page opinion concludes: "The bleeding from Dr Kelly's ulnar artery is highly unlikely to have been so voluminous and rapid that it was the cause of death. We advise the instructing solicitors to obtain the autopsy reports so that the concerns of a group of properly interested medical specialists can be answered."

One motive which may have led to Kelly's murder was that the scientist was writing a book "exposing highly damaging government secrets before his mysterious death," *The Sunday Express* **reported** July 5.

According to published reports, Kelly intended to reveal that he had warned Prime Minister Tony Blair "there were no weapons of mass destruction anywhere in Iraq weeks before the British and American invasion." Despite warnings that the book would breach Britain's draconian Officials Secrets Act, Kelly sought advice on how he might bring his findings into a publishable form.

These reports also suggest that Kelly threatened to "lift the lid" on a larger scandal, "his own secret dealings in germ warfare with the apartheid regime in South Africa."

Investigative journalists Bob Coen and Eric Nadler in their book ***Dead Silence: Fear and Terror on the Anthrax Trail*** and a companion 90-minute documentary, ***Anthrax War***, provide startling evidence that Kelly's death is linked to a secret world of germ warfare research.

Indeed, according to Coen and Nadler, David Kelly's secret dealings included a connection with Dr. Wouter Basson, the cardiologist who was the former head of the South African apartheid regime's clandestine biological and chemical warfare program, Project Coast.

During Basson's 1999 trial and subsequent acquittal, evidence presented by some 150 witnesses, including operatives linked to South African snatch-and-kill squads, tied Basson to chemical and biological research used in extrajudicial executions by the apartheid regime. It was further alleged that Project Coast had conducted active research into the fabrication of "ethnic weapons" that would specifically target South Africa's black population.

In *Anthrax War*, Basson states that his findings were shared with foreign scientists, including those affiliated with weapons research in Britain and the United States. According to a 2001 piece in ***The New Yorker***,

Basson had already put the fear into American intelligence during his T.R.C. [Truth and Reconciliation Committee] appearance, where he handed over fourteen pages of notes from a visit to the United States in 1981. American Air Force officers had been eager to develop joint "medical projects" with South Africa, he wrote. … Basson says that in 1995 his life was threatened on the street by a C.I.A. agent. The American Embassy in Pretoria admits privately that the United States government is "terribly concerned" that Basson may start talking about his sources of information and technology. The Embassy hopes that an impression of "unwitting coöperation" is all that emerges in the way of an American connection. (William Finnegan, "The Poison Keeper," *The New Yorker*, January 15, 2001)

Coen and Nadler uncovered evidence that Kelly had discovered a "Porton Down-South Africa connection" linked to a global bioweapons black market. The investigative journalists told the *Express*, "We have proved there is a black market in anthrax. David Kelly was of particular interest to us because he was a world expert on anthrax and he was involved in some degree with assisting the secret germ warfare programme in apartheid South Africa."

Andrew Mackinlay, a British MP blamed for humiliating Kelly "to the point of suicide" started "asking questions in the House of Lords" after the scientist's death "about Kelly's relationship with these bad actors in Pretoria, even making inquiries about South African links to Pasechnik's Regma firm."

Founded in 2000 by the deceased scientist, Regma Bio Technologies was headquartered on the Porton Down campus and had signed a contract with the U.S. Navy for anti-anthrax research.

What Mackinlay discovered about the entire operation was highly disturbing to say the least. His inquiry sparked "the convening of an extraordinary 'handling strategy meeting' involving thirteen officials from different government agencies. But any and all information about UK-South African germ work was withheld from the MP."

Mackinlay told Coen and Nadler, "This is one of the most closely guarded secrets of the British government."

The question is, did David Kelly threaten to reveal these "closely guarded secrets" in the book he was preparing, and was this a motive for certain "dark actors" to eliminate a person now considered "an enemy of the state"?

These programs are not Cold War relics. Biological weapons research continues today and remain one of America's most deadly secrets. As the 2001 anthrax attacks which employed a weaponized version of the bacteria to sow terror, and subsequent FBI cover-up illustrate, such programs remain fully operational.

The evidence suggests that Dr. David Kelly, as Norman Baker avers "may have signed his own death warrant" by threatening to reveal this secret underworld menacing all humanity with unimaginable horrors.

That an out-of-control agency like the CIA has the means, motives and opportunity to silence critics and that "no geographical limitations" were placed "on the agency's actions," should give pause to a society that considers itself a democracy.

Media revelations so far have suggested that the CIA and Special Operations Forces were assembling teams to "put bullets in [the al Qaeda leaders'] heads" as *The Wall Street Journal* reported.

But perhaps the Obama administration's trepidation in exploring this and other Bush-era programs through congressional hearings or the mechanism of a special prosecutor has much to do with fear of opening a proverbial can of worms.

One never knows where such an investigation might lead.

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