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War, Repression and International Gangsterism: U.S. State Policy From Benghazi to Baltimore

By Ajamu Baraka
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A mere two months after clashes between black youth and police in Baltimore following the murder of Freddie Gray while in police custody, President Obama's Department of Justice (DOJ) announced the indictment of twenty-four year old Raymon Carter for his alleged involvement in

the torching of a CVS pharmacy. The national government's intervention into the case had an unmistakable message – if you engage in “unauthorized” forms of resistance – in this case, crimes against property – expect to confront the full power of the national government.

U.S. Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein made it even clearer: “Anyone in the future who participates in a ‘riot’ should know that police, prosecutors and citizens will track them down and send them to prison.”

This aggressive and speedy move on the part of the DOJ to criminalize poor, black kids in Baltimore differed sharply from the DOJ approach to high government officials, armed servants of the state at the local level and the big banks and investment firms. For the officials involved in torture under the Bush Administration, the financial gangsters who engineered the 2008 economic crisis, and the killer cops across the country who have yet to experience *one* indictment from Obama's DOJ after months of “investigations,” DOJ-granted impunity has been the operative principle in practice.

But Obama's DOJ has not been the only state institution involved in providing cover and impunity for repression and criminality in the service of the capitalist oligarchy.

Impunity for State Terrorism: the Real Story of Benghazi

What might seem oppositional and important in the game of U.S. politics is usually insignificant and diversionary. Hillary Clinton's appearance before the House Select Committee, ostensibly established to conduct a bi-partisan investigation into the events that led to the death of Christopher Stevens and three other U.S. citizens on September 11, 2012, was a case in point.

Despite the supposed acrimony between the two ruling class parties in Congress, an ideological consensus exists around the overall strategic commitment to maintain U.S. global dominance. On that ultimate objective both corporate parties share an interest in shifting public attention away from state policies and actions that demonstrate the state's absolute commitment to the principle of “by any means necessary” for maintaining and advancing the interests of the White supremacist, patriarchal, colonial/capitalist order.

For example, initially the Republican majority's decision to launch another investigation into the events of 2012 was met with a considerable amount of consternation on the part of some democrats who saw the investigation as just another effort to sabotage Clinton's run for the Presidency. However, when the republicans settled on the issue of Clinton's emails the democrats were concerned that Clinton's use of a private server might cause some embarrassment for her candidacy, but it was also clear that the hearings were going to be rigged and the real questions related to Benghazi would never be raised.

If the House Committee had really been committed to public accountability and surfacing the truth, there were a number of questions that could have been raised such as: 1) what was the role of the facility that was attacked? Was it a U.S. Consulate, a CIA facility or some other entity? 2) Why were those facilities set up so quickly even before a stable government was established in the aftermath of the destruction of the Libyan state? 3) Why were there estimated to be more

than twenty CIA personnel on the ground in Benghazi just miles from the facility on the night of the attack and what was the mission of those CIA personnel? And 4) Why did the U.S. government contract with an organization to provide security for the facility that had clear ties to Jihadist groups that the U.S. considered as part of the international terrorist networks?

These kinds of questions that would have delved into U.S. involvement in Libya were not raised for two reasons: 1) The Syrian issue – Congress didn't want the public to focus too much attention on the question of the timeline of U.S. involvement. Although many right-wing republicans were upset that the Obama administration was not more aggressive with more open and direct support for its regime change strategy, everyone in Congress knows that the narrative of reluctant and recent involvement on the part of the Obama administration in the events in Syria is pure fiction. And 2) elements in congress and the Obama administration, with the full collaboration of the corporate press, have suppressed the facts around the mission of the CIA and the role of the State Department in Libya during the period leading to the attack on the two compounds because those activities contravened both U.S. and international law.

Investigative journalist Seymore Hersh revealed that a classified annex to a report prepared by the Senate Intelligence Committee on Benghazi that was not made public, discussed a secret agreement made in early 2012 between the Obama and Erdogan administration in Turkey to run an arms supply line from Libya using arms secured with the overthrow of the Libya state to the so-called rebel forces in Syria. The operation was run by CIA director David Petraeus, and the elements that received support included jihadist groups, including the Al Nusrah Front, al-Qaeda's official Syrian affiliate.

So even though information on the real role of the U.S. in the war in Syria is getting more coverage, the elites in Congress and the Administration were still not interested in calling too much attention to the fact that the U.S. provided material support to groups that it defined as terrorists which technically under U.S. law should have made that assistance prosecutable.

Vice President Joe Biden even stated publically that governments allied with the U.S. and their nationals were supplying arms to elements that they knew were terrorists and U.S. officials knew it:

“They poured hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of tons of weapons into anyone who would fight against Assad. Except that the people who were being supplied were al-Nusra and al-Qaeda and the extremist elements of jihadist coming from other parts of the world. “

Yet not one of these individuals or government officials, many who travel on a regular basis to the U.S. and other Western nations have been charged or had sanctions applied to them. In fact, in a pathetic and disingenuous comment, Biden claims that even though it was pointed out to those states by U.S. officials that their support was going to extremist jihadists forces – “We could not convince our colleagues to stop supplying them.”

Obviously for the Obama Administration charging them, freezing their bank accounts, slapping sanctions on the government as was done with the governments and individuals in Iran and Russia was out of the question.

This is why for anyone whose vision is not distorted by the myopia of white supremacist, capitalist ideology, the crude class politics of the DOJ's decision to prosecute the young resisters in Baltimore is so outrageous.

Benghazi is only a symptom of a pattern of criminal activity on the part of U.S. officials from both parties. From the illegal attacks on Iraq and Libya, subversion in Syria and Venezuela, surveillance, police state repression and mass incarceration domestically, coups in Honduras and Haiti, support for genocide in Yemen, and the continued occupation of Palestine, it is clear that what unites the elites of both parties is their unshakable commitment to maintaining the power of the U.S./EU/NATO axis of domination as the institutional expressions of concentrated white power for as long as possible.

In the meantime, Raymon Carter is facing years in prison because the state claims it has a right to hunt down and prosecute who it defines as criminals.

But the social world is not static and the balance of forces is shifting. One day using that same logic but informed by an alternative ethical framework that centers real justice, the people will be in a position to hunt down and bring to justice the international colonial gangsters who destroy our earth, torture, exploit and bring death to countless millions.