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A Volcano of Lies

By ALEXANDER COCKBURN

May 6-8-2011

Barack Obama, who pledged to restore ethical honor to the White House after the Bush years, is now burying himself under an active volcano of lies, mostly but not exclusively concerning the assassination of Osama bin Laden.

There was scarcely a sentence in the President's Sunday night address, or in the subsequent briefing by John Brennan, his chief counter-terrorism coordinator, that has not been subsequently retracted by CIA director Leon Panetta or the White House press spokesman, Jay Carney, or by various documentary records.

- The White House photograph of Obama, Clinton and top security advisors supposedly watching real-time footage of the Navy Seals' onslaught on the Abbottabad compound, their killing of two men and a woman (excuse for the latter killing: the standard "caught in crossfire") and liquidation of OBL himself turns out to have been a phony. BO and friends could have been watching basketball replays. Panetta has admitted the real-time video link stopped working before the Seals got into the compound.

- Panetta also admits Osama bin Laden was not armed, and that he did not hide behind his young wife's skirt. He conceded that under military rules of engagement Osama should have been taken prisoner, but then added vaguely that he showed some unspecified form of resistance. He probably reached for his walking stick, since he has been ailing from kidney and liver problems. As any black or brown resident in, say, the purview of the Ramparts Division of the LAPD

knows full well, reaching for a walking stick or even holding a cell phone can be a death warrant; multiply that likelihood by a factor of 100 if you are the world's most wanted terrorist in front of a score of heavily armed and homicidal Navy SEALs, no doubt amped up on amphetamine.

An admitted fan of the herb, Osama may have been stoned as part of his pain management program since there was a marijuana patch outside in the allotment and, like any world star in retirement, Osama liked to smoke a lot of weed and made DVDs of important speeches which stacked up forlornly on the bookshelf next to the bottles of pills and the Koran, hoping to get picked up by Al Jazeera or HBO. How his lieutenants must have yearned for his summary martyrdom as they received his importunate bulletins that they derail a train during Obama's State of the Union and other madcap schemes.

- The White House claims that issues of delicacy prohibit the release of photographs of Osama's bullet-riddled face and required that after an alleged match with a relative's DNA he be given a swift but formal sea burial in a weighted body bag dropped from the aircraft carrier Carl Vinson into the north Arabian Sea, presumably awaiting retrieval by salvagers with a fix on the Vinson's position at the time of burial.

Maybe the Navy Seal photographer forgot to take his lens cap off. Obama's claims of ethical sensitivity certainly ring hollow. He's battling the wimp factor, and "Lo! The head of Osama" would be a nifty prop. There was lengthy display back in Bush-time of the mutilated bodies of Saddam's sons Uday and Qusay, killed by US special forces in 2003, plus filming of Saddam's own execution by hanging.

Further back, when DNA matches were unknown, US special forces verified Che Guevara's execution by permitting many photographs immediately post-mortem. They also cut off Che's hands, for subsequent verification by the CIA. We're not talking Miss Manners here.

- The official "back story" released Sunday night by Obama is that US intelligence learned of the Abbottabad compound only last August and spent the following months watching the place, following Osama's trusted couriers and concluding that it was highly likely, though not certain, that Osama was there.

This is bunk. The three-storey house has been a well-known feature of Abbottabad. Shaukat Qadir, a well-connected Pakistan Army officer, [reported](#) to CounterPunch from Pakistan: "For the record, this house has been under ISI surveillance while it was under construction. It was first raided in 2003, and the ISI just missed capturing al-Libi (he was later captured by the ISI close to Mardan in K-P Province). It has been raided on numerous occasions since."

Shaukat tells me that contrary to a report in the *New York Times* by Carlotta Gall on May 5, neither of the two trusted couriers were among the dead in the compound.

Shaukat: "The house where Osama had sought refuge belonged to two brothers from Mardan (a Pashtun dominated region of K-P) who had numerous aliases; locally they were known as Arshad (or Bara—meaning elder) and Chota (younger) Pathan, who have been residents of that

house for seven years past. The rub is; neither one has been identified among the dead. If Osama was followed to this house by constant tracking of his courier who, according to CIA reports, shouldn't one, if not both brothers, should have been present, shouldn't they? But they weren't. Of the seven bodies left behind (a female, a child and five men of ages ranging from mid-twenties to mid-thirties), none have been identified as being either brother.... " Inference: "Osama was sold out. The operation was the result of entrapment. An entrapment organized through one or more of his most trusted aides..."

In fact, specific knowledge by US intelligence of the compound and its likely possible prime denizen goes back to 2005.

This has been established by Israel Shamir, also writing for [CounterPunch](#). Shamir compares certain passages in the WikiLeaks documents on Guantanamo against those recently published by the *New York Times* and the *Guardian*.

Shamir reports these newspapers were working from the WikiLeaks files supplied to them (price unknown) by WikiLeaks' former German employee, Daniel Domscheit-Berg, "who went AWOL after this appropriation". Shamir says Domscheit-Berg made a deal with the *Guardian* which subsequently made a co-publication arrangement with the *New York Times*. "Both papers published the cables after redacting them, or should we say 'censoring' - removing everything the secret services demanded [they] remove."

When Assange learned that the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* planned to publish the Guantanamo files, his WikiLeaks team also prepared the files and began to upload. So did the competitors, possessing the Domscheit-Berg appropriated copy.

The most important redactions by the *Guardian* and the *New York Times*, Shamir writes, "were directly dictated by the US intelligence services. The name of Nashwan Abd Al Razzaq Abd Al Baqi, or by another name, Abdul Hadi al-Iraqi or by his number IZ-10026 was edited away from the file of Abu al-Libi (US9LY-010017DP) and elsewhere."

This is significant because al-Iraqi was in close contact with al-Libi who had been designated by Osama in 2003 as his trusted, official courier, therefore aware of OBL's whereabouts at all times. In the end, at separate times, the US captured both al-Libi and al-Iraqi, had them both tortured and thus became aware of al-Libi's courier duties and hence the possibility that Osama was in Abbottabad.

Comparison of the [redacted version](#) of the *Guardian* and in the [uncut version](#) of WikiLeaks shows to what extent all the traces of al-Iraqi, the likely informer-under-torture, were removed at the behest of US intelligence. It was not connected to "caring about informers", for al-Libi was understood at the time to have committed suicide in a Libyan jail just before the arrival of the US Ambassador in Tripoli. The file of al-Iraqi is missing in all databases; he was captured in 2005 and kept in various secret prisons, until transferred to Guantanamo where he remains detained.

So the trail to Abbottabad was known to the US intelligence services at least since 2005, when al-Libi was captured. "Careful reading of the file," Shamir writes, "shows that al-Libi was

connected with al-Iraqi since October 2002. In 2003, Osama stated al-Libi would be the official messenger between OBL and others in Pakistan. In mid-2003, al-Libi moved his family to Abbottabad, Pakistan and worked between Abbottabad and Peshawar. He maintained contact with al-Iraqi."

We can conclude, from this narrative, that when the unredacted WikiLeaks files surfaced, US intelligence concluded that Osama's associates would soon figure out that the Americans had made the appropriate connections and conjectures and there the associates urged him to move on with all due haste. So Obama decided to send in the Seals.

From this active volcano of lies, we can safely assume that Obama's re-election campaign has been well and truly launched. Lift-off began on April 27 with the White House's release of the long birth certificate. Obama seems to have problems with timely provision of convincing documentation about arrivals (his own) and departures (Bin Laden's).

Release of the full birth certificate could have come in 2008, when it first became a minor issue. Instead Obama refused to authorize release until last week, by which time 25 per cent of all Americans and 50 per cent of all Republicans thought he was hiding something fishy. A photo of the dead Osama would have been useful this week in quelling speculation.

Had it not been for cloud cover over Abbottabad, the raid on Osama's compound could have come on Friday, April 29, the same day as the royal wedding.

Saturday, April 30 was reserved for the attempted assassination of Colonel Gaddafi, with the dropping of precision-guided bombs on the house of his son Saif, who died along with three grandchildren. Saif, then four, was in the Gaddafi family compound on April 15, 1986 when bombs ordered up by Ronald Reagan were dropped from F-111s, killing his 15-month old sister, adopted by Gaddafi 11 months earlier. Thus have Reagan and Obama shared a target. 'Decapitation' - going for the enemy's top guy - is now standard Nato strategy. In the "shock and awe" assaults on Iraq in 2003, the prime mission of US bombers was to target whatever houses Saddam was presumed to be visiting. We can assume electronic eavesdrops or maybe a human observer told the Nato targeteers that Gaddafi himself was in the house that Saturday, and the bombers were swiftly dispatched from Nato's Allied Air Command in Izmir, Turkey, whose overall commander is Lt-Gen Ralph J. Jodice II (US).

Would Obama have been briefed on the plan, or have signed off on a program of targeted assassination of Gaddafi? It seems a sure thing.

Reverse the rationale. If a Libyan bomber had blown up the wedding couple and a goodly tranche of the British upper crust in Westminster Abbey under justification that the whole place and its human contents, down to the grandchildren, not to mention the hats, were fair game because Cameron was there.

As the Oxford historian Mark Almond [subsequently wrote](#) in this site, "Little wonder, the royal newlyweds' honeymoon was suddenly cancelled on Saturday. So much of William and Kate's nuptials was choreographed around their parents' and grandparents' weddings that it was a fair

guess that like Princess Elizabeth and Philip they were going to fly to Malta to start their honeymoon before going on to Kenya where three generations of Windsors have enjoyed cementing their relations. Malta is too close to Libya for comfort and Kenya's Muslim minority might not be too friendly to a serving Nato officer."

But Gaddafi survived. So Obama only had one bloodied feather in his cap when he gave one of the most morally repellent speeches I have ever heard delivered from the White House. Bush at least had the crude brio of a semi-literate jock when he vaunted America's prowess. Obama's "we nailed him" paragraphs of mendacity concluded with Dickensian Heepishness: "Tonight we are once again reminded that America can do whatever we set our mind to. That is the story of our history."

Alas, the actual story of the "our history" is an unrelenting ability to lie about everything, while simultaneously claiming America's superior moral worth.

Footnote: Peering briefly at the royal nuptials in a house high up in the mountains above Malibu, I was surprised to see how spectacularly tacky the British upper classes have become. They looked very vulgar. The appalling cuteness of the Aston Martin supplied the coup de grace. The groom didn't know how to stand up properly. Contrary to effusive comparisons, the bride's much touted dress from the atelier of the wildly overpraised late Alexander McQueen, was a far cry from Grace Kelly's, designed by Helen Rose, who had dressed her in *High Society* and *The Swan*. The bride's headdress hung like a dishrag. The only vestments born with confidence and aplomb were those of the churchmen. The Archbishop of Canterbury, with his emphatic beard and specs, had a splendid cope. His voice was confident. I'd like to see him in debate with one of Teheran's ayatollahs. But the Anglo actresses watching the event on our mountain were ecstatic. My daughter Daisy, returning to London two days later, reported that the young women she was encountering were all swept away by the event and eager for marriage.

De Valera's American Parent

On Apr 24, 2011, at 1:19 PM, Danny Hallinan wrote:

Hello Alexander-

Many years later there were two things that made me think of writing you. Reading your [Diary](#) on the Easter Uprising, a point of familial info. Dev's mom wasn't American - his "Dad" - whatever - was. His mother is my - and Ringo's - great-great-grandmother's sister. A Cull from Ballingarry who returned a young widow from NY. This connection is part of how I have an Irish passport.

The other random thought is that it was exactly 50 years ago that we met in London. Aldermaston March 50th just a week or so ago, Yuri Gagarin 50 years, and Zill - a truly fine fellow.

Danny Barry (Shoot me like an Irish soldier) Hallinan

But that 1961 march wasn't the first time I met the Hallinan boys from San Francisco – at least Terence (later the DA of San Francisco) and CounterPuncher Conn aka Ringo. It was on one of the earlier Aldermaston marches at the end of the 1950s, in the company of Konni Zilliacus's daughter Linden, plus Saul Landau, who was traveling through Europe with C. Wright Mills.

When Prophecy Fails

From: Noel Ignatiev
Date: April 30, 2011 4:49:07 AM PDT

Dear Alex,

Re your [Diary](#) on cognitive dissonance and *When Prophecy Fails* Perhaps you know about the Miller-ites in the 1830s. William Miller prophesied the end of the world and even predicted the date, based on calculations he made from the Bible. He gathered thousands of followers in upstate New York (the "bruned-over district," the 19th-century equivalent of California today) to give away their property and join him on the hilltops waiting. When the event did not take place, Miller said he had miscalculated, and announced another date a few months off. Again thousands believed him and readied themselves. When the second date passed uneventfully, the movement dissolved, but not quite: the original Seventh Day Adventists were disappointed Miller-ites, and they in their turn spawned health cultists who eventually developed techniques for preserving cereal grains. Kellogg's in Battle Creek, Michigan was the result, starting out to save the world through nutrition, today just the manufacturer of Wheaties. T.C. Boyle tells some of the story in his novel [The Road to Wellville](#), later made into a film. Characteristically American episode.

Best, Noel

Earthquakes in Kabul, Stasis in Iran

Our latest newsletter goes out this weekend, with brilliant reports from Patrick Cockburn from Kabul and Teheran. Patrick's energy is boundless, notwithstanding the huge physical exertion imposed on him by an attack of polio in the mid-1950s – the last Irish epidemic before the Salk vaccine. But Patrick hauls himself from one war-torn location to the next, files his uniquely perceptive reports and finds times to co-write with his son, my nephew, Henry a searing account, [Henry's Demons](#), of the schizophrenia that Henry has endured and from which he has emerged across the past eight years. It's a marvelous book, with Henry's contributions of a particularly searing clarity. Next week we will run some excerpts on this site.

Noticed how Fukushima has dropped out of the headlines again? What to know what's actually going on? In this latest newsletter John Wilcox in Tokyo supplies a full update on the fall-out, the resistance to nuclear power, the maneuvers of the nuclear industry.

What do pwogwessives pray for each night? Just one really genuine "humanitarian intervention" they can wholeheartedly support. There have been so many disappointments – in the former Yugoslavia, in Iraq – but surely Libya was a safe bet! Doesn't seem that way now, as NATO settles into its prolonged agenda of the destruction of Libya, and more slimy deals being hatched

in Benghazi see the light of day. In our newsletter Jean Bricmont dissects the myths and illusion of “left” humanintervention.