

US State Sponsored Assassinations: Congress Objects to CIA Lies but not to Torture and Murder

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Why are some members of Congress suddenly upset the CIA lied to them when the Agency has been guilty of innumerable crimes that are far worse?

Is Congress saying, "It's okay to do what you're doing, just don't lie to us about it?" When accused of a crime in the newspapers, Jesse James used to write reporters, "I wasn't there." Yet it was not lying that he was hunted down for but bank robbery and murder.

Back in 1967, the CIA's *own Inspector General* produced a 133-page internal report that implicated "every living CIA officer who has served as chief of the clandestine service—Allen Dulles, Richard Bissell, Richard Helms, and Desmond FitzGerald—in conspiracies to commit murder," writes investigative journalist Tim Weiner in his book "Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA"(Anchor Books). That was 40 years ago, and the CIA's path has been downhill ever since.

Now House Intelligence committee Democrats have revealed CIA Director Leon Panetta's comments that "top CIA officials have concealed significant actions...and misled" Congress since 2001. Actually, the Agency's been misleading Congress since President Truman authorized it in 1947. CIA lying isn't news, it's *tradition*. So is murder.

After Truman departed, the CIA often took its orders to "terminate" foreign leaders directly from the White House, as when President Kennedy authorized it to kill Castro.

Now it turns out Vice President Cheney is charged with directing his very own Murder Inc. Investigative reporter Seymour Hersh said the Joint Special Operations Command(JSOC) "is a special wing of our special operations community that is set up independently. They do not report to anybody except in the Bush-Cheney days they reported directly to the Cheney office...Congress has no oversight of it. It's an executive assassination ring essentially, and it's been going on and on and on."

So what do you call a country if not a "tyranny" when its top officials dispatch their henchmen around the world to murder their enemies? That's how the Soviet Union's Joe Stalin worked. In 1940, his assassin murdered Stalin rival the exiled Leon Trotsky near Mexico City. "Death solves all problems," Stalin is said to have remarked. "No man, no problem." Stalin was no believer in respecting the sovereignty of other countries or bothering with their courts. Just go in and kill the guy. Apparently, Cheney worked the same way. And like Stalin, he authorized torture. This totalitarian streak runs deep both in the White House and the CIA. Indeed, President Clinton authorized the first CIA renditions. What he began as a trickle of kidnappings turned into a torrent under Bush-Cheney.

Less than a week after 9/11, “President Bush issued a 14-page top secret directive to (George) Tenet and the CIA, ordering the agency to hunt, capture, imprison, and interrogate suspects around the world,” writes Weiner, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter who covered intelligence for The New York Times. “It set no limits on what the agency could do. It was the foundation for a system of secret prisons where CIA officials and contractors used techniques that included torture.”

“One CIA contractor was convicted of beating an Afghan prisoner to death,” Weiner continued. “This was not the role of a civilian intelligence service in a democratic society. But it is clearly what the White House wanted the CIA to do,” Weiner observed. (By some counts, hundreds may have been murdered, none of whom ever saw a judge.)

The crimes of our presidents and the CIA today represent everything America’s Founders despised when they looked aghast at the excesses of the French Revolution. As Alexander Hamilton wrote in 1794: “If there be anything solid in virtue—the time must come when it will have been a disgrace to have advocated the Revolution of France in its late stages.”

Yet, according to William Blum in “Rogue State”(Common Courage), as of 2005, the U.S. had been involved in the assassination or attempted assassination of 37 world leaders, ranging from France’s Charles de Gaulle to Panama’s Omar Torrijos and from Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini to India’s Jawaharlal Nehru. Reporter Blum also cites more than 50 U.S. foreign interventions, mostly by the CIA, ranging from blackmail to armed overthrow.

Blum also cites evidence of CIA meddling in 30 foreign elections, including Australia, Bolivia, British Guiana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Laos, Lebanon, Nepal, Nicaragua, Panama, Portugal, the Philippines, and Viet Nam,. “On many occasions, U.S. interventions resulted in free, or any, elections being done away with completely for large stretches of time, as in Brazil, Congo, Guatemala, Indonesia, Iran, South Korea, Chile, and Greece,” Blum writes.

Elections are sacred moments in the life of a democracy and for the U.S. to bribe voters, as the CIA has often done overseas, (Brazil is a sordid example) is to repudiate the democratic ideal. The judicial process and human life also are held sacrosanct, yet apparently these never counted for much with Cheney or past CIA directors. Like Stalin, Cheney felt responsible to no one; he was bent on extending his power globally by force and violence.

And now we have a President seemingly with no intention of prosecuting Cheney or CIA brass guilty of crimes against humanity. What would Alexander Hamilton have said?

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