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Obama's Crown Jewels

by NORMAN POLLACK

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Would you buy a used car from this man? If the maker happens to be Constitution Motors, model “Rule of Law,” with accessories including habeas-corpus rights, right of counsel, speedy trial, then, after kicking the tires, you might want to apply the Guantanamo Test, in which case, you find the doctrine of indefinite detention, solitary confinement, and, while languishing, perhaps a night of torture, sleep deprivation, brain washing—all in all, *that's* one car, given the wear and tear, the deceptive warranty, the recklessness of the owner, one would want to stay away from, and begin looking for a more honest value. On the same lot, a sleek beauty from Drone Motors, already armed as part of the original equipment, and handled with great care, the driver somehow sitting 8,000 miles away, a car having one, and only one, purpose—to *kill*, and therefore listed by Consumers Report as a good buy, if that were the new owner's purpose. Our shopper, however, has a mild distaste for that sort of thing, having already been disappointed in the previous maker's “Rule of Law,” concerned, no doubt, about the low resale value when, what is hoped for a vehicle, it contributes to a sense of well-being for the owner and his family. But now, on to the third, from Surveillance Motors, practically invisible, as though a mirage, a car, unlike any in automotive history, produced without advertising, all known test results classified by the management, and, in truth, so shoddy as to violate every law in the book (except those laws, such as FISA, designed to protect it and give it the air of legality) and therefore appealing solely to criminal types.

This last model, especially its twotone coupe, aptly named the Nondisclosure Provision, can be counted on to turn heads (or, metaphorically, of course, chop them off, leaving no untoward

trace), and is all the rage among government procurement officers. It comes equipped with the latest in gadgetry to ensure an entertainment center designed to please the most discriminating taste, with universal access to every conceivable channel known to human communication. Tune in (only competitors dare call this “spying”) to private conversations, and, if lucky, pillow talk, globally, thereby enriching one’s sense of humanity at the same time knowing the FISA Court gives you full legal right to eavesdrop. The coupe improves on all earlier models, such as the McCarthyism, still a collector’s item, because it conjures up a threat called terrorism that is far more sinister, menacing, and widespread than Communism, only to lash it to pieces by the help of the new service centers, known as CIA and JSOC, and with the approval of the firm’s CEO, in not-so-extreme cases, an ongoing marketing campaign of paramilitary operations, including licensing assassination, while, with bigger fish to fry, a strategy of confrontation (e.g., the “pivot” or Pacific-first strategy to contain and isolate China) calling for the massive deployment of naval and air power into the new territory to be opened. Nondisclosure, at your dealers now, with a careful warranty that balances domestic thought-and-social control with the promise that the benign company has only its customers’ interests at heart, is currently the product of press revelations, ones hinting that this, along with the other models, beckons all to a glorious future in the National-Security (aka Surveillance) State.

Not surprisingly, these automotive offerings are designed to be sold, primarily, to the power hungry, who have only contempt for the law, as they speed from one intervention to another, attracted to the models’ rakish design, fusing militarism and domestic repression (as in the two-tonedness of the coupe), and its extravagant price tag, in this case, up to \$100B for nuclear modernization, missile defense systems, and retrofitted aircraft to carry the weapons, and even larger amounts for wars, occupations, worldwide bases, mercenaries, and the usual accoutrements for national security. We should thrill to, and take pride in, the humongous sums, coming directly out of domestic needs (thus instilling in the citizenry—customers all—noble sentiments of austerity and self-sacrifice), approaching if not exceeding \$1T (as in trillion). As used cars, they carry the pedigrees of previous use, as in Vietnam and research and development in regime change, tested from Cuba and Chile (notably successful, with Pinochet, the new executive on board to all three companies) to Iran and other testing grounds, should rival companies (aka alternative modes of development and/or challenges to US financial and business hegemony) try to spring up.

Fortunately, forces of authoritarianism, possessing majority ownership in all three, have found their joint supersalesman, who converts counterterrorism into counterrevolution and the clear makings of a domestic Police State, in short, a free market for their products—lawlessness, assassination, and spying on the customer base—proudly decked out in liberal/progressive dress, snake-oil charm (to some), and a record of networking which takes him into the inner circles of Wall Street, the CIA, and the “defense” industries. And why not, for he promises them global markets, political-military hegemony, and blood-letting sufficient to satisfy the most psychopathic drivers on the road. His name may be familiar, Obama, but his record has been skillfully falsified to cover up the very results these models were intended to achieve, and to which the customer base turns a blind eye: a consistent policy framework promotive of inequality, social deprivation, and massive wealth-accumulation to the stockholders. With scare-tactics abounding, such that wrecking the Constitution, reducing America’s “enemies” to blood spats or specks of dust, and mounting a campaign to dismantle safeguards to, and perhaps the

idea of, *privacy*, all publicised and sold as essential to The Protection of the Homeland, one can look forward to the breaking of new sales records, equally shared, harbinging a new era, which is nicely put as: liberal humanitarian fascism.

I include below my four Comments to the *New Yorks Times* (June 5-8) in response to revelations about government programs of surveillance, each self-explanatory—and consecutively written—for those familiar with the paper’s themes and coverage on this significant issue. Their importance to me is as germinating soil for ideas which then find a place, as now, in the article. More than addenda, they contain a specificity of criticism from which further elaboration and the fleshing out of implications become possible. At this writing, Obama is meeting with the Chinese president to discuss cyberwarfare, as meanwhile he actively conducts cyberware against the American people. The fourth Comment in this series is fuller than NYT’s space limitations allow:

I

The Times finally stirs, after blindly supporting Obama these many years. Consider your heritage: A.O.S. [Arthur O. Sulzberger] and publication of The Pentagon Papers. Yet you still compartment the issues, making civil liberties merely one area, instead of seeing it as integrated with the whole of public policy.

Obama is a menace to freedom. Period. What you protest against here has its immediate parallels in the doctrine and practice of indefinite detention, denial of habeas corpus to detainees, the very gruesome act of targeted assassination (a self-evident war crime), and yet you fiddle while America burns, by upholding the fiction that because Republicans are so bad Obama must therefore be good.

Stand up for press freedom (as by and large you do), but also stand up for freedom that extends further: the right to have transparent government, rule of law punctiliously observed, effective regulation, a vital social safety net, and protection of the environment—NONE of which the Obama administration has done.

II

Expressions of outrage are simply not enough. We should have seen this coming, even from the early months of the First Term. Obama is a danger to civil liberties. He shows contempt for the Constitution from numerous angles, perhaps beginning with unctuous remarks about transparency, and then proceeding to throw a mantle of secrecy around government like not seen before in peacetime. Overclassification of documents is a deliberate attempt to cover up illegal and criminal activity which cannot stand the light of day. Indeed, Obama’s obsession with secrecy reveals an unstable, desperate personality, fearful not only of discovery of real and potential war crimes, but also of self-discovery, that beneath the “cool” exterior is one unduly attracted to power, to the point of being unscrupulous both in gathering and using it.

Hiding behind legislation is a shabby pretext for surveillance because Congress is itself complicit in constitutional violations. The very fact of refusing to make public the legal memos

presumably validates the kinds of surveillance now uncovered, a refusal also about targeted assassination, which gives Obama no leg to stand on—and today’s denials should be taken for what they are: damage control, obfuscation, worse, deceit. How can America tolerate a POTUS whose preference lies in assassination? Liberals and progressives—the sad state of radicalism in America—enjoy being walked over, lied to, betrayed at every turn, and then come back for more.

III

Laws are not necessarily lawful. Using FISA and/or hiding behind nondisclosure and other secretive procedures mocks the rule of law itself. Obama has soiled the Constitution he was sworn to uphold. This is worse than McCarthyism because more sweeping in intent and possessing the technological means for conducting surveillance.

Civil liberties is a paramount issue of democracy—failure there makes one wary of failure on other fronts, including US interventions, massive military expenditures, regulatory lacunae, wide differentials in wealth and power, and yes, Guantanamo, Espionage Act prosecutions, etc., which although pertinent to civil liberties also strike a more disturbing note: the fascistic tendencies of the administration.

IV

This gets worse by the minute. “Domestic spying activity,” far worse than Watergate, and, given its scope the actors involved, NSA, DOJ, and yes, POTUS (all, despite careful attempts to squirm out of accountability), should send massive waves of indignation through society—*yet has not*. Why? In fact, the DOJ April court filing, on expanding the scope of these activities, and nailing down the no-disclosure provision, while conveniently leaving Obama and Holder unmentioned, should be a warning of the looming threat to American liberties. The recent IRS affair is a tempest in a teapot compared with what Obama-Holder-NSA-DOJ-FBI-CIA have shown to be overt neofascist actions, tendencies, and tactics.

Kudos to The Times for defending press freedoms. But you still do not confront, and probably never shall confront, Obama *head-on*, or, despite your justified concern, Congress itself, which willingly turns a blind eye to illegalities, even war crimes, as in targeted assassination, commissioned and/or committed by the Obama administration. For when you refer to “limit[ing] the collection of call records and the monitoring of Internet traffic to that of people suspected of terrorism,” you fall right back into the trap Obama-Holder has set for you: that of being stampeded by cries of national security and protecting the Homeland against terrorist attacks. Therefore, silence; just as Congress has also maintained silence—the only difference being Congress tacitly approves, by a bipartisan majority, the need for knuckling under to administration pressure and your editorial cautiously—too cautiously—does not. How long until the “people suspected of terrorism” includes Obama’s critics, or critics of assassination, or critics of B61-12, or critics of secrecy and nondisclosure rules?

Time is running out. As a principal defender of press freedom, The Times should take off the editorial gloves, stop its obeisance to the lesser-of-two evils mindset, and expose Obama, *in every realm of public policy*, for betraying the principles that got him elected.

