

U.S. intelligence Abuses: Next Generation of ‘Family Jewels’?

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The CIA’s belated release of its infamous “Family Jewels” sheds light on U.S. intelligence abuses during the CIA’s first quarter century, but this openness may actually obscure a darker reality – that the subsequent three-plus decades have witnessed worse national-security crimes committed under the cloak of greater secrecy and deception.

Washington’s current conventional wisdom is that the “bad ol’ days” of the 1950s and 1960s couldn’t recur because a formal system of congressional oversight was put in place after press reports first disclosed CIA abuses in the mid-1970s.

Today’s reality, however, is far less reassuring. The start of routine congressional oversight in 1977 only caused intelligence hardliners and their political allies to shift operations off-books while simultaneously building a right-wing media infrastructure to harass journalists, investigators and whistleblowers who still exposed wrongdoing.

The combination of these two factors – the semi-privatizing of covert operations and the emergence of right-wing media defenders – has made it harder, not easier, to uncover and expose intelligence crimes.

Plus, the culture of deception has only deepened in Washington over the past few decades. Looking back on the Family Jewels documents, it’s almost quaint that CIA officers would comply with an order from CIA Director James Schlesinger in 1973 to confess acts that may have violated the CIA’s charter.

Since then, the pattern – reaching from the CIA to the White House – has been to keep on stonewalling and lying, while right-wing media operatives lay down covering fire of angry talking points against any accusers. Many career-minded mainstream journalists then join in “debunking” the potential scandal until it fades away, often amid derision.

In this environment, it would take very tough investigators willing to absorb withering media attacks to pry loose a new generation of Family Jewels. Indeed, it’s next to impossible to envision the current batch of U.S. government officials or this era’s journalists showing the tenacity and courage to do that.

Questions to Ask

However, if CIA Director Michael Hayden wanted to go further than just accepting plaudits for releasing some ancient history, he would demand that CIA personnel answer questions about the following events from the 1970s and 1980s that collectively make the old Family Jewels look like child’s play:

-What is the full story about the CIA's connection to a right-wing Latin American terror network known as Operation Condor, which carried out a series of international murders including a terrorist attack that killed Chilean dissident Orlando Letelier and American co-worker Ronni Moffitt on the streets of Washington in September 1976?

(The CIA, then run by George H.W. Bush, received warning messages from a U.S. ambassador about a plot by the Chilean government's assassins to use the CIA as a cover for infiltrating into the United States, but Bush has never fully explained why he didn't do more to prevent the Letelier-Moffitt murders.)

-What did the CIA know about the terrorist bombing of a civilian Cubana Airliner in October 1976 which killed 73 people, including youngsters on the Cuban national fencing team? Why has the U.S. government protected and harbored two of the implicated terrorists, Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada, to this day?

(Though George H.W. Bush ran for national office four times since the Cubana attack, he has never been pressed to give a thorough answer about his knowledge of the terror wave that occurred under his watch at CIA. Neither has George W. Bush been challenged over his decision to spare Posada from extradition to stand trial.)

-In 1980, what was the role of three CIA officers - Robert Gates, Donald Gregg and George Cave - in backchannel contacts between the Reagan-Bush campaign and Iranian Islamic radicals then holding 52 Americans hostage, a crisis that effectively doomed Jimmy Carter's reelection bid?

(Gates, Gregg and Cave have denied involvement in the "October Surprise" case, but their alibis have never been carefully vetted. Gregg also failed a lie-detector test when he was asked about his role in this secret 1980 operation during Iran-Contra questioning. Despite extensive evidence that Republicans did contact Iran behind Carter's back, congressional investigations into the scandal were, at best, half-hearted.)

-What did the CIA do to protect drug traffickers connected to two major paramilitary operations in the 1980s, the contras in Nicaragua and the mujahedeen in Afghanistan?

(Much of the U.S. news media - both right-wing and mainstream - dismissed the contra-cocaine allegations as a "conspiracy theory." But the inspectors general of the CIA and the Justice Department made broad admissions about the prevalence of drug traffickers inside the contra operation in the 1980s - and the U.S. government's failure to root them out. Those I.G. reports received little attention - or were simply ignored by major U.S. news outlets - when they were released in 1998.)

Moon's Operation

-What is the relationship between U.S. intelligence and Sun Myung Moon's organization? Why has Moon's operation, with its relationships with crime kingpins in Asia and Latin America, escaped legal scrutiny even after it was exposed during the Korea-gate scandal in the late 1970s as a South Korean intelligence front?

(Though the Korea-gate findings contributed to Moon's prosecution and conviction on tax charges in 1982, he and his organization have since become untouchables, a pattern of protection that some critics trace to Moon's investment of billions of mysterious dollars in

publishing the pro-Republican Washington Times, in financing a right-wing political infrastructure in the United States, and in putting money into the pockets of U.S. political leaders, including former President George H.W. Bush.)

-What was the CIA's hand in the so-called "perception management" operations of the 1980s aimed at influencing how the American people perceived foreign-policy events?

(CIA Director William Casey took a direct interest in establishing a "perception management" operation based in the National Security Council under the guidance of long-time CIA officer Walter Raymond Jr. Though Raymond was "externalized" from the CIA by shifting him to the NSC, this sleight of hand violated at least the spirit of the prohibition against the CIA influencing Americans through distribution of propaganda.)

-What did the CIA know about clandestine weapons shipments to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s?

(Former Reagan administration official Howard Teicher has written in a sworn affidavit that then-Vice President George H.W. Bush, CIA Director William Casey and then-deputy CIA director Robert Gates played secret roles in arranging military assistance to Saddam Hussein's government. But the full story has never been told.)

-Was the CIA aware of the 1985 activities of Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and his assistant, Gen. Colin Powell, in arranging illegal shipments of weapons to Iran?

(Ronald Reagan's National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane has testified that he described the operation to Weinberger and Powell in 1985 before there was a presidential intelligence finding and thus when the shipment of U.S. weapons through Israel was illegal. Weinberger denied knowledge and Powell claimed a faulty memory. Then, President George H.W. Bush blocked the truth when he pardoned Weinberger on Christmas Eve 1992, thus preventing Weinberger's Iran-Contra trial and sparing Powell some embarrassing questions.)

[For more on the evidence of these intelligence scandals, see Robert Parry's *Lost History and Secrecy & Privilege*, available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), or look for our upcoming book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*.]

'War on Terror'

There are many other possible Family Jewels-style questions, including current ones that bear on the "war on terror" – torture, rendition flights, secret prisons, assassinations, etc. – but the CIA would surely throw a cloak of operational secrecy over those activities.

The same should not hold true for questions relating to intelligence crimes of the 1970s and 1980s. The obstacle there is that those abuses remain politically radioactive because they implicate President George W. Bush's father, current Defense Secretary Robert Gates and several Republican icons, including Colin Powell and Ronald Reagan.

However, if Gen. Hayden were to repeat the practice of CIA Director Schlesinger in calling for confessions about past crimes – and if this generation of CIA officers would obey the order – the legitimacy of the entire Reagan-Bush era could be put into question.

Rather than a glorious period of conservative rule, the Reagan and Bush I administrations would stand exposed as a criminal enterprise, having secured power through illegal

subterfuge and conducting foreign policy by violating a host of American laws.

That, in turn, would put the current Bush administration in a very harsh light, as the political spawn of criminal and possibly even treasonous acts.

So the chances of ever reading a second generation of Family Jewels does not seem bright.

*Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, [Secrecy & Privilege: Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq](#), can be ordered at [secrecyandprivilege.com](#). It's also available at [Amazon.com](#), as is his 1999 book, *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth.'**

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