

CIA claims of cancelled assassination campaign are hogwash!

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CIA director Leon Panetta just told Congress he cancelled a secret operation to assassinate al-Qaida leaders. The CIA campaign, authorized in 2001, had not yet become operational, claimed Panetta. I respect Panetta, but his claim is humbug. The U.S. has been trying to kill al-Qaida personnel (real and imagined) since the Clinton administration. These efforts continue under President Barack Obama. Claims by Congress it was never informed are hogwash.

The CIA and Pentagon have been in the assassination business since the early 1950s, using American hit teams or third parties. For example, a CIA-organized attempt to assassinate Lebanon's leading Shia cleric, Muhammad Fadlallah, using a truck bomb, failed, but killed 83 civilians and wounded 240.

In 1975, I was approached to join the Church Committee of the U.S. Congress investigating CIA's attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro, Congo's Patrice Lumumba, Vietnam's Ngo Dinh Diem, and Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Add to America's hit list Saddam Hussein, Afghanistan's Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Indonesia's Sukarno, Chile's Marxist leaders and, very likely, Yasser Arafat.

Libya's Moammar Khadaffy led me by the hand through the ruins of his private quarters, showing me where a 2,000-pound U.S. bomb hit his bedroom, killing his infant daughter. Most Pakistanis believe, rightly or wrongly, the U.S. played a role in the assassination of President Zia ul-Haq.

To quote Josef Stalin's favourite saying, "No man. No problem."

Assassination was outlawed in the U.S. in 1976, but that did not stop attempts by its last three administrations to emulate Israel's Mossad in the "targeted killing" of enemies. The George W. Bush administration, and now the Obama White House, sidestepped American law by saying the U.S. was at war, and thus legally killing "enemy combatants." But Congress never declared war.

CHENEY'S SQUAD

Washington is buzzing about a secret death squad run by Dick Cheney when he was vice-president and his protege, the new U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Stanley McChrystal. This gung-ho general led the Pentagon's super secret Special Operations Command, which has become a major rival to the CIA in the business of "wet affairs" (as the KGB used to call assassinations) and covert raids.

Democrats are all over Cheney on the death squad issue, as are some Republicans -- in order to shield Bush. But the orders likely came from Bush, who bears ultimate responsibility.

Americans are now being deluged by sordid scandals from the Bush years about torture, kidnapping, brutal secret prisons, brainwashing, mass surveillance of American's phones, e-mail, and banking.

In 2001, as this column previously reported, U.S. Special Forces oversaw the murder at Dasht-e-Leili, Afghanistan, of thousands of captured Taliban fighters by Uzbek forces of the Communist warlord, Rashid Dostum.

CIA was paying Dostum, a notorious war criminal from the 1980s, millions to fight Taliban. Dostum is poised to become vice-president of the U.S.-installed government of President Hamid Karzai. Bush hushed up this major war crime.

America is hardly alone in trying to rub out enemies or those who thwart its designs. Britain's MI-6 and France's SDECE were notorious for sending out assassins. The late chief of SDECE told me how he had been ordered by then-president Francois Mitterrand to kill Libya's Khadaffy. Israel's hit teams are feared around the globe.

DISGRACE

History shows that state-directed murder is more often than not counterproductive and inevitably runs out of control, disgracing nations and organizations that practise it.

But U.S. assassins are still at work. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, U.S. drones are killing tribesmen almost daily. Over 90% are civilians. Americans have a curious notion that killing people from the air is not murder or even a crime, but somehow clean.

U.S. Predator attacks are illegal and violate U.S. and international law. Pakistan's government, against which no war has been declared, is not even asked permission or warned of the attacks.

Dropping 2,000-pound bombs on apartment buildings in Gaza or Predator raids on Pakistan's tribal territory are as much murder as exploding car bombs or suicide bombers.

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Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-1653.html>