

The Crimes of Barack Obama

by Dave Lindorff via gan - ICH *Wednesday, May 2 2012, 11:47pm*

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As we slog towards another vapid, largely meaningless exercise in pretend democracy with the selection of a new president and Congress this November, it is time to make it clear that the current president, elected four years ago by so many people with such inflated expectations, is a betrayer. We had hoped that Obama would act in progressive ways and keep his promises; however, as is clear today, Obama is not only a betrayer of those hopes, but is a serial violator of his oath of office. ***Obama is in truth a war criminal, easily the equal of his predecessor George W. Bush and perhaps even of Bush's regent, former Vice President, Dick Cheney.***



Let me count the ways:

* For starters, in vowing to “preserve, protect and defend the US Constitution of the United States,” President Obama, upon taking office, had a sacred obligation to prosecute the people who had gravely wounded that document prior to his assuming office. It was clear, as I wrote in my book *The Case for Impeachment: The Legal Argument for Removing President George W. Bush from Office* (St. Martin’s Press, 2006), that Bush and Cheney had ordered and condoned and covered up torture of captives in their so-called “War” on Terror, as well as in the very real wars against Iraq and Afghanistan, committing grievous war crimes that are not only violations of international law, but of the US Criminal Code, given that the US is a leading author and signatory of the Geneva Accords). They also were war criminals of the first degree for orchestrating, through lies to both the UN Security Council and the US Congress and the American people, about the alleged threat and imminence of any threat by Iraq to the US or its allies. President Obama, under the UN Charter and under US law, as the president, commander in chief and top law officer in the nation, was bound to investigate and prosecute those crimes. Instead, he ordered that there would be no prosecutions.

* A federal court also ruled that President Bush had committed a felony in using the National Security Agency and several complicit telecommunications companies to spy on massive numbers of Americans with no warrants. Again, instead of prosecuting the president once he replaced him, President Obama said there would be no prosecution, and he went on to expand that spying program exponentially, effectively shredding beyond recognition the Fourth Amendment against unreasonable searches and seizures, which had been a leading rallying issue for the revolutionists of 1776.

* President Obama, on his own initiative, has moved beyond the illegal wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, launching illegal wars against Libya, Yemen and Pakistan, largely through the use of American military aircraft, cruise missiles and especially pilotless drones.

In addition to being illegal acts of war against nations that pose no imminent threat to the US, these clear acts of war have caused vastly disproportionate civilian deaths -- reportedly as many as 40 civilians, including many children, are being killed by drone strikes inside Pakistan for each of the supposed targeted "terrorists." Just the disproportionality of such "collateral damage" is a heinous war crime, even leaving aside the illegality of such strikes being conducted by the US within the border of a sovereign nation not at war with the US.

* The president and his surrogates, including Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, have committed one of the gravest of crimes in the world, a Crime Against Peace under the UN Charter (which as a signed and Senate-ratified treaty is the law of the land under our Constitution), by threatening a war of aggression against the nation of Iran. Under the Charter's terms, it is the number one war crime to attack a nation that does not pose an imminent threat to the attacker, and a nearly equally grievous crime to threaten such a crime, as the president and his secretary of state have done on multiple occasions, warning Iran that "all options are on the table" should Iran not halt its (totally legal) nuclear fuel enrichment program. Beyond just words, the President as Commander in Chief has moved several fully armed, Tomahawk Cruise-missile-equipped aircraft battle groups to positions off the coast of Iran, sent squadrons of new F22 stealth fighter bombers to airfields directly across the Persian Gulf from Iran, and positioned troops and missile-equipped submarines in invasion-ready locations, as well as providing specialized bombs and refueling aerial tankers to Israel, which itself is preparing for an attack on Iran. Yet even the most hawkish Israeli and US military and intelligence experts concede that Iran is years away from having an operational nuclear weapon even if it were to begin a bomb-development program, which there is no evidence of at present. Obama has already ordered an ongoing campaign of terrorist attacks and bombings inside of Iran, which has led to the deaths of many Iranians, including civilians.

* President George W. Bush committed an impeachable crime when he had Jose Padilla, an American citizen born in New York, arrested, held without charge on a military base in South Carolina a for years and tortured mercilessly to the point of madness, before he was finally ordered released to a civilian prison where he faced trial in a civilian court. But President Obama has moved well beyond that travesty by issuing, in April 2010, and then acting on an Executive Order that he claims allows him, on his sole authority, to declare American citizens to be "terrorists" and to have them killed anywhere in the world. Under this clearly unconstitutional order, there is no trial, no judicial ruling. Just an execution order. At least two citizens have been killed in this way, including the wholly innocent young son of an American-born target, Anwar al-Awlaki, killed by a Predator drone in Yemen. President Obama has also, short of killing them, signed an order authorizing the arrest and secret detention indefinitely of American citizens, again on his own authority, without trial or legal recourse.

* He has also continued to claim the right to rendition and to torture captives that he on his own authority declares to be terrorists.

* President Obama, as president, is responsible for a program organized out of his Department of Homeland Security last year, to coordinate and help finance a nationwide violent crackdown on the Occupy Movement which swept the country in a wave of popular anger at the crimes of the US financial industry and the massive corruption of the political process. Hundreds if not thousands of people who were peacefully exercising their First Amendment rights to assemble, speak and seek redress were battered, shot, gassed, pepper-sprayed, beaten, arrested and jailed by local, state and

sometimes federal police urged on by the central government's internal security agencies. Participants in these legitimate protests have been photographed, investigated, spied on, subjected to the deceptions of agents provocateurs, and now are in data bases in federal, state and local computer systems, where they are classified as national security threats, making a mockery of the claim that America is still a free, democratic society.

* As a special category of crime, this repression, orchestrated by the White House through its Homeland Security (sic) and Justice (sic) Departments, targeted the press, with clearly identified reporters, even including those from major corporate news organizations, being subjected to arrest, having their cameras snatched or destroyed, or at a minimum being forcibly removed from the scene of repressive police actions against demonstrators.

* The president, initially lying to the American public about the goals of the raid, ordered the slaying -- not the capture -- of Osama Bin Laden, the alleged mastermind behind the 9-11 attacks on the World Trade Center Towers and the Pentagon in 2001, thus continuing the cover-up of the truth about that event which precipitated the current crisis of American democracy. With Bin Laden located and easily trapped within his compound in Pakistan, the president sent a US Navy Seal team in under cloak of night with the express goal of killing Bin Laden, thereby assuring that he would never be interrogated or put on the stand where he could potentially have revealed what really happened on 9-11, who knew about the plans, and how he was able to pull off such an improbable attack on the most powerful nation in the history of the world.

* Corruption: There is so much corruption in this administration that it can hardly be tallied up. There is clear evidence that officials appointed by the administration from the banking industry, including Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, presidential economic advisor Lawrence Summers, and "Jobs Czar" Jeffrey Immelt, are guilty of frauds, crimes and coverups in the financial crisis that since 2008 have allowed them and their financial industry patrons and compatriots to steal literally trillions of dollars from American citizens and the US treasury. Only criminal prosecutions or a no-holds-barred Congressional investigation could lay out these crimes, but neither is remotely likely. There is similar corruption, on a smaller scale in dollars, but perhaps more devastating in its long-term impact, in the Education Department, where the private charter school industry is gradually taking over education policy with the connivance of Obama Education Secretary Arne Duncan.

* President Obama has violated the Posse Comitatus Act barring the use of federal troops on American soil, creating a domestic military command and using federal troops to bar the media and environmental activists from inspecting the damage from the BP Gulf oil spill, and later helping to try to break a strike at port facilities at Pacific coast ports by the International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union.

* There has been an abject failure by President Obama to protect the United States from the terrible looming threat of climate change. Although his own Pentagon has declared that climate change poses far greater threats to US national security than terrorism, the president has over four years in office not only done almost nothing to try and combat this threat; he has actively undermined diplomatic efforts to achieve some kind of international coordinated action, even punishing those countries, like Bolivia and the Maldives, that have sought to do something concrete, and has adopted policies domestically, like approving more offshore oil drilling in the Arctic Ocean, that only make the crisis worse.

When I was writing my book about the impeachable crimes of the Bush/Cheney administration, there was at least a hope that Congress, then in the hands of the Democratic Party, might actually act and impanel an Impeachment Committee in the House. In the end, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)

nixed that idea and strong-armed Rep. John Conyers (D-MI) into never seriously investigating that administration's crimes, much less impaneling an impeachment committee.

I have no illusions that the current even more craven and spineless Congress, even with the House in the hands of Republicans, would seek to impeach this president. Indeed, many of the crimes listed above involve activities that the Republicans in Congress themselves actively support and are thus also guilty of, such as threatening Iran with war, supporting the ongoing theft of the nation's wealth by the financial industry, or ignoring the threat of climate change.

It is nonetheless important, I believe, to publicly announce this bill of particulars, so that it is clear that we continue in the United States to be led by a gang of thieves and sociopaths.

The election of 2008 proved yet again that voting in the US is simply for show, at least as long as the public continues to be suckered into accepting the fake limitation of choice to the two parties, which actually compete only for the right to the patronage and financial spoils that come with winning. The real politics must be in our communities and in the street.

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