OMNI US NATIONAL SECRECY NEWSLETTER #1, May 14, 2013. Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace

My blog: It's the War Department
http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/
Newsletters:
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/
Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/
See: Imperialism, Militarism, National Security State, Surveillance, Pentagon, Torture, Whistleblowers, Wikileaks

Contents

Scahill, US Secret Dirty Wars
Pierce, US Secret Wars
Priest and Arkin, Top Secret America
Trevor Paglen, 2 Books
    Invisible
    Blank Spots
Moyers, Reagan and Contras
Wise, Johnson, Nixon, and VN War
Ventura, Secret Documents
Napolitano, US History
Greenberg, Wikileaks, Hackers for Transparency

Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters:
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

JEREMY SCAHILL, DIRTY WARS, BOOK AND DOCUMENTARY
About Jeremy Scahill
"Scahill is a one-man truth squad." Bill Moyers

film, *Dirty Wars*, which won the Cinematography Award for U.S. Documentary at the Sundance Film Festival 2013. IFC Films releases *Dirty Wars* in theaters June 7 throughout the United States.

Scahill has reported from Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Nigeria, Yemen, the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere across the globe. Scahill is a frequent guest on a wide array of programs, appearing regularly on *The Rachel Maddow Show*, *Real Time with Bill Maher*, and *Democracy Now!*. He has also appeared on ABC World News, CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, BBC, al Jazeera, CNN, *The NewsHour*, and *Bill Moyers Journal*.

Scahill’s work has sparked several Congressional investigations and won some of journalism’s highest honors. He was twice awarded the prestigious George Polk Award, in 1998 for foreign reporting and in 2008 for his book *Blackwater*. In 2013, Scahill was named one of nine recipients of the Donald Windham-Sandy M. Campbell Literature Prizes at Yale University.

Scahill is a member of the Writers Guild of America, East.

- Jeremy Scahill
- Order The Book
- Praise & Reviews

**Join our mailing list**

Name:

Email:

Subscribe

@dirtywars

· DirtyWars: London: Tmw 15 May 6PM
· @DoughtyStPublic hear @jeremyscahill talk about his new book
Charles P. Pierce, “The Cost of America's Secret Wars, Then and Now” Esquire, December 6, 2011, RSN

Pierce writes: "This is what secret wars are about. Secret wars are still wars. There will be atrocities. And, because this is the nature of all governments in all wars, these atrocities will be covered up and lied about. But the problem with secret wars is not that they are secret from the people on whom they are waged, or the people who simply live in the country where they are waged. As Doonesbury once memorably pointed out, the 'secret bombing' of Cambodia wasn't any secret to the Cambodians. But secret wars, waged by the Executive branch beyond the reach of congressional oversight, inevitably lead to a deep and abiding corruption in the government of this country."


TOP SECRET AMERICA

COMMENTARY ON WASHINGTON POST’S SERIES BY PRIEST AND ARKIN ON POST-9/11 ESCALATION OF SECRECY IN US NATIONAL SECURITY STATE (In 2011 a book and a PBS Frontline video.)
National Security Inc.

Private Contractors

In June, a stone carver from Manassas chiseled another perfect star into a marble wall at CIA headquarters, one of 22 for agency workers killed in the global war initiated by the 2001 terrorist attacks.

The intent of the memorial is to publicly honor the courage of those who died in the line of duty, but it also conceals a deeper story about government in the post-9/11 era: Eight of the 22 were not CIA officers at all. They were private contractors.

To ensure that the country's most sensitive duties are carried out only by people loyal above all to the nation's interest, federal rules say contractors may not perform what are called "inherently government functions." But they do, all the time and in every intelligence and counterterrorism agency, according to a two-year investigation by The Washington Post.

What started as a temporary fix in response to the terrorist attacks has turned into a dependency that calls into question whether the federal workforce includes too many people obligated to shareholders rather than the public interest -- and whether the government is still in control of its most sensitive activities. In interviews last week, both Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and CIA Director Leon Panetta said they agreed with such concerns.

The Post investigation uncovered what amounts to an alternative geography of the United States, a Top Secret America created since 9/11 that is hidden from public view, lacking in thorough oversight and so unwieldy that its effectiveness is impossible to determine.

It is also a system in which contractors are playing an ever more important role. The Post estimates that out of 854,000 people with top-secret clearances, 265,000 are contractors. There is no better example of the government's dependency on them than at the CIA, the one place in government that exists to do things overseas that no other U.S. agency is allowed to do.

Private contractors working for the CIA have recruited spies in Iraq, paid bribes for information in Afghanistan and protected CIA directors visiting world capitals. Contractors have helped snatch a suspected extremist off the streets of Italy, interrogated detainees once held at secret prisons abroad and watched over defectors holed up in the Washington suburbs. At Langley headquarters, they analyze terrorist networks. At the agency's training facility in Virginia, they are helping mold a new generation of American spies.

Through the federal budget process, the George W. Bush administration and Congress made it much easier for the CIA and other agencies involved in counterterrorism to hire more contractors than civil servants. They did this to limit the size of the permanent workforce, to hire employees more quickly than the sluggish federal process allows and because they thought - wrongly, it turned out - that contractors would be less expensive.

Contractors can offer more money - often twice as much - to experienced federal employees than the government is allowed to pay them. And because competition among firms for people with security clearances is so great, corporations offer such perks as BMWs and $15,000 signing bonuses, as Raytheon did in June for software developers with top-level clearances.

The idea that the government would save money on a contract workforce "is a false economy," said Mark M. Lowenthal, a former senior CIA official and now president of his own intelligence training academy.

As companies raid federal agencies of talent, the government has been left with the youngest
intelligence staffs ever while more experienced employees move into the private sector. This is true at
the CIA, where employees from 114 firms account for roughly a third of the workforce, or about
10,000 positions. Many of them are temporary hires, often former military or intelligence agency
employees who left government service to work less and earn more while drawing a federal pension.

Across the government, such workers are used in every conceivable way.

Contractors kill enemy fighters. They spy on foreign governments and eavesdrop on terrorist networks.
They help craft war plans. They gather information on local factions in war zones. They are the
historians, the architects, the recruiters in the nation's most secretive agencies. They staff watch centers
across the Washington area. They are among the most trusted advisers to the four-star generals leading
the nation's wars.

So great is the government's appetite for private contractors with top-secret clearances that there are
now more than 300 companies, often nicknamed "body shops," that specialize in finding candidates,
often for a fee that approaches $50,000 a person, according to those in the business.

Making it more difficult to replace contractors with federal employees: The government doesn't know
how many are on the federal payroll. Gates said he wants to reduce the number of defense contractors
by about 13 percent, to pre-9/11 levels, but he's having a hard time even getting a basic head count.

"This is a terrible confession," he said. "I can't get a number on how many contractors work for the
Office of the Secretary of Defense," referring to the department's civilian leadership.

The role of private contractors

As Top Secret America has grown, the government has become more dependent on contractors with
matching security clearances.

The Post's estimate of 265,000 contractors doing top-secret work was vetted by several high-ranking
intelligence officials who approved of The Post's methodology. The newspaper's Top Secret America
database includes 1,931 companies that perform work at the top-secret level. More than a quarter of
them - 533 - came into being after 2001, and others that already existed have expanded greatly. Most
are thriving even as the rest of the United States struggles with bankruptcies, unemployment and
foreclosures.

The privatization of national security work has been made possible by a nine-year "gusher" of money,
as Gates recently described national security spending since the 9/11 attacks.

With so much money to spend, managers do not always worry about whether they are spending it
effectively.

"Someone says, 'Let's do another study,' and because no one shares information, everyone does their
own study," said Elena Mastors, who headed a team studying the al-Qaeda leadership for the Defense
Department. "It's about how many studies you can orchestrate, how many people you can fly all over
the place. Everybody's just on a spending spree. We don't need all these people doing all this stuff."

Most of these contractors do work that is fundamental to an agency's core mission. As a result, the
government has become dependent on them in a way few could have foreseen: wartime temps who
have become a permanent cadre.

Just last week, typing "top secret" into the search engine of a major jobs Web site showed 1,951
"We could not perform our mission without them. They serve as our 'reserves,' providing flexibility and expertise we can't acquire," said Ronald Sanders, who was chief of human capital for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence before retiring in February. "Once they are on board, we treat them as if they're a part of the total force."

The Post's investigation is based on government documents and contracts, job descriptions, property records, corporate and social networking Web sites, additional records, and hundreds of interviews with intelligence, military and corporate officials and former officials. Most requested anonymity either because they are prohibited from speaking publicly or because, they said, they feared retaliation at work for describing their concerns.

The investigation focused on top-secret work because the amount classified at the secret level is too large to accurately track. A searchable database of government organizations and private companies was built entirely on public records. [For an explanation of the newspaper's decision making behind this project, please see the Editor's Note.]

---

The national security industry sells the military and intelligence agencies more than just airplanes, ships and tanks. It sells contractors' brain power. They advise, brief and work everywhere, including 25 feet under the Pentagon in a bunker where they can be found alongside military personnel in battle fatigues monitoring potential crises worldwide.

Late at night, when the wide corridors of the Pentagon are all but empty, the National Military Command Center hums with purpose. There's real-time access to the location of U.S. forces anywhere in the world, to granular satellite images or to the White House Situation Room.

The purpose of all this is to be able to answer any question the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff might have. To be ready 24 hours a day, every day, takes five brigadier generals, a staff of colonels and senior noncommissioned officers - and a man wearing a pink contractor badge and a bright purple shirt and tie.

Erik Saar's job title is "knowledge engineer." In one of the most sensitive places in America, he is the only person in the room who knows how to bring data from far afield, fast. Saar and four teammates from a private company, SRA International, teach these top-ranked staff officers to think in Web 2.0. They are trying to push a tradition-bound culture to act differently, digitally.

Help wanted: professionals with security clearances

Recruiters for companies that hold government contracts meet with job seekers who have security clearances at a Targeted Job Fairs event in McLean, Va. Launch Video »

That sometimes means asking for help in a public online chat room or exchanging ideas on shared Web pages outside the military computer networks dubbed .mil - things much resisted within the Pentagon's self-sufficient culture. "Our job is to change the perception of leaders who might drive change," Saar said.

Since 9/11, contractors have made extraordinary contributions - and extraordinary blunders - that have changed history and clouded the public's view of the distinction between the actions of officers sworn on behalf of the United States and corporate employees with little more than a security badge and a gun.

Contractor misdeeds in Iraq and Afghanistan have hurt U.S. credibility in those countries as well as in the Middle East. Abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, some of it done by contractors, helped ignite a call
for vengeance against the United States that continues today. Security guards working for Blackwater added fuel to the five-year violent chaos in Iraq and became the symbol of an America run amok.

Contractors in war zones, especially those who can fire weapons, blur "the line between the legitimate and illegitimate use of force, which is just what our enemies want," Allison Stanger, a professor of international politics and economics at Middlebury College and the author of "One Nation Under Contract," told the independent Commission on Wartime Contracting at a hearing in June.

Misconduct happens, too. A defense contractor formerly called MZM paid bribes for CIA contracts, sending Randy "Duke" Cunningham, who was a California congressman on the intelligence committee, to prison. Guards employed in Afghanistan by ArmorGroup North America, a private security company, were caught on camera in a lewd-partying scandal.

But contractors have also advanced the way the military fights. During the bloodiest months in Iraq, the founder of Berico Technologies, a former Army officer named Guy Filippelli, working with the National Security Agency, invented a technology that made finding the makers of roadside bombs easier and helped stanch the number of casualties from improvised explosives, according to NSA officials.

Contractors have produced blueprints and equipment for the unmanned aerial war fought by drones, which have killed the largest number of senior al-Qaeda leaders and produced a flood of surveillance videos. A dozen firms created the transnational digital highway that carries the drones' real-time data on terrorist hide-outs from overseas to command posts throughout the United States.

Private firms have become so thoroughly entwined with the government's most sensitive activities that without them important military and intelligence missions would have to cease or would be jeopardized. Some examples:
* At the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the number of contractors equals the number of federal employees. The department depends on 318 companies for essential services and personnel, including 19 staffing firms that help DHS find and hire even more contractors. At the office that handles intelligence, six out of 10 employees are from private industry.

* The National Security Agency, which conducts worldwide electronic surveillance, hires private firms to come up with most of its technological innovations. The NSA used to work with a small stable of firms; now it works with at least 484 and is actively recruiting more.

* The National Reconnaissance Office cannot produce, launch or maintain its large satellite surveillance systems, which photograph countries such as China, North Korea and Iran, without the four major contractors it works with.

* Every intelligence and military organization depends on contract linguists to communicate overseas, translate documents and make sense of electronic voice intercepts. The demand for native speakers is so great, and the amount of money the government is willing to pay for them is so huge, that 56 firms compete for this business.

* Each of the 16 intelligence agencies depends on corporations to set up its computer networks, communicate with other agencies' networks, and fuse and mine disparate bits of information that might indicate a terrorist plot. More than 400 companies work exclusively in this area, building classified hardware and software systems.

Hiring contractors was supposed to save the government money. But that has not turned out to be the case. A 2008 study published by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence found that contractors made up 29 percent of the workforce in the intelligence agencies but cost the equivalent of 49 percent of their personnel budgets. Gates said that federal workers cost the government 25 percent
less than contractors.

The process of reducing the number of contractors has been slow, if the giant Office of Naval Intelligence in Suitland is any example. There, 2,770 people work on the round-the-clock maritime watch floor tracking commercial vessels, or in science and engineering laboratories, or in one of four separate intelligence centers. But it is the employees of 70 information technology companies who keep the place operating.

They store, process and analyze communications and intelligence transmitted to and from the entire U.S. naval fleet and commercial vessels worldwide. "Could we keep this building running without contractors?" said the captain in charge of information technology. "No, I don't think we could keep up with it."

Vice Adm. David J. "Jack" Dorsett, director of naval intelligence, said he could save millions each year by converting 20 percent of the contractor jobs at the Suitland complex to civil servant positions. He has gotten the go-ahead, but it's been a slow start. This year, his staff has converted one contractor job and eliminated another - out of 589. "It's costing me an arm and a leg," Dorsett said.

Washington's corridors of power stretch in a nearly straight geographical line from the Supreme Court to the Capitol to the White House. Keep going west, across the Potomac River, and the unofficial seats of power - the private, corporate ones - become visible, especially at night. There in the Virginia suburbs are the brightly illuminated company logos of Top Secret America: Northrop Grumman, SAIC, General Dynamics.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates says he would like to reduce the number of defense contractors to pre-9/11 levels. (Photo by: Melina Mara | The Washington Post)

Of the 1,931 companies identified by The Post that work on top-secret contracts, about 110 of them do roughly 90 percent of the work on the corporate side of the defense-intelligence-corporate world.

GENERAL DYNAMICS

To understand how these firms have come to dominate the post-9/11 era, there's no better place to start than the Herndon office of General Dynamics. One recent afternoon there, Ken Pohill was watching a series of unclassified images, the first of which showed a white truck moving across his computer monitor.

The truck was in Afghanistan, and a video camera bolted to the belly of a U.S. surveillance plane was following it. Pohill could access a dozen images that might help an intelligence analyst figure out whether the truck driver was just a truck driver or part of a network making roadside bombs to kill American soldiers.

To do this, he clicked his computer mouse. Up popped a picture of the truck driver's house, with notes about visitors. Another click. Up popped infrared video of the vehicle. Click: Analysis of an object thrown from the driver's side. Click: U-2 imagery. Click: A history of the truck's movement. Click. A Google Earth map of friendly forces. Click: A chat box with everyone else following the truck, too.

Ten years ago, if Pohill had worked for General Dynamics, he probably would have had a job bending steel. Then, the company's center of gravity was the industrial port city of Groton, Conn., where men and women in wet galoshes churned out submarines, the thoroughbreds of naval warfare. Today, the firm's commercial core is made up of data tools such as the digital imagery library in Herndon and the
secure BlackBerry-like device used by President Obama, both developed at a carpeted suburban office by employees in loafers and heels.

The evolution of General Dynamics was based on one simple strategy: Follow the money.

The company embraced the emerging intelligence-driven style of warfare. It developed small-target identification systems and equipment that could intercept an insurgent's cellphone and laptop communications. It found ways to sort the billions of data points collected by intelligence agencies into piles of information that a single person could analyze.

It also began gobbling up smaller companies that could help it dominate the new intelligence landscape, just as its competitors were doing. Between 2001 and 2010, the company acquired 11 firms specializing in satellites, signals and geospatial intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, technology integration and imagery.

On Sept. 11, 2001, General Dynamics was working with nine intelligence organizations. Now it has contracts with all 16. Its employees fill the halls of the NSA and DHS. The corporation was paid hundreds of millions of dollars to set up and manage DHS's new offices in 2003, including its National Operations Center, Office of Intelligence and Analysis and Office of Security. Its employees do everything from deciding which threats to investigate to answering phones.

General Dynamics' bottom line reflects its successful transformation. It also reflects how much the U.S. government - the firm's largest customer by far - has paid the company beyond what it costs to do the work, which is, after all, the goal of every profit-making corporation.

The company reported $31.9 billion in revenue in 2009, up from $10.4 billion in 2000. Its workforce has more than doubled in that time, from 43,300 to 91,700 employees, according to the company.

Revenue from General Dynamics' intelligence- and information-related divisions, where the majority of its top-secret work is done, climbed to $10 billion in the second quarter of 2009, up from $2.4 billion in 2000, accounting for 34 percent of its overall revenue last year.

The company's profitability is on display in its Falls Church headquarters. There's a soaring, art-filled lobby, bistro meals served on china enameled with the General Dynamics logo and an auditorium with seven rows of white leather-upholstered seats, each with its own microphone and laptop docking station.

General Dynamics now has operations in every corner of the intelligence world. It helps counterintelligence operators and trains new analysts. It has a $600 million Air Force contract to intercept communications. It makes $1 billion a year keeping hackers out of U.S. computer networks and encrypting military communications. It even conducts information operations, the murky military art of trying to persuade foreigners to align their views with U.S. interests.

"The American intelligence community is an important market for our company," said General Dynamics spokesman Kendell Pease. "Over time, we have tailored our organization to deliver affordable, best-of-breed products and services to meet those agencies' unique requirements."

In September 2009, General Dynamics won a $10 million contract from the U.S. Special Operations Command's psychological operations unit to create Web sites to influence foreigners' views of U.S. policy. To do that, the company hired writers, editors and designers to produce a set of daily news sites tailored to five regions of the world. They appear as regular news Web sites, with names such as "SETimes.com: The News and Views of Southeast Europe." The first indication that they are run on behalf of the military comes at the bottom of the home page with the word "Disclaimer." Only by clicking on that do you learn that "the Southeast European Times (SET) is a Web site sponsored by the United States European Command."
What all of these contracts add up to: This year, General Dynamics' overall revenue was $7.8 billion in the first quarter, Jay L. Johnson, the company's chief executive and president, said at an earnings conference call in April. "We've hit the deck running in the first quarter," he said, "and we're on our way to another successful year."

**SMALLER COMPANIES**

In the shadow of giants such as General Dynamics are 1,814 small to midsize companies that do top-secret work. About a third of them were established after Sept. 11, 2001, to take advantage of the huge flow of taxpayer money into the private sector. Many are led by former intelligence agency officials who know exactly whom to approach for work.

Abraxas of Herndon, headed by a former CIA spy, quickly became a major CIA contractor after 9/11. Its staff even recruited midlevel managers during work hours from the CIA's cafeteria, former agency officers recall.

Other small and medium-size firms sell niche technical expertise such as engineering for low-orbit satellites or long-dwell sensors. But the vast majority have not invented anything at all. Instead, they replicate what the government's workforce already does.

A company called SGIS, founded soon after the 2001 attacks, was one of these.

In June 2002, from the spare bedroom of his San Diego home, 30-year-old Hany Girgis put together an information technology team that won its first Defense Department contract four months later. By the end of the year, SGIS had opened a Tampa office close to the U.S. Central Command and Special Operations Command, had turned a profit and had 30 employees.

An alternative geography

Since Sept. 11, 2001, the top-secret world created to respond to the terrorist attacks has grown into an unwieldy enterprise spread over 10,000 U.S. locations. SGIS sold the government the services of people with specialized skills; expanding the types of teams it could put together was one key to its growth. Eventually it offered engineers, analysts and cyber-security specialists for military, space and intelligence agencies. By 2003, the company's revenue was $3.7 million. By then, SGIS had become a subcontractor for General Dynamics, working at the secret level. Satisfied with the partnership, General Dynamics helped SGIS receive a top-secret facility clearance, which opened the doors to more work.

By 2006, its revenue had multiplied tenfold, to $30.6 million, and the company had hired employees who specialized in government contracting just to help it win more contracts.

"We knew that's where we wanted to play," Girgis said in a phone interview. "There's always going to be a need to protect the homeland."

Eight years after it began, SGIS was up to revenue of $101 million, 14 offices and 675 employees. Those with top-secret clearances worked for 11 government agencies, according to The Post's database.

The company's marketing efforts had grown, too, both in size and sophistication. Its Web site, for example, showed an image of Navy sailors lined up on a battleship over the words "Proud to serve" and another image of a Navy helicopter flying near the Statue of Liberty over the words "Preserving freedom." And if it seemed hard to distinguish SGIS's work from the government's, it's because they were doing so many of the same things. SGIS employees replaced military personnel at the Pentagon's 24/7 telecommunications center. SGIS employees conducted terrorist threat analysis. SGIS employees provided help-desk support for federal computer systems.
Still, as alike as they seemed, there were crucial differences.

For one, unlike in government, if an SGIS employee did a good job, he might walk into the parking lot one day and be surprised by co-workers clapping at his latest bonus: a leased, dark-blue Mercedes convertible. And he might say, as a video camera recorded him sliding into the soft leather driver's seat, "Ahhhh . . . this is spectacular."

And then there was what happened to SGIS last month, when it did the one thing the federal government can never do.

It sold itself.

The new owner is a Fairfax-based company called Salient Federal Solutions, created just last year. It is a management company and a private-equity firm with lots of Washington connections that, with the purchase of SGIS, it intends to parlay into contracts.

"We have an objective," says chief executive and President Brad Antle, "to make $500 million in five years." . . . 

© 2010 The Washington Post Company

BOOKS BY TREVOR PAGLEN

_Invisible: Covert Operations and Classified Landscapes_ is Trevor Paglen's long-awaited first photographic monograph.

Social scientist, artist, writer and provocateur, Paglen has been exploring the secret activities of the U.S. military and intelligence agencies--the "black world"--for the last eight years, publishing, speaking and making astonishing photographs.

As an artist, Paglen is interested in the idea of photography as truth-telling, but his pictures often stop short of traditional ideas of documentation. In the series _Limit Telephotography_, for example, he employs high-end optical systems to photograph top-secret governmental sites; and in _The Other Night Sky_, he uses the data of amateur satellite watchers to track and photograph classified spacecraft in Earth's orbit. In other works Paglen transforms documents such as passports, flight data and aliases of CIA operatives into art objects.

Rebecca Solnit contributes a searing essay that traces this history of clandestine military activity on the American landscape.
“Blank Spots is an important, well-researched, and insightful expose that opens a window into the black world of secret operations. Paglen’s conclusion that ‘our own history, in large part, has become a state secret’ is both a warning and a call to arms. It is time to heed the warning and take up arms.”

—John Perkins, author of *Confessions of an Economic Hitman*

“A chillingly literal tour de force. Paglen doesn’t so much fill in the blanks as trace their outlines and give their shifting shapes a density that says as much about the future of democracy as it does about the dismal confines of the black world.”

—Derek Gregory, Professor of Geography, University of British Columbia

**Viewing Secrecy Through “Blank Spots on the Map”**

January 30th, 2009 by Steven Aftergood, *Secrecy News,*

“I think that trying to understand secrecy through geography helps make the subject more real,” writes Trevor Paglen in a new book about secret government. “Thinking about secrecy in terms of concrete spaces and practices helps us to see how secrecy happens and helps to explain how secrecy grows and expands.”

Paglen, a geographer, writes about secrecy at the Groom Lake facility in Nevada, secret prisons in Afghanistan, secret satellite constellations in orbit, secret contractor locations around Washington, DC, and elsewhere. He considers their enabling conditions, as well as their implications for American democracy and public policy.

“The United States has become dependent on spaces created through secrecy, spaces that lie outside the rule of law, outside the Constitution, outside the democratic ideals of equal rights, transparent government, and informed consent,” he concludes. Worse, “the black world’s historical geography
shows that where black budgets manifest into a space, informal violence becomes the norm.”

“Rescind President Obama's 'Transparency Award' Now”

Sibel Edmonds and Coleen Rowley, Reader Supported News

Sibel Edmonds and Coleen Rowley write: "The giving of an unmerited award, however, whether for transparency or peace, is not entirely benign. No one knows better how destructive secrecy is for maintaining systems of justice, ethics and democracy than these self-proclaimed 'open government' watchdogs. Especially when such a false accolade emanates, as in this case, from those who are supposed to serve as counters to secrecy and to retaliation against government whistleblowers."

READ MORE  http://readerssupportednews.org/opinion2/277-75/6269-rescind-president-obamas-transparency-award-now


Based on an acclaimed PBS documentary, The Secret Government (1987), analyzes the threats to constitutional government posed by an illegitimate network of spies, profiteers, mercenaries, ex-generals, and "superpatriots".

School Library Journal

YA-- In this adaptation of the script of a 1987 public television telecast, Moyers develops a carefully articulated argument against the abuses of executive power associated with the Iran-Contra affair and the Watergate break-in. He uses a variety of expert and man-in-the-street interviews to drive home the importance of an open, public discussion of issues and of an adherence to constitutional principles and prescribed rules of conduct by elected officials in a democracy. Throughout this book, Moyers traces the historical development of government covert operations and the erosion of democratic principles associated with covert action. Students deserve access to this well-reasoned polemic against governmental secrecy in a representative democracy. Moyers leaves readers not only with the information that Oliver North and others committed indictable offenses, but also engaged in activities that undermine the fabric of our government.-- Tom Irwin, Episcopal High School, Bellaire, Tex.

More Reviews and Recommendations

FARTHER BACK: JOHNSON AND NIXON
Large numbers of people no longer believe the government or the President. They no longer believe the government because they have come to understand that the government does not always tell the truth.

It was official deception over the war in Vietnam that caused a major erosion of confidence of the American people in their government.

The disclosures of the Pentagon Papers did demonstrate how easy it is for government officials to use the security classification system to keep from public view policies, decisions, and actions that are precisely the opposite of what the public is told. In other words, through official secrecy, we now have a system of institutionalized lying.
The press's failure to question government information more vigorously, the willingness to accept official "handouts" as fact, the tendency toward passive reporting - what Tom Wicker has called "the press box mentality" - has made it that much easier for government to mislead the public.

The American system is based not only upon formal checks and balances among the three branches of government, it depends also, and perhaps more importantly, on a delicate balance of confidence between the people and the government.

The consent of the governed is basic to American democracy. If the governed are misled, if they are not told the truth, or if through official secrecy and deception they lack information on which to base intelligent decisions, the system may go on - but not as a democracy.

If politics is the pursuit and exercise of power over other human beings, truth is always likely to take a secondary role to that primary objective.

It can be argued, (too,) that lying and secrecy are basic to any government; that it is only human nature for political leaders to tend to conceal the truth, hide their mistakes or wrongdoing, and mislead the public. That easy rationale is not acceptable, however, in a democracy, which depends upon an informed public.

When in 1830 President Andrew Jackson approved a brutal policy to remove all Indians to lands west of the Mississippi, he announced that the Indians were not happy living among whites, anyway. Once we "open the eyes of those children of the forest to their true condition," Jackson said, the Indians would realize "the policy of the general government toward the red man is not only liberal, but generous." The statement sounded as if it had been scripted by W.C. Fields. The Black Hawk War and the long struggle to subdue the Seminoles indicated that for the Indians at least, Jackson's credibility was low.

In 1846 James K. Polk asked Congress to declare war against Mexico, which it did, because Mexico had crossed "the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood on the American soil." In fact, the clash had taken place in a disputed area between the Rio Grande and the Nueces River. The battle had its modern parallel in the Tonkin Gulf incident of 1964; it provided the excuse to go to war. The Kentucky Whig Garrett Davis declared during the debate over Polk's war message: "It is our own President who began this war."
Lincoln, who once conceded that his own impulse for dealing with the slavery problem was to "send them to Liberia," is secure in American history as the Great Emancipator. Yet the Emancipation Proclamation, which, as Richard Hofstadter has pointed out, "had all the moral grandeur of a bill of lading," freed no slaves. It exempted Southern states and areas held by Union troops and applied only to the states that were in rebellion. Those states, of course, had no intention of complying with a proclamation issued by Lincoln.

McKinley, who once assailed annexation of the Philippines as "criminal aggression," thought differently when the Spanish-American war brought the islands within reach of America's manifest destiny. It was, McKinley decided, America's duty "to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them."

Wilson's 1916 campaign slogan "He Kept Us Out of War" proved true for five months, anyway. During the campaign Wilson warned that a Republican victory would guarantee "that we will be drawn -. . . into the embroilments of the European war." And, said Wilson, some young men ought to be interested in that."

Wilson's promises found their echo in Franklin D. Roosevelt's famous pledge in Boston, six days before the election of 1940: "I have said this before, but I shall say it again and again and again: Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars."

Many Americans can remember growing up in a time when people assumed that if the government said something, it was true. That era is gone, and faith in government belongs to the nostalgia for a vanished American past.

Distrust of government is, of course, deeply rooted in much broader social, political, and cultural forces at work in postwar America. The civil rights movement, radical protest, the youth revolt, the antiwar movement, Black Power, and Women's Lib are only a few of the phrases that have symbolized an age of alienation and protest. It is hardly surprising, for example, that many American youths should distrust a government that sent many thousands of them to die in an unpopular war in Vietnam. Or that some black Americans should distrust the government of a society that denies social justice and full equality to more than 22,000,000 citizens.

Against such a background of turbulence and political and personal alienation, the loss of public confidence in government cannot, obviously, be attributed solely to government lying and secrecy. Yet these are terribly important factors, merit ing separate attention, for they threaten the democratic process.
It is not only that government misinformation has been perceived relatively recently as a political danger, and credibility recognized as a political issue. Quantitatively as well, the amount of government misinformation today is far greater than it was prior to World War II.

The United States emerged from that war a major world power. In its new global role, America developed a powerful national security establishment, including a secret intelligence bureaucracy that spends more than $5 billion annually and a defense establishment that spends $78 billion a year. With this expansion of American power, the opportunities and temptations for information distortion by the federal government increased proportionately. To put it simply, government had more chances to lie.

p25
Often, in the foreign policy and national security area, what the government says is the news. The Tonkin Gulf episode was a classic illustration of this. The public was told that on August 4 two American warships on "routine patrol" had, in Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's words, been under "continuous torpedo attack" by North Vietnamese PT boats; in response, Lyndon Johnson ordered the first bombing attack on North Vietnam and pushed the Tonkin Gulf resolution through Congress, thereby acquiring a blank check to escalate the war. Later it became clear that there had been much confusion and considerable doubt within the government as to whether any PT-boat attack had taken place at all. The public, however, had to rely entirely on Lyndon Johnson and Robert McNamara for their news of the incident. If the details seem unimportant in the larger tapestry of the war, we need only recall that at the time 163 Americans had died in Vietnam.

In short, in the crucial field of national security, the government controls almost all the important channels of information. And where government controls the channels of information, there is a greater possibility that information will be distorted. In the foreign policy area, therefore, the potential for government lying is high.

p29
Where government controls access to both events and documents, information becomes a commodity, a tool of policy. It is shaped and packaged by the government, and sold to the public through the media.

p29
Television has not only increased the impact of news and the speed of communication, it has also increased the ease and effectiveness of information distortion by the government.
Along with technology, the rise of policy-making elites, particularly in the national security area, has exacerbated the credibility problem. The policy makers and crisis managers, drawn largely from the universities and the upper echelons of the bureaucracy, typically and arrogantly believe that only they possess the necessary intellect and skills to manage the nation's foreign policy. Moreover, they routinely receive secret intelligence information and other classified data on a daily basis, and such information is heady knowledge. As a result, it is easy for such officials to assume that the ordinary citizen is not equipped to understand complex issues of war and peace. From such an attitude, it is but a short step to justify misleading the public.

The last three Presidential assistants for national security - McGeorge Bundy, former Harvard dean, later president of the Ford Foundation; economic historian and Vietnam hawk Walt W. Rostow; and Henry A. Kissinger, Harvard government professor and nuclear strategist - have symbolized the new breed of elite policy makers. From their offices in the White House basement, they have wielded enormous personal power.

Government lying has resulted from the growth of a huge intelligence establishment since 1947. This invisible government, with the CIA at its center, has frequently engaged in secret operations that have led the United States to tell official lies. In the language of intelligence, these are "cover stories."

... The intelligence practitioners are apparently unconcerned with the long-range effect on American democracy of government lying; their concern is much narrower and pragmatic; they speak of confining intelligence operations to those that are "plausibly deniable." Thus the standard is not truth, but fashioning lies that will be believed.

When information which properly belongs to the public is systematically withheld by those in power, the people soon become ignorant of their own affairs, distrustful of those who manage them, and - eventually - incapable of determining their own destinies.
The emergence of the United States as a world power during and after World War II proportionately increased the opportunities, the temptations, and the capacity of the government to lie. The expansion of American power resulted in the growth of a vast national security establishment and an often unchecked intelligence bureaucracy. Covert operations of the CIA required official lies to protect them, and the standard in such cases became not truth, but whether the government's actions were "plausibly deniable." In other words, whether the government's lies were convincing.

As a concomitant of expanded American global power, the government has increasingly gained control over channels of information about military, diplomatic, and intelligence events. Frequently the press and public, unable to check the events independently, can only await the appearance of the President on the television screen to announce the official version of reality, be it the Bay of Pigs, Tonkin Gulf, or Laos, or Cambodia, or Vietnam.

Because of official secrecy on a scale unprecedented in our history, the government's capacity to distort information in order to preserve its own political power is almost limitless. Although General Lavelle could not find a way to convert lies into truth, the government has been more successful. Increasingly in recent years it has used the alchemy of power to brew synthetic truths and to shape our perception of events to fit predetermined policies.

If information is power, the ability to distort and control information will be used more often than not to preserve and perpetuate that power. But the national security policy makers, the crisis managers of the nuclear age, are frequently men of considerable intellectual abilities who have gone to the right schools. They pride themselves not only on their social graces, but on their rationality and morality. For such men, the preservation of partisan political power would not be a seemly rationale for official deception (although it might be entirely sufficient for the President whom they serve). National security provides the acceptable alternative, the end that justifies all means, the end that permits men who pondered the good, the true, and the beautiful as undergraduates at Harvard and Princeton to sit in air-conditioned rooms in Washington twenty years later and make decisions that result in blood and agony half a world away. It is the rationale that permits decent men to make indecent decisions.

The excuse for secrecy and deception most frequently given by those in power is that the American people must sometimes be misled in order to mislead the enemy. This justification is unacceptable on moral and philosophic grounds, and often it simply isn't true. Frequently the "enemy" knows what is going on, but the American public does not.
For example, for several years, until details were publicized by a subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the United States government waged a secret war in Laos. Secret, that is, from the American public, because presumably the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese were under no delusions about the American role. Apparently it was thought necessary, in this case, to mislead the American public in order to reveal the truth to the enemy.

When Lyndon Johnson issued his National Security Action Memorandum of April 6, 1965, which ordered that the commitment of American combat troops in Vietnam be kept secret, his actions were patently not designed to fool Hanoi or the Viet Cong, who would find out quickly enough who was shooting at them; it was designed to conceal the facts from the American electorate. The memorandum ordered that the troops be deployed "in ways that should minimize any appearance of sudden changes in policy," a concern that was clearly tailored more to domestic audiences than to public opinion in Hanoi, where there are very few American voters. Again and again the government has taken actions designed to mislead not an enemy, but the American public-just the opposite of the stated rationale for deception.

The elitists who make national security policy have combined "the arrogance of power," as Hannah Arendt has noted, with "the arrogance of mind." They have increasingly come to feel that they alone possess the necessary information and competence to deal with foreign policy crises and problems. Leslie H. Gelb, director of the task force that produced the Pentagon Papers, has written that "most of our elected and appointed leaders in the national security establishment felt they had the right - and beyond that the obligation - to manipulate the American public in the national interest as they defined it."

The elite policy makers have thus found an easy justification for both deception and secrecy. They are the only ones who "read the cables" and the intelligence reports and "have the information". Ordinary citizens, they believe, cannot understand complex foreign policy problems; ergo the policy makers have the right, so they think, to mislead the public for its own good.

In its baldest terms, this philosophy has been stated as "the right to lie." Even if officials feel compelled to mislead the public - and it is unlikely that total virtue will ever find its way into the councils of government - to proclaim that right is to place an official imprimatur on a policy of deception and distrust.

"It is sophistry to pretend that in a free country a man has some sort of inalienable or constitutional right to deceive his fellow men," Walter Lippmann has noted. "There is no more right to deceive than there is a right to swindle, to cheat, or to pick pockets."
The result of more than two decades of deception has been to shred the fabric of trust between people and government. It is not only that people no longer believe what a President tells them; the mistrust has seeped outward. It has spread, and pervaded other institutions. In the courts, for example, the government has discovered it increasingly difficult to convict peace activists or others who dissent from established policy because juries tend to disbelieve the uncorroborated testimony of government witnesses.

Within the Executive Branch itself, the lying has had an insidious effect, for in time, policy makers begin to believe their own lies. The deception designed for the public in the end becomes self-deception, as the lesson of Vietnam illustrates. To read the Pentagon Papers in detail is to perceive a group of men at the highest level of the government marching in lockstep toward certain disaster. They had begun to believe their own memoranda, "options," and "scenarios"; for them, reality had become the reflection in the fun-house mirror.

One of the most damaging aspects of government lying is that even if the truth later emerges, it seldom does so in time to influence public opinion or public policy. The extent of the government's deception over Tonkin Gulf did not begin to emerge until late in 1967 and early 1968, almost four years after the event. By then, it was too late.

And the effect of lying is cumulative; it is doubtless true, and possibly comforting, that the American public is less gullible today than twenty years ago, because it has learned that the government is not always credible. But this increased public sophistication has been earned at a terribly high price; there is now a tendency to disbelieve the government even when it is telling the truth. Like the reaction of the jury to the witness who admits perjury but insists that his new testimony is the absolute truth, the public responds to the government: "Yes, but when did you stop lying?"

Unfortunately, the remedies for government deception and secrecy are as much in the realm of morality as of politics. The only "solution" to government lying is for government to tell the truth. But given the combination of factors that has led to government deception in America on such an unprecedented scale, merely wishing it to go away will not help very much.
Any hope of change, therefore, must come through the political process. The need is to make the political cost of lying too high; to make political power rest, at least in some measure, on truth. The process of public education that began with the U-2 affair is perhaps slowly leading in that direction; paradoxically, the "credibility gap" may contain the seeds of its own destruction. The disclosures of the Pentagon Papers and the gradually dawning realization by the public that it has been systematically misled may in time have beneficial political consequences. If political leaders come to realize, through mass opinion and election returns, that deceiving the public carries greater political risks than telling the truth, the politics of lying may gradually be replaced by the politics of truth.

This may seem entirely too optimistic, and perhaps it is, but there are some signs pointing in this direction. Lyndon Johnson's low credibility quotient certainly helped to bring about his retirement. Government deception, truth, and trust were low-key issues in the 1968 Presidential campaign, but they were considerably more visible issues in 1972, despite George McGovern's failure to convert them into votes.

The fact that an issue is discussed in a Presidential campaign does not, of course, automatically guarantee any change whatsoever. In 1968 Richard Nixon seemed to recognize credibility as an important political issue; he promised to provide open government and tell the truth. After his election he followed much the same manipulative policies as had his predecessor, Lyndon Johnson. Nixon widened and deepened the credibility gap while warning against it.

Unless deception and secrecy are clearly recognized and identified as political issues of major importance, unless the President of the United States and his successors take personal steps to bring about and sustain a new atmosphere of candor and trust, there is little possibility of change, and there will be continuing danger to our political institutions. . . .


Ventura, Jesse with D. Russell. 63 *Documents the Government Doesn’t Want You to Read*. The CIA’s guide to assassination, fake terrorist attacks planned by the US, etc.

From Amazon.com:

Jesse Ventura's New Book: 63 Documents the Government Doesn't Want You to Read

Release Date: April 1, 2011

Product Description
There’s the Freedom of Information Act, and then there’s Ventura’s way.

The official spin on numerous government programs is flat-out bull****, according to Jesse Ventura. In this incredible collection of actual government documents, Ventura, the ultimate non-partisan truth-seeker, proves it beyond any doubt. He and Dick Russell walk readers through 63 of the most incriminating programs to reveal what really happens behind the closed doors. In addition to providing original government data, Ventura discusses what it really means and how regular Americans can stop criminal behavior at the top levels of government and in the media. Among the cases discussed:

• The CIA’s top-secret program to control human behavior
• Operation Northwoods—the military plan to hijack airplanes and blame it on Cuban terrorists
• The discovery of a secret Afghan archive—information that never left the boardroom
• Potentially deadly healthcare cover-ups, including a dengue fever outbreak
• What the Department of Defense knows about our food supply—but is keeping mum

Although these documents are now in the public domain, the powers that be would just as soon they stay under wraps. Ventura’s research and commentary sheds new light on what they’re not telling you—and why it matters.

About the Author
Jesse Ventura is the former governor of Minnesota and author of several bestselling books, including Don’t Start the Revolution Without Me! and American Conspiracies. Ventura is the host of the television show Conspiracy Theory with Jesse Ventura on truTV. He lives in Minnesota and Mexico.

Dick Russell is a nationally respected activist, environmentalist, and author of critically acclaimed books, including, with Jesse Ventura, The New York Times bestsellers Don't Start the Revolution Without Me! and American Conspiracies. He is also the author of On the Trail of the JFK Assassins and The Man Who Knew Too Much. Russell is a prolific publisher in many of the nation's top magazines and has been a guest on many national TV and radio programs, including the Joan Rivers Show and NBC Nightly News. He lives in Los Angeles, California.

-------------------------------------

From the website of Lew Rockwell:
The Official Spin On Top-Secret Government Programs?
Lies, Lies, and More Dirty Lies!
63 Documents the Government Doesn’t Want You to Read
By Jesse Ventura with Dick Russell
"The liberties of a people never were, nor ever will be, secure, when the transactions of their rulers may be concealed from them." – Patrick Henry
Fifty years ago, even before the dubious reign of Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon, we the American people knew our government was dishonest. Politicians can act anonymously, in secrecy, and behave unethically. In 63 Documents the Government Doesn’t Want You to Read, Jesse Ventura – Navy SEAL, wrestler, actor, governor, TV personality, and bestselling author – embarks on a pursuit for truth to unveil what our government is doing behind closed doors. "I’ve put together this book in the same spirit as the WikiLeaks’ disclosures – to reveal the truth." Ventura explains. "It’s become crystal clear that our democracy has been undermined from within and it’s been going on for a long time." This collection is actual government data; written examples of criminal activity that Ventura hopes will inspire or infuriate readers to "wake up and start demanding accountability [from guilty government figures]."

In 63 Documents, Ventura divides the facts into five sections. In each section, he discusses the scandalous behavior and gives an energetic, no-holds-barred approach to each topic:

Section #1: Links between past government perpetrations and today’s political agendas. Such as the CIA’s Secret Assassination Manual: "Maybe they should change the name to the CIA’s ‘secret first degree murder manual.’ How is that we are allowed to kill other people if we’re not in a declared war with them?"

Section #2: Delves into a series of government, military, and corporate secrets. Many veterans of the first Gulf War suffer adverse health conditions, yet the government denies the validity of Gulf War Syndrome. "What’s it going to take for our leaders to consider the real cost of these endless wars?"

Section #3: A history of "shady" White Houses. Including an internal war "between Nixon and Richard Helms, director of the CIA... Time and again, the CIA thumbs its nose even at presidents. So who runs this agency if the president doesn’t?"

Section #4: The truth about the terrible events of Sept. 11, 2001. "The question that’s haunted me from day one is, how come the world’s biggest military superpower was somehow oblivious to rogue airliners in American air space for more than an hour?"

Section #5: Examines the War on Terror. Such as the CIA’s destruction of detainee torture videos, "which makes you wonder what else is being covered up." History has shown it is impossible to enforce accountability and honesty from inside the government.

Jesse Ventura is a strong advocate for any source acting as a check on governmental integrity – including WikiLeaks, which he considers heroic: "I say let the chips fall where they may as WikiLeaks puts the truth out there...WikiLeaks is exposing our government officials for the frauds that they are." Similar to his previous New York Times bestselling book, American Conspiracies, the latest research and commentary in 63 Documents the Government Doesn’t Want You to Read sheds new light on what politicians are not telling you – and why it matters.

Jesse Ventura implores all Americans to challenge unnecessary secrecy; government leaders will show greater ethical consideration in the future if we remove their masks today.

Lew Rockwell - January 26, 2011
FARTHER, FARTHER BACK, US HISTORY
LIES TOLD BY US GOVERNMENT


---

*This Machine Kills Secrets: How Wikileaks, Cypherpunks, and Hacktivists Aim to Free the World's Information* by Andy Greenberg

END US SECRECY NEWSLETTER #1

--
Dick Bennett
My blog: War Department/Peace Department
[http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/](http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/)
Newsletters
Index:
[http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/](http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/)
National/International Days
See Newsletters
Peace, Justice, Ecology Birthdays
See INMOtion
jbennet@uark.edu
(479) 442-4600
2582 Jimmie Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72703