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PANETTA'S CIA COVERUP Pantta Seeks to Whitewash CIA Crimes

By Sherwood Ross
8/8/2009

CIA Director Leon Panetta's article titled "*It's Time To Move On*" published in the August 4th Miami Herald is a stunning disservice to the principles of justice. It not only calls for whitewashing the Agency's past horrific crimes, which have included torture and murder, but openly advocates the use of force and violence. Panetta writes, "the focus on the past, especially in Congress, threatens to distract the CIA from its crucial core missions: intelligence collection, analysis and covert action." In CIA lingo, "covert action" has always meant dirty tricks, from blackmailing to assassinating foreign leaders, and from pouring bribe money to influence elections to overthrowing governments.

Covert action is not your church Tuesday night bingo party. And these criminal acts are invariably performed in sneaky secret because if the American people learned of them they would never tolerate the spy agency's cruelty and tax waste. Besides, some CIA crimes could make you puke.

And when Panetta charges that Congress "threatens to distract the CIA" he is revealing his fear that at any House or Senate intelligence committee hearings his Agency will have an awful lot of embarrassing crimes to account for. Yet, as reporter Tim Weiner points out in his aptly named "*Legacy of Ashes, The History of The CIA(Anchor)*," Congressional committees "need to do their work—ask hard questions, demand answers, and report back to the citizenry. They have been derelict in this duty for much of the past three decades, but their conduct since 9/11 has bordered on criminal negligence." But when Congress changes course and tries to do its job, Panetta sees it as a "threat."

At the least, the CIA needs to be called to account for its murder of Manadel al-Jamadi, who was pulled from his Baghdad home and family on November 4, 2003, and beaten to death by the CIA and whose killers have never been called to account. The CIA tried to blame that one

on Navy Seals but it has evidently committed too many like murders to blame them all on the military. As Jane Mayer writes in her book "The Dark Side,"(Anchor), after the Abu Ghraib prison scandal broke the military "punished more than 200 soldiers for wrongdoing" but "the CIA underwent no public accountability process."

In December, 2004, the *Washington Post* revealed the CIA was mistreating prisoners at Bagram military base in Afghanistan. That month, Mayer writes, "two Afghan prisoners...were beaten to death by their interrogators" and a third prisoner "died of hypothermia under the auspices of the CIA in the notorious prison known as the 'Salt Pit,' also in Afghanistan." Mayer notes the CIA was implicated in four other killings at the time as well. Likely, there are scores or hundreds more, where victims have been tortured and butchered in secret illegal CIA-backed dungeons from Morocco to Poland to Thailand. How else explain the Agency's refusal to allow the Red Cross access to its Kabul, Afghanistan, prison?

Panetta claims that "The CIA no longer operates black sites and no longer employs 'enhanced' interrogation techniques" (i.e. torture) is not enough. It is incumbent upon him to tell the Red Cross, Congress, and the American people the location of every prison and the name of every prisoner, some of whom have now been held for years without a trial or a lawyer and who have been denied contact with their families.

As for Panetta's laughter that "the security of the United States depends on a CIA that is totally focused on the job of defending America," this is bottled hogwash. Nothing has damaged American security and turned the world against us as much as President's Bush's invasion of Iraq, which brought millions of protestors into the streets the world over. And it was the CIA, fawning at Cheney's feet, that provided the lying rationale for Bush's claim that Saddam Hussein had WMD. The Iraq war, in fact, touched off a wave of global boycotts of Made in America brands. Indeed, one Kuwaiti businessman wrongly arrested by the CIA said when he gets out of prison (if he does) he is through buying Cadillacs. (Some terrorist!)

In his "*Time to Move On*" essay, Panetta uses the expression "in our democracy," a phrase that may no longer apply to this nation because in good measure the CIA has been allowed to operate above the law: to assassinate, murder, torture, kidnap, and conduct itself like the "Gestapo" President Harry Truman said he feared it would become when he signed the legislation that created the Agency in 1947. No democracy can long allow a secretive criminal cadre to operate in its midst as an arm of government. Gangrene spreads.

In his "Anti-Empire Report" of August 4th, Washington investigative journalist William Blum charted more than 50 CIA attempts over the years to overthrow foreign governments, "most of which had been democratically-elected." These included Portugal, 1976; Jamaica, 1980; Chad, 1982; Grenada, 1983; Fiji, 1987; Panama, 1989; Nicaragua, 1990; Bulgaria, 1990; Albania, 1991; Ecuador, 2000; and Venezuela, 2002.

If the CIA was a municipal police department that had gone corrupt, an incoming chief would clean house and make any rogue cops who dishonored the badge stand trial. No honest reformer would take over a vast, multi-billion criminal enterprise which is what the CIA has become and brag to the world that its gangsters "truly are America's first line of defense," as Panetta has said of its employees.

As the above list indicates, the CIA is no protector of democracy. It is a proven serial killer of democracies. Its covert practices are in stark opposition to the Ten Commandments, the Sermon On The Mount, international covenants, and the U.S. Constitution. If Panetta will not purge the spy agency of its criminal element he is certainly unfit to lead it and should be fired. As the U.S. has 15 other intelligence agencies, it has no need of one that feeds it false information. Congress could shut the Agency down by turning off its funding and the sun will come up tomorrow just the same.