

Pakistan's Bomb, U.S. Cover-up

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Global Research, January 23, 2008

Consortiumnews.com 23 January 2008

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On Jan. 20, the London Sunday Times published [an article](#) that followed up on [earlier damning allegations](#) from former FBI translator Sibel Edmonds, who accused the Bush administration of covering up sensitive documents suggesting high-level U.S. complicity in Pakistan's nuclear program.

In this essay, Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg urges the major U.S. news media to get serious and pursue these disclosures aggressively:

For the second time in two weeks, the entire U.S. press has let itself be scooped by Rupert Murdoch's London Sunday Times on a dynamite story of criminal activities by corrupt U.S. officials promoting nuclear proliferation.

But there is a worse journalistic sin than being scooped, and that is participating in a cover-up of information that demands urgent attention from the public, the U.S. Congress and the courts.

For the last two weeks — one could say, for years — the major American media have been guilty of ignoring entirely the allegations of the courageous and highly credible source Sibel Edmonds, quoted in the London Times on Jan. 6, 2008, in a front-page story that was front-page news in much of the rest of the world but was not reported in a single American newspaper or network.

It is up to readers to demand that this culpable silent treatment end.

Just as important, there must be pressure by the public on congressional committee chairpersons — in particular Rep. Henry Waxman and Sen. Patrick Leahy — who have been sitting for years on classified sworn testimony by Edmonds — as she reveals in the Times' new story on Sunday — along with documentation in their possession confirming parts of her account, to hold public hearings to investigate her accusations of widespread criminal activities over several administrations that endanger national security.

They should call for open testimony under oath by Edmonds — as she has urged for five years — and by other FBI officials she has named to them, cited anonymously in the first Times' story.

And this is the time for those who have so far creditably leaked to the Times of London to come forward, accepting personal risks, to offer their testimony — and new documents — both to the Congress and to the American press.

I would say to them: Don't do what I did: waste months of precious time trying to get

congressional committees to act as they should in the absence of journalistic pressure.

Do your best to Inform the American public directly, first, through the major American media. But perhaps today the alternative media and the international press are a necessary precursor even to that.

It shouldn't be true, but if it is, it's a measure of how far the New York Times and Washington Post have fallen from their responsibilities to the public, to their profession and to American democracy, since I gave them the Pentagon Papers in 1971.

They printed them then. Would they today? It's impossible to believe that they — or Rupert Murdoch's Wall Street Journal — could not have acquired documents and testimony that Murdoch's London paper reported on Sunday.

Now the challenge to them is to end their silence on that reporting and do their job.

Otherwise, like the now-Democratic-controlled committees, they are complicit in cover-up. That's not what these institutions should be doing.

It's not that "the cover-up is always worse than the crime": that favorite media mantra is itself a cover story. The criminal cover-up by the FBI revealed by Edmonds and the Times' documents is, as often the case, to conceal extremely serious crimes endangering our security, and to protect the official perpetrators.

But if "freedom of the press is mainly for the people who own presses," it is time for those owners to stop using that freedom to help conceal official wrongdoing. And the people who own computers should be using them to light a fire under the owners of presses and television networks.

In support of the official cover-up, various American journalists in the last weeks have reportedly received calls from "intelligence sources" hinting that "what Sibel Edmonds stumbled onto" is not a rogue operation by American officials and congressmen working to their own advantage — as believed by Edmonds and some other former or active FBI officials — but a sensitive covert operation authorized at high levels.

If there is any truth to that, we clearly have another prize candidate — giving us as blowback the Pakistani Bomb and nuclear sales — in the category of "worst covert operation in U.S. history": rivaling such contenders as the Bay of Pigs, Iran-Contra, and the secret CIA torture camps abroad.

In the first two of those the American press gullibly responded to official warnings of "sensitivity" and sat on information they should have reported (as did the New York Times for a year on the illegal NSA surveillance).

If the Washington Post had heeded such warnings and demands with respect to the covert torture camps they would have missed a well-earned Pulitzer Prize and the camps would still be torturing.

Many, if not most, covert operations deserve to be disclosed by a free press. They are often covert not only because they are illegal but because they are wildly ill-conceived and reckless.

“Sensitive” and “covert” are often synonyms for “half-assed” ‘or “idiotic,” as well as for “criminal,” as the pattern of activities revealed by Edmonds would appear to be if it were truly presidentially authorized.

These activities persist, covertly, to the point of national disaster because the press neglects what our First Amendment was precisely intended to protect and encourage it to do: expose wrongdoing by officials.

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