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## Break the CIA in Two

By Ray McGovern

After the CIA-led fiasco at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961, President John Kennedy was quoted as saying he wanted to "splinter the CIA into a thousand pieces and scatter it into the winds." I can understand his anger, but a thousand is probably too many.

Better is a Solomon solution; divide the CIA in two. That way we can throw out the bath water and keep the baby.

Covert action and analysis do not belong together in the same agency—never have, never will. That these two very different tasks were thrown together is an accident of history, one that it is high time to acknowledge and to fix.

The effects of this structural fault became clear to President Harry Truman as he watched the agency at work in its first decade and a half. He was aghast.

Like oil on water, covert action fouls the wellspring of objective analysis—the main task for which Truman and the Congress established the CIA in 1947. The operational tail started wagging the substantive tail almost right away. It has done so ever since—with very unfortunate consequences.

An accident of history? How so?

Covert action practitioners, many of whom showed great courage and imagination in the European and Far Eastern theaters of World War II arrived home wondering whether there was still a call for their expertise. With the Soviet Union taking over large chunks of Europe and the KGB plying its covert-action wares worldwide, the question answered itself; a counter capability was needed.

The big mistake was shoehorning it into an agency being created to fulfill an entirely different mission. As former CIA senior analyst Mel Goodman points out in his most recent book, *Failure of Intelligence*, there was uncertainty and confusion over where to place responsibility for this capability.

The term "covert action" is a euphemism covering the broad genus of dirty tricks, from overthrowing governments (we now blithely call that particular species "regime change") to open but nonattributable broadcasting into denied areas.

Secretary of Defense James Forrestal didn't want the Pentagon to be responsible for covert action in peacetime. And, to their credit, neither did senior leaders of the fledgling CIA. They were no neophytes, and could see that covert operations might easily end up tainting the intelligence product if one Director were responsible for the two incompatible activities.

The experience of the past 62 years has showed, time and time again, that their concern was well founded, as the covert action side has not only polluted substantive analysis but also expanded into high-tech warfare.

### ***Predators***

Trying to overthrow governments via covert action is one thing. Flying Predator drones with Hellfire missiles is quite another. There would be real hellfire on that from Harry Truman, were he still with us.

Even former CIA Director George Tenet of flexible conscience had second thoughts about the CIA assuming responsibility for flying the Predator and firing Hellfires. In his memoir, *At the Center of the Storm*, he writes that there was a "legitimate question about whether aircraft firing missiles...should be the function of the military or CIA." Resorting to the all-purpose catch-all (and excuse-all), Tenet adds, "But that was before 9/11."

Of equal importance is the kind of question to which Tenet normally paid little heed; namely, what would flying Predators do to CIA credibility.

Think about it for a minute. You are ordered and given funding to conduct Predator attacks on "suspected al-Qaeda bases" in Pakistan. (Our armed forces cannot do it since the Pentagon is not supposed to be striking countries with whom we are not at war.) You salute, find some contractors to help, and conduct those attacks.

The President then asks his CIA morning briefer about the effectiveness of the drone attacks, including the longer-term political as well as military effects. When the briefer checks with the substantive analysts watching Pakistan, he learns that the attacks are very effective—indeed, the very best recruitment tool Osama bin Laden and the Taliban could imagine. Jihadists are flocking to Pakistan and Afghanistan like moths to a light blub.

Problem. Do you think mealy-mouthed CIA Director Leon Panetta will have the courage to whisper that unwelcome finding to the President? Suppose Gen. David Petraeus or Gen. Stanley McChrystal found out.

### ***No NIE on Af-Pak***

The proof is in the pudding. Were not Panetta a self-described "creature of the Congress" (be wise, compromise), he would have long since ordered up a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on prospects for Afghanistan AND—far more important—Pakistan,

Would you believe that at this stage there is still no such NIE?

And the reason Panetta and his managers are keeping their heads way down is the same reason former CIA Director George Tenet for years shied away from doing an NIE on whether Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. The findings would smell like skunks at a picnic.

It was only after Sen. Bob Graham, then-Chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, told the White House in September 2002, "No National Intelligence Estimate, no congressional vote on war with Iraq," that Tenet was ordered by the White House to commission an NIE with pre-ordained conclusions.

That NIE was to be completed in record time (less than three weeks), in order to emerge several weeks before the mid-term elections and it was to reflect the alarmist views expressed by Vice President Dick Cheney in a major speech on August 26, 2002.

In Tenet's memoir he admits that Cheney "went well beyond what our analysis could support." But never mind; Tenet and his lieutenants had become quite accomplished in cooking intelligence to order. And so they did.

Like Cheney's speech, the Estimate was wrong on every major count—deliberately so. At the conclusion of an exhaustive investigation by the Senate Intelligence Committee, Sen. Jay Rockefeller, Chair from 2007 to 2009, bemoaned the fact that the Bush/Cheney administration "presented intelligence as fact when in reality it was unsubstantiated, contradicted, or even non-existent."

Non-existent? You mean fabricated or forged? With the advent of the George W. Bush administration we had learned about "faith-based intelligence," but the mind boggles at the use of "non-existent" intelligence.

### ***What Harry Would Did Say***

For those of you who may have forgotten, today (Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup>> is the 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the most important op-ed of all the 381,659 written about the CIA since its founding. Do not feel bad if you missed it; the op-ed garnered little attention—either at the time or subsequently.

The draft came from Independence, Missouri and was published in the *Washington Post* early edition on Dec. 22, 1963.

(<http://www.maebrussell.com/Prouty/Harry%20Truman%27s%20CIA%20article.html>) The first and the last two sentences of Harry Truman's unusual contribution bear repeating:

*"I think it has become necessary to take another look at the purpose and operations of our Central Intelligence Agency....*

*"We have grown up as a nation, respected for our free institutions and for our ability to maintain a free and open society. There is something about the way the CIA has been functioning that is casting a shadow over our historic position and I feel that \ve need to correct it."*

Truman began by describing what he saw as CIA's *raison d'etre*, emphasizing that a President needs "the most accurate and up-to-the-minute information on what is going on everywhere in the world, and particularly of the trends and developments in all the danger spots."

He stressed that he wanted to create a "special kind of an intelligence facility" charged with the collection of "all intelligence reports from every available source, and to have these reports reach

me as President without 'treatment' or interpretations" by departments that have their own agendas.

### ***A Warning***

The "most important thing," he said, "was to guard against the chance of intelligence being used to influence or to lead the President into unwise decisions." It is a safe bet that Truman had uppermost in mind how senior CIA officials tried to mousetrap President John Kennedy into committing U.S. armed forces to attack Cuba, rather than to sit by and let Fidel Castro's troops kill or capture the rag-tag band of CIA-trained invaders at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961.

The operation was a disaster, pure and simple. Truman was no doubt aware of how Kennedy initially gave the go-ahead to a CIA plan that had been approved by President Dwight Eisenhower; how the new President belatedly saw the trap; and how he had the courage to face down the tricksters and then take responsibility for the consequences that came of having trusted them.

Still, Kennedy did not feel he could follow his instinct to "splinter the CIA into a thousand pieces and scatter it into the winds." Instead, he fired CIA Director Allen Dulles, a quintessential Establishment figure—something one does at one's peril. Allen Dulles later played a key role in selecting those who were allowed to testify before the Warren Commission on the JFK assassination, and in shaping its highly questionable findings. In *JFK and the Unspeakable*, author James Douglass adduces persuasive evidence that some of Dulles' old buddies were involved in the murder of President Kennedy.

It may be just coincidence that President Truman chose to publish his CIA op-ed exactly one month after Kennedy was killed, but it seems equally possible that he deliberately chose that first monthiversary.

### ***"Disturbed" at CIA Operational Role***

In his Dec. 22, 1963 op-ed, Trurnan addresses the structural fault alluded to above:

*"For some time I have been disturbed by the way CIA has been diverted from its original assignment [collection, analysis, and reporting]. It has become an operational and at times a policy-making arm of the Government. This has led to trouble and may have compounded our difficulties in several explosive areas ...*

*"Some of the complications and embarrassment I think we have experienced are in part attributable to the fact that this quiet intelligence arm of the President has been so removed from its intended role that it is being interpreted as a symbol of sinister and mysterious foreign intrigue..."*

*"The last thing we needed was for the CIA to be seized upon as something akin to a subverting influence in the affairs of other people."*

Think Iran. In early 1963 when I began work at the CIA it had been almost a decade since the overthrow of the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran, Mohammed Mosaddeq in August 1953. The joint CIA and British intelligence "Operation Ajax" was cited proudly as a singularly successful covert action operation.

Just before electing Mosaddeq in 1951, the Iranian Parliament had nationalized Iran's oil industry, which until then had been controlled exclusively by the British government-controlled Anglo-Iranian Oil Company—Britain's largest overseas investment at the time.

Unfortunately for Britain, there were upstarts in Iran ("militants," in today's parlance) who made bold to think that Iranians should be able to profit from the vast oil reserves in Iran. Winston Churchill asked Truman to order the fledgling CIA to join the British service, MI-6, in arranging a coup. Truman said No. (I can imagine him saying. Hell, No!)

Truman's successor, Dwight Eisenhower, however, said Yes. And the coup that Eisenhower approved goes a long way toward explaining why the Iranians don't much like us. After throwing out Mosaddeq and bringing in the Shah, the Iranian people suffered untold horrors at the hands of SAVAK, the Shah's notorious secret police.

Every Iranian knew/knows that the CIA and MI-6 did what the British would call a "brilliant" job training SAVAK. Many students of Iran believe that it was SAVAK's widespread and widely known torture, as much as Ayatollah Khomeini's charisma, that brought revolution and dumped the Shah in 1979.

### *And the Oil?*

And who got control of the oil? That seems always to be the question, doesn't it?

The Shah let the US and UK split 80 percent of control, with the rest going to French and Dutch interests. The Shah got 50 percent of the revenues. When the Shah and SAVAK became history, the new Iranian government took control of the oil. Today, there is scant applause among thinking people for the "singularly successful" U.S.-U.K.-sponsored coup in Iran.

The same goes for the CIA-run coup in Guatemala the following year. American media initially sold both operations as victories over leftist leaning governments vulnerable to Communist blandishments.

It was about really oil in Iran, as it was about land claimed by the United Fruit Company in Guatemala. But the kind of suffering in store for the people of both countries was the same.

Having learned from the British how this kind of thing is done, CIA operatives were ready to try out their newly acquired skills and succeeded in overthrowing the government of Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, who had been elected President in 1950 with 65 percent of the vote.

His offense was giving land to the peasants—unfarmed land that private corporations earlier had set aside for themselves. The United Fruit Company was allergic to real land reform in Guatemala and lobbied hard for Washington to remove Arbenz.

The Dulles brothers, Allen and John Foster, who happened to be shareholders of the United Fruit Company, took the line that Arbenz' actions smacked of "Communism." Then-CIA Director Allen Dulles stoked fears by describing Guatemala as a "Soviet beachhead in the Western hemisphere."

The overthrow of Arbenz in 1954 made Guatemala safe for United Fruit, but not for democracy. The coup ended a hopeful decade-long experiment with representative democracy known as the "Ten Years of Spring." The outcome's implications for democracy in Central American were immense.

Other examples could be adduced, but let us stop here with the two with which Harry Truman would have been most familiar—from a statecraft point of view. (I doubt that he held stock in either Big Oil or United Fruit.)

At the end of his op-ed, Truman puts his conclusion right out there with characteristic straightforwardness:

*"I, therefore, would like to see the CIA be restored to its original assignment as the intelligence arm of the President...and that its operational duties be terminated or properly used elsewhere."*

### ***Media Un-Reaction***

A blockbuster op-ed, no?

Well, no. Investigator Raymond Marcus is among those struck by the curious lack of response—one might say embargo—regarding Truman's *Washington Post* article. Marcus has written:

*"According to my information, it was not carried in later editions that day, nor commented on editorially, nor picked up by any other major newspaper, or mentioned in any national radio or TV broadcast."*

What are we to make of this? Was/is it the case, as former CIA Director William Colby is quoted as saying in a different connection, that the CIA "owns everyone of any significance in the major media?" Or at least that it did in the Sixties? How much truth lies beneath Colby's hyperbole?

Did the CIA and its White House patrons put out the word to squelch a former President's op-ed already published in an early edition of the *Post*? Or is there a simpler explanation. Do any of you readers perhaps know?

The tradecraft term of art for a "cooperating" journalist, businessperson, or academic is "agent of influence." Some housebroken journalists have previously worked for the CIA. Some take such

scrupulous notes that they end up sounding dangerously close to their confidential government sources.

Think back, for example, to those vengeful days in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, and the macho approach being modeled by President Bush and aped down the line by CIA operatives and their "agents of influence."

CIA operative Gary Schroen told National Public Radio that, just days after 9/11, counterterrorism chief Cofer Black sent him to Afghanistan with orders to "Capture bin Laden, kill him, and bring his head back in a box on dry ice." As for other al Qaeda leaders, Black reportedly said, "I want their heads up on pikes."

This quaint tone—and language—reverberated among Bush-friendly pundits. One consummate insider, *Washington Post* veteran Jim Hoagland went a bit overboard in publishing a letter to President Bush on Oct. 31, 2001. It was no Halloween prank. Rather, Hoagland strongly endorsed what he termed the "wish" for "Osama bin Laden's head on a pike," which he claimed was the objective of Bush's "generals and diplomats."

At the same time, there are dangers in sharing too much information with pet insider/outsideers. In his open letter to Bush, Hoagland lifted the curtain on the actual neoconservative game plan by giving Bush the following ordering of priorities.

*"The need to deal with Iraq's continuing accumulation of biological and chemical weapons and the technology to build a nuclear bomb can in no way be lessened by the demands of the Afghan campaign. You must conduct that campaign so that you can pivot quickly from it to end the threat Saddam Hussein's regime poses."*

Thus, Hoagland surfaced the "pivot" plan three weeks before Donald Rumsfeld called Gen. Tommy Franks to tell him the President wanted him to shift focus to Iraq. Franks and his senior aides had been working on plans for attacks on Tora Bora where bin Laden was believed to be hiding, but attention, planning, and resources were abruptly diverted toward Iraq. And Osama bin Laden walked out of Tora Bora through the mountain passes to Pakistan, according to a recent Senate Foreign Relations Committee report.

The point here is that some media favorites are extremely well briefed partly because they are careful not bite the hands that feed them by criticizing the CIA. Still less are they inclined to point out basic structural faults—not to mention the crimes of recent years. So it is up to those of us who know something about intelligence and how structural faults, above-the-law mentality, and flexible consciences can spell disaster.

### ***Split Up the Agency***

Here's what should be done.

Expunge the one sentence in the National Security Act of 1947 that gives a President wide latitude to direct the CIA to perform "other such functions and duties related to intelligence."

Make it crystal clear that the sense conveyed by that sentence, whether the sentence itself stays in or is deleted, cannot authorize activities that violate international or U.S. criminal law—crimes like kidnapping and torture.

"Other such functions and duties?" What was meant by this wording were activities additional to what President Truman describes in his op-ed as the "original assignment" of the CIA—a central place with access to all collection that enables analysts to advise the President with candor, without department "treatment" or interpretations, and not sparing him "unpleasant facts" so as not to "upset" him.

As Truman himself suggests, terminate "other such functions and duties" or put those operations elsewhere.

And imagine into existence different, effective ways to exercise oversight, not totally dependent on the highly politicized "overlook" committees of the Congress.

That done, there will still be a baby NOT to be thrown out with the bath water.

The good news is that there remains a core of analysts willing and able to seek truth and speak truth to power. This was shown in 2007, when Tom Fingar, a senior analyst with integrity and courage, led to conclusion a National Intelligence Estimate that helped prevent the attack that Dick Cheney, the neoconservatives, and Israel were planning on Iran.

That NIE assessed with high confidence that Iran had ceased working on the warhead-related part of its nuclear program in the fall of 2003—a judgment that holds to this day, however unpopular and unwelcome it may be among those who would have the President give Israel carte blanche to strike Iran's nuclear facilities.

That is the capability Truman wanted—the baby that must be rescued and reared. But the baby is still in danger.

With Tom Fingar now retired, the absence of an NIE on Afghanistan/Pakistan speaks volumes about the timidity that persists within the hierarchy of the CIA and the intelligence community. It boggles the mind that, amid all the assessment and reassessment prior to the President's decision to escalate by sending 30,000 more troops, no policy maker or congressional leader wanted to know what the 16 agencies of the intelligence community were thinking. Or did the White House make it clear to those interested that it would be better not to ask?

### *Gloom Avoidance*

Gen. Petraeus and Gen. McChrystal are not interested in CIA analysis, just CIA drones (the aircraft). Sources inside the intelligence community tell us that they assess the prospects for success of the generals' approach as very low, but that this word does not seem to be getting to the President.



It is not entirely clear whether it is a case of Panetta being reluctant to relay to Obama the kind of "unpleasant facts" or "bad news" that Truman wanted the CIA to give him in a straightforward way, or that Obama himself has discouraged such truth seeking/telling lest the abysmal prognosis of the analysts leak and complicate his Faustian bargain with the top brass—and cause even more political damage in his dissatisfied Democratic "base."

As things get still worse in "Af-Pak"—and they will—it will be important for Obama to have a group of analysts able to give him an objective read on the quagmire into which his benighted policies have led, and how he might attempt to pull himself and U.S. troops out. Perhaps then he will ask.

So save that baby. Throw out the other one with the bathwater.