
OMNI’s endowed fund at UA’s Mullins Library for the purchase of books and films on Victims includes books and films on corporations and on resistance to US Imperialism Abroad and Repression at Home—including whistleblowers and investigative reporters.

My blog: The War Department and Peacemaking

http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/

Newsletters:

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

Index:

http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/

See: Wikileaks

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Sibel Edmonds Book, US and Al Qaeda Collaboration Suppressed
Write Letters to Newspapers Advocating for John Kiriakou's Pardon

Dear David,

We just delivered our petition for John Kiriakou's pardon to the White House. Now it's time to get his story in the presses.

Coincidentally, a new report by the nonpartisan Constitution Project validates John's disclosures: The U.S. indeed carried out torture on detainees, sanctioned at the highest levels of government.1 Despite this, John remains the only person connected to the torture program to go to prison.

We know the president won't act unless there is a loud public call to fix this grave injustice. That's why we're organizing letters to local and national newspapers to encourage conversation and build support for John's pardon.

Can you take a minute to send a letter to local and national newspapers in support of torture whistleblower John Kiriakou's pardon?

Can't write? Chip in $10+ to help us run ads recruiting more activists to join our campaign.

A close friend of John's has personally delivered our petition with 15,000+ signatures to White House Chief of Staff Dennis McDonough. While this was a powerful message, we know it's only a first step in securing fair justice for John.

If we can get enough letters into newspapers, we can begin to foster a conversation about John's disclosures and what it says about our nation to imprison him in light of the facts.

John's whistleblowing alerted the public to crimes committed in our names and played a major role in ending those practices. But he and his family have had to pay a price for his efforts, as the government, under both the Bush and Obama administrations, have harassed and intimidated him in the lead up to his prosecution2

As he approaches his third month in prison, we must speak out in his defense and call for him to be pardoned in recognition of his courageous service to our country.

Write a letter to the editor advocating for John Kiriakou's pardon.

Can't write? Chip in $10+ to help us run ads recruiting more activists to join our campaign.

John told us that the knowledge that he has supporters out there fighting for him has helped sustain him
during this sentence. Thank you for your continued dedication to this campaign.

Thanks for all you do

Jane Hamsher
Founder & Publisher,
Firedoglake.com

Sources:

GAP: BRIDGING THE GAP SPRING 2013

In these times. With liberty and justice for all...MAY 2013
Blood on the Tracks
Railway whistleblowers get some federal protection at last.

BY KARI LYDERSEN

‘Every time they fire Joe Blow who got hurt getting off an engine, people think, “Oh my god if I ever get hurt I better just limp home, lick my wounds, go to a hospital, just don’t report it.” ’

The 19th-century railroad boom enabled not only the settling of the American West, the industrial revolution and the growth of American cities, but also the creation of a new class of corporate owners. The railroad magnates of the 19th and early 20th centuries amassed such wealth and wielded such political clout that they seemed almost omnipotent. The 1886 U.S. Supreme Court case Santa Clara County vs. Southern Pacific Railroad Company is known as the first significant ruling to grant corporations the same constitutional equal rights protections as human beings.

In many ways, that sense of overwhelming corporate power has endured to the present, at least in major railroad companies’ relations with their employees. Railroad workers and their attorneys say—and federal courts and government regulators have agreed—that for decades there has been an endemic problem of retaliation by railroad companies against employees who are injured on the job or who speak out about safety hazards. Often the two issues go together: Injury investigations bring safety hazards to light.

Historically, the railroad industry had “a paramilitary mentality,” says Charlie Goetsch, an attorney who specializes in representing railroad workers. “In the army, if you refuse to obey an order, you’re shot or court-martialed. You do what I say or you’re fired or I make your life miserable. The workers had no power, no recourse to stand up against that. Railroad unions have been a powerful force, but they have had no ability to strike back when rail management retaliated against an individual employee for having the gall to report a safety hazard or a resulting injury. That continued on into the 21st century.”
But the industry may be in the early stages of a sea change, thanks to 2007 legislation protecting railroad workers that has been strongly backed by federal court rulings this year and complemented by policy changes and voluntary agreements involving the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

**Blaming the victim**

Railroad workers and attorneys say the railroad industry provides a prime example of a trend that has become prominent across multiple industries, from manufacturing to package delivery. That is the concept of “behavior-based safety,” wherein all accidents and injuries are assumed to be avoidable, and thus the fault of the worker. This approach is self-serving for employers in a number of ways. If the worker is theoretically to blame, it is easier (though not necessarily legal) for the company to refuse to grant workers’ compensation or other benefits. And the supposed misconduct on the worker’s part can also be used as justification for firing, so that employers don’t have to deal with injured workers.

Ron Kaminkow, general secretary of the group Railroad Workers United (RWU), which includes members of several railroad unions, explains: “If I fell off a locomotive, it’s in the interest of the rail carrier to show I was careless, or on drugs or alcohol. So when it goes to court, I have to prove that the carrier had created an unsafe workplace, and the carrier wants to prove, ‘No, we’re not liable—this worker didn’t follow these rules.’ We have a million rules for everything,” so it’s easy to find minor violations, says Kaminkow.

This approach creates a climate where workers are far less likely to report injuries since they suspect they will be blamed, disciplined or fired. That serves employers, who are mandated to pass on injury reports to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)—the U.S. agency that enforces rail safety.

“They want those numbers to be low,” says Kaminkow. “[So] in effect they are intimidating the rest of the workforce. Every time they fire Joe Blow who got hurt getting off an engine, people think, ‘Oh my god if I ever get hurt I better just limp home, lick my wounds, go to a hospital, just don’t report it.’ ”

Kaminkow’s depiction is borne out by a 2007 report by the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, which noted, “The underreporting of railroad employee injuries has long been a particular problem.”

The report also cited a 2005 Transportation Department Inspector General’s finding that the FRA investigated less than two-tenths of 1 percent of reported accidents and incidents. “It’s absurd,” says a West Coast rail yard worker who was fired over what he says were trumped-up charges after reporting a safety hazard. Since his case is pending, he didn’t want his name used.

“Are all accidents preventable?” he asks. “Look it up in the dictionary, pal! That’s nuts. Human beings will be involved in accidents, especially in an industry as dangerous as railroads.”

Seattle-based attorney George Thornton frequently represents railroad workers. He says the companies are especially likely to fire or discipline “people who are vocal about safety complaints, who won’t just go along and get along.” Instead of blaming workers for their injuries, he says, companies should actually spend money to address safety problems that lead to accidents.

The Association of American Railroads, an industry group, did not respond to interview requests for this story. An OSHA spokesperson did not respond to questions or provide requested statistics on trends in railroad workplace injuries and whistleblower complaints.

**Witness protection**
The case of New Jersey railroad worker Anthony Araujo exhibits both the systemic problems with the industry and the hope offered by Congressional amendments made to the Federal Railroad Safety Act (FRSA) in 2007.

On February 25, 2008, Araujo was working as a conductor and flagman on a commuter rail track when he saw something that would change his life. A construction worker was fatally electrocuted: “a human being in flames, burning to his death,” as Araujo describes it today. Araujo went to a counselor employed by the railroad company, he said, and was referred to a trauma specialist who found he was suffering post-traumatic stress symptoms and would need time off from work.

After receiving the specialist’s report, New Jersey Transit Rail Operations charged Araujo with violating company electrical rules, according to Araujo, and to documents from OSHA and the federal court proceedings that resulted. (A spokesperson for New Jersey Transit declined to comment for this story.)

The company ceased paying Araujo’s wages, and he subsequently fell into debt, losing his car and his home to foreclosure and having his credit ruined. And more importantly, Araujo said, “I lost my job, my respect, my relationships.”

Araujo felt—and OSHA agreed—that he was blamed and punished for his own injury. He also sees himself as a whistleblower, since in the investigation of the construction worker’s death he described what he saw as safety hazards and problems with company process.

Araujo filed a complaint against New Jersey Transit with OSHA’s whistleblower protection office, saying that he had not been investigated or charged with a rules violation until after reporting his own work-related injury. OSHA ruled in Araujo’s favor and granted him more than half a million dollars, including attorneys’ fees and lost wages for the year he was out of work. He now works for New Jersey Transit again.

New Jersey Transit appealed OSHA’s decision. But Araujo had additional recourse, thanks to the 2007 FRSA amendments.

That legislation expands protections for railroad workers under the 1926 Railway Labor Act and grants the government much greater power to intervene in railroad whistleblower cases. Individual workers like Araujo are now allowed to bring lawsuits in federal court if they have not gotten results through the administrative process.

Since the 2007 FRSA, whistleblower complaints filed under the act have risen steadily, from 45 in 2008 to 353 in 2012. The number of settlements has accordingly gone up, although the great majority of claims (more than 80 percent in 2012) are either dismissed by the agency or withdrawn by the employee.

The 2007 FRSA also created other new protections for workers, including an explicit demand that railroad companies “may not discharge, demote, suspend, reprimand, or in any other way discriminate against an employee” for protected activities, including reporting safety hazards or a workplace injury or illness. The 2007 FRSA allows OSHA and federal courts to award workers compensatory damages, lost wages, job reinstatement, attorneys’ fees and punitive damages of up to $250,000 for violations.

So Araujo appealed to federal court and, this February, received a ruling that legal advocates see as clarifying and strengthening the 2007 FRSA. The court cited the long history of retaliation in the railroad industry: “The legislative history shows that Congress was concerned that some railroad supervisors intimidated employees from reporting injuries to the FRA, in part, because their
compensation depended on low numbers of FRA reportable injuries within their supervisory area.”

Noting that people in Araujo’s position were never disciplined for the infraction of which he was accused, the appeals court overturned the lower court’s verdict that the company’s actions against Araujo were not retaliatory. But the higher court didn’t decide explicitly in Araujo’s favor, instead kicking the case back to federal district court.

However, since the appeals court emphasized Congress’s intent in strengthening railroad worker protections with the 2007 FRSA amendments, it was seen as an important victory for railroad workers.

Araujo’s attorney, Goetsch, wrote on his blog: “All railroad employees should take heart knowing that Congress and now the federal courts have declared that the FRSA must be liberally interpreted and applied so as to fully protect all employees who report injuries.”

The federal government had already sent signals that OSHA was taking the law seriously. In July 2012, the Federal Railroad Administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation signed a memorandum of agreement with OSHA elaborating on how the law would be enforced. The agreement laid the groundwork for increased cooperation between the rail administration and OSHA, which railroad workers think will mean more pro-active enforcement of the FRSA.

Meanwhile, in January OSHA announced that BNSF, the railroad majority-owned by Warren Buffett, had signed a voluntary agreement regarding alleged retaliation against workers injured on the job. The agreement included settlement offers (of undisclosed amounts) to 36 workers with pending whistleblower claims and the revision of BNSF policies regarding injuries and whistleblower complaints.

In a statement provided by BNSF, Mark Schulze, vice president for safety, training and operations support, said: “We are pleased to have voluntarily worked with OSHA in a cooperative and constructive manner to have clarified issues and look forward to continuing to work with our employees and the appropriate safety regulators to achieve our goal of a workplace free of accidents and injuries.

“These policies will continue to be valuable tools to hold employees accountable for rules compliance, focused on reducing exposure and eliminating at-risk behaviors.”

**Endless appeals**

Despite the 2007 FRSA and other positive developments, railroad workers and attorneys say there are still obstacles to workers feeling safe from retaliation when they report injuries or safety hazards. For one thing, a worker has only 180 days (six months) from the incident to file a complaint with OSHA’s whistleblower office. Some workers and attorneys say this time period is too short, since it often takes longer for workers to realize that they have legal recourse.

Railroad companies also have a right to appeal OSHA decisions to a federal administrative law judge. Attorneys and workers say major railroad companies make it a practice to do so. “The [2007] law is good and the Department of Labor is starting to do something about it,” said Thornton. “But the companies are engaging in scorched-earth litigation tactics—they refuse to pay anything, delay as much as possible, appeal everything, they fight every step of the way.”

“The railroads starve people out—there is an arbitration system to go through, but it works in such a slow way that no worker in a normal situation can afford to wait until the whole thing is over,” said the West Coast railroad worker who didn’t want his name used.
Steve Desavouret, a Chicago-area railroad worker fired by Canadian National Railway Company in relation to an incident involving a workplace injury, feels like the railroad “tried to take my life away” by appealing an OSHA ruling that he should get his job back.

“I’ve had some Teamster union activists sitting with their mouths open at some of the things rail bosses do,” he says, “things that UPS”—which has been targeted by a national Teamsters campaign around alleged blame-the-worker policies—“would not dare try to pull off.”

**Public outrage**

Since the 2007 FRSA was passed, increasing numbers of railroad safety cases have begun to reach the federal courts. Attorney Goetsch says that jurors in these cases are often aghast at the railroad industry’s practices.

“Within the industry this is a given, it’s the way it’s always been,” said Goetsch. “But people outside the railroad industry—the public—come in off the street, sit down in a jury, start learning about the railroad culture of retaliation and ignoring their own safety standards, and they become outraged. They don’t understand how any employer could fire someone for reporting an injury that results from a hazardous condition. Members of the public get that immediately, because it seems so bizarre and so wrong.”

Andrew Barati worked as a trackman for Metro-North, a New York/Connecticut commuter rail, when in April 2008 his left big toe was crushed as he lowered the load from a jack. The company disciplined and then fired him, saying the accident was his fault. Barati took his case to federal court and in March 2012 a jury decided that negligence by the company was in part responsible for Barati’s injury. The jury awarded him $1 million in punitive damages for his retaliatory firing—more than the amount actually allowed under the FRSA. (A spokesperson for Metro-North declined to comment.)

Goetsch said that the jury’s outsized award was an example of just how outraged many regular Americans are when they get a window into the inner workings of the railroad industry.

Many Americans see railroad safety—and by extension, labor issues—as affecting the larger society, too, since rail accidents and spills can be devastating for large numbers of people.

Goetsch hopes that growing public awareness will contribute to the willingness of federal officials to stand up for railroad workers, of Congress to support legislative protections and of workers themselves to come forward.

“I like to think of it as a battleship,” said Goetsch. “A battleship doesn’t turn on a dime. We’re in the middle-early stages of taking the wheel and turning it and holding it down. The railroads are starting to change course, the battleship is starting to move, but it’s not there yet by any stretch.”

Araujo knows that he still has a long road ahead.

“Even if I have a jury trial next year, it could still be 10 years before I have a final resolution,” Araujo said. “A lot of people see what happened to me and think, ‘I don’t want to go through that.’ But I’m proud to be standing up. It’s not about me. It’s about changing this culture of retaliation … so we can survive, stand up, make a difference, so it’s not just business as usual anymore.”

**ABOUT THIS AUTHOR**

Kari Lydersen, an In These Times contributing editor, is a Chicago-based journalist whose works has
appeared in The New York Times, the Washington Post, the Chicago Reader and The Progressive, among other publications. Her most recent book is Revolt on Goose Island. In 2011, she was awarded a Studs Terkel Community Media Award for her work. She can be reached at kari.lydersen@gmail.com.

More information about Kari Lydersen

1-800-FED-INFO (333-4636)

**Whistleblower Protection**

A whistleblower is a person who reports misconduct in an organization. The misconduct can be the violation of a law or regulation, fraud, health/safety violations, or corruption. Whistleblowers may face reprisals from the organizations, such as termination of employment.

To protect whistleblowers, the federal government and several states have whistleblower protection laws:

- **Federal Government**
  The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) investigates whistleblower disclosures from federal employees, former employees, and applicants for federal employment. For more information, please view the OSC's information about whistleblower disclosures or call their hotline at 1-800-572-2249.

- **Military**
  The Military Whistleblower Protection Act protects servicemembers. A military inspector general's office or the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General (DODIG) can investigate whistleblower violations. For more information, visit the DODIG's Defense Hotline Reprisal Complaints website or call their hotline at 1-800-424-9098.

- **State and Local Government and the Private Sector**
  Many states have whistleblower protection laws for employees of state government and the private sector. Please contact your state attorney general for more information. The Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act provides whistleblower protection for occupational safety and health related matters.

**Need More Information? Try These Additional Resources:**

- StopFraud.gov (Financial Fraud)
- Whistleblower Protection Act of 1989 (WPA)
- Sarbanes-Oxley Act
OVERVIEW
The Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act) and a number of other laws protect workers against retaliation for complaining to their employers, unions, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), or other government agencies about unsafe or unhealthful conditions in the workplace, environmental problems, certain public safety hazards, and certain violations of federal provisions concerning securities fraud, as well as for engaging in other related protected activities. Whistleblowers may not be transferred, denied a raise, have their hours reduced, or be fired or punished in any other way because they have exercised any right afforded to them under one of the laws that protect whistleblowers.

Pursuant to most of these laws, discrimination complaints must be filed as soon as possible - within 30 days of the alleged reprisal. OSHA Area Office staff can explain the protections under the whistleblower laws and deadlines for filing complaints.

Workers who believe that they have been subject to retaliation for engaging in health and safety actions that are protected under the OSH Act may file complaints with a federal OSHA Area Office representative. In those states operating OSHA-approved State Plan (except those plans covering only public sector employees), private sector employees may file
complaints for retaliation with either a federal OSHA Area Office representative or with a State Plan representative. States with OSHA-approved State Plans also protect state and local government employees against retaliation, but in those states, public sector workers can file complaints for retaliation only with State Plan representatives. MORE http://www.dol.gov/compliance/laws/comp-whistleblower.htm

1.

Part 2: Robert Greenwald on Film "War on Whistleblowers: Free ...
Democracy Now (blog) - Apr 18, 2013

The film, War on Whistleblowers, profiles Michael DeKort, a Lockheed Martin project manager who posted a whistleblowing video on YouTube.

2.

3.

Filmmaker Robert Greenwald on "War on Whistleblowers: Free ...
Truth-Out - Apr 19, 2013

A new film directed by Robert Greenwald looks at four whistleblowers who had their lives practically destroyed after they went to the press with ...

4.

5.

Robert Greenwald's 'War on Whistleblowers' Shows Importance of ...
Firedoglake - Apr 16, 2013

In a small auditorium at the Newseum in Washington, DC, Brave New Films director Robert Greenwald held the premiere of his new ...

+ Show more

6.

7.
'War on Whistleblowers' Film Highlights Dangers of Crackdown
RollingStone.com-Apr 17, 2013

Director Robert Greenwald's latest film, War On Whistleblowers: Free Press and the National Security State, focuses on four whistleblowers...

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9.

'The War on Whistleblowers,' a Documentary
New York Times-Apr 18, 2013

Controversial or not, according to “War on Whistleblowers,” these cases are all ... To clinch his argument, Mr. Greenwald points out that despite ...

+  

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10.
11.

INTERVIEW: War on Whistleblowers’ director Robert Greenwald
The Week Magazine-Apr 15, 2013

War on Whistleblowers, a documentary by Brave New Foundation, premieres this week in Washington, D.C., and New York City. The film ...

12.
13.

Filmmaker: Obama's war on whistleblowers 'a terrible disservice to ...  
Raw Story-by Stephen C. Webster-Apr 14, 2013

Filmmaker: Obama's war on whistleblowers 'a terrible disservice to ... documentary filmmaker Robert Greenwald said that his latest film will ...

14.
15.
Barack Obama will strengthen whistleblower laws to protect federal workers who expose waste, fraud, and abuse of authority in government.

Everyone is talking about War on Whistleblowers, the new documentary from Robert Greenwald of Brave New Films. The film uses the stories ... 

... journalists attest in “War on Whistleblowers: Free Press and the National Security State,” a timely documentary directed by Robert Greenwald ...


FBI whistle-blower Sibel Edmonds was described as “the most gagged person in the history of the United States” by the American Civil Liberties Union. Was the Sunday Times pressured to drop its investigation into her revelations?

By Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed
A whistleblower has revealed extraordinary information on the U.S. government’s support for international terrorist networks and organised crime. The government has denied the allegations yet gone to extraordinary lengths to silence her. Her critics have derided her as a fabulist and fabricator. But now comes word that some of her most serious allegations were confirmed by a major European newspaper only to be squashed at the request of the U.S. government.

In a recent book Classified Woman, Sibel Edmonds, a former translator for the FBI, describes how the Pentagon, CIA and State Department maintained intimate ties to al-Qaeda militants as late as 2001. Her memoir, Classified Woman: The Sibel Edmonds Story, published last year, charged senior government officials with negligence, corruption and collaboration with al Qaeda in illegal arms smuggling and drugs trafficking in Central
Asia.

In interviews with this author in early March, Edmonds claimed that Ayman al-Zawahiri, current head of al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden’s deputy at the time, had innumerable, regular meetings at the U.S. embassy in Baku, Azerbaijan, with U.S. military and intelligence officials between 1997 and 2001, as part of an operation known as ‘Gladio B’. Al-Zawahiri, she charged, as well as various members of the bin Laden family and other mujahideen, were transported on NATO planes to various parts of Central Asia and the Balkans to participate in Pentagon-backed destabilisation operations.

According to two Sunday Times journalists speaking on condition of anonymity, this and related revelations had been confirmed by senior Pentagon and MI6 officials as part of a four-part investigative series that were supposed to run in 2008. The Sunday Times journalists described how the story was inexplicably dropped under the pressure of undisclosed “interest groups”, which, they suggest, were associated with the U.S. State Department.

Shooting the Messenger

Described by the American Civil Liberties Union as the “most gagged person in the history of the United States of America,” Edmonds studied criminal justice, psychology and public policy at George Washington and George Mason universities. Two weeks after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, her fluency in Turkish, Farsi and Azerbaijani earned her an FBI contract at the Washington DC field office. She was tasked with translating highly classified intelligence from operations against terrorism suspects in and outside the U.S..

In the course of her work, Edmonds became privy to evidence that U.S. military and intelligence agencies were collaborating with Islamist militants affiliated with al-Qaeda, the very forces blamed for the 9/11 attacks – and that officials in the FBI were covering up the evidence. When Edmonds complained to her superiors, her family was threatened by one of the subjects of her complaint, and she was fired. Her accusations of espionage against her FBI colleagues were eventually investigated by the Justice Department’s Office of the Inspector General, which did not give details about the allegations as they remained classified.

Although no final conclusions about the espionage allegations were reached, the Justice Department concluded that many of Edmonds’ accusations “were supported, that the FBI did not take them seriously enough and that her allegations were, in fact, the most significant factor in the FBI’s decision to terminate her services.”

When she attempted to go public with her story in 2002, and again in 2004, the U.S. government silenced Edmonds by invoking a legal precedent known as “state secrets privilege” – a near limitless power to quash a lawsuit based solely on the government’s claim that evidence or testimony could divulge information that might undermine “national security.” Under this doctrine, the government sought to retroactively classify basic information concerning Edmonds’s case already in the public record, including, according to the New York Times, “what languages Ms. Edmonds translated, what types of cases she handled, and what employees she worked with, officials said. Even routine and widely
disseminated information — like where she worked — is now classified.”

Although certainly not the first invocation of “state secrets privilege”, since the Edmonds case the precedent has been used repeatedly in the post-9/11 era under both the Bush and Obama administrations to shield the U.S. government from court scrutiny of rendition, torture, warrantless wiretapping, as well as the President’s claimed war powers.

Other intelligence experts agree that Edmonds had stumbled upon a criminal conspiracy at the heart of the American judicial system. In her memoirs, she recounts that FBI Special Agent Gilbert Graham, who also worked in the Washington field office on counter-intelligence operations, told her over a coffee how he “ran background checks on federal judges” in the “early nineties for the bureau… If we came up with shit – skeletons in their closets – the Justice Department kept it in their pantry to be used against them in the future or to get them to do what they want in certain cases – cases like yours.” A redacted version of Graham's classified protected disclosure to the Justice Department regarding these allegations, released in 2007, refers to the FBI’s “abuse of authority” by conducting illegal wiretapping to obtain information on U.S. public officials.

Incubating Terror

Five years ago, Edmonds revealed to the Sunday Times that an unidentified senior U.S. State Department official was on the payroll of Turkish agents in Washington, passing on nuclear and military secrets. “He was aiding foreign operatives against U.S. interests by passing them highly classified information, not only from the State Department but also from the Pentagon, in exchange for money, position and political objectives”, Edmonds told the paper. She reported coming across this information when listening to suppressed phone calls recorded by FBI surveillance, marked by her colleague Melek Can Dickerson as “not pertinent”.

In the Sunday Times exposé, Edmonds described a parallel organisation in Israel cooperating with the Turks on illegal weapons sales and technology transfers. Between them, Israel and Turkey operated a range of front companies incorporated in the U.S. with active “moles in sensitive military and nuclear institutions”, supported by U.S. officials, in order to sell secrets to the highest bidder. One of the buyers was Pakistan’s Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) – which often used its Turkish allies, according to the Times, “as a conduit… because they were less likely to attract suspicion.”

The Pakistani operation was, the paper reported, “led by General Mahmoud Ahmad, then the ISI chief” from 1999 to 2001, when the agency helped train, supply and coordinate the Afghan Taliban and gave sanctuary to their Arab allies brought together in the coalition named al-Qaeda. Ahmad, as the Times noted, “was accused [by the FBI] of sanctioning a $100,000 wire payment to Mohammed Atta, one of the 9/11 hijackers, immediately before the attacks.”

According to Indian intelligence officials, they had assisted the FBI in “tracing and establishing” the financial trail between the General and the chief hijacker. The discovery was, they allege, the real reason behind the General’s sudden retirement in October 2001. The Pakistani daily, The News, reported on 10th September 2001 that the ISI chief
held several “mysterious meetings at the Pentagon and National Security Council” that week, including with CIA director George Tenet.

In an interview with this author in March, Edmonds raised the question of whether U.S. officials’ liaisons with an espionage network overseen by Ahmad, and the FBI’s suppression of related intelligence, played a role in facilitating the attacks.

“Following 9/11, a number of the foreign operatives were taken in for questioning by the FBI on suspicion that they knew about or somehow aided the attacks”, reported the *Sunday Times*. The paper related that according to Edmonds, the senior State Department official received a call from a foreign agent under FBI surveillance asking for help to “get them out of the U.S. because we can’t afford for them to spill the beans.” The official promised “he would ‘take care of it’.”

Edmonds told this author that high-level corruption compromised the ability of the U.S. intelligence community to pursue ongoing investigations of those planning the 9/11 attacks. “It was precisely those militants that were incubated by some of America’s key allies”, she said. Corruption helped guarantee Congressional silence when that incubation strategy backfired in the form of 9/11. “Both Republican and Democratic representatives in the House and Senate came up in FBI counterintelligence investigations for taking bribes from foreign agents”, she said.

**Al-Qaeda: Enemy or Asset?**

In her interview, Edmonds insisted that after its initial exposé, the *Times*’ investigation had gone beyond such previous revelations, and was preparing to disclose her most startling accusations. Among these, Edmonds described how the CIA and the Pentagon had been running a series of covert operations supporting Islamist militant networks linked to Osama bin Laden right up to 9/11, in Central Asia, the Balkans and the Caucasus.

While it is widely recognised that the CIA sponsored bin Laden’s networks in Afghanistan during the Cold War, U.S. government officials deny any such ties existed. Others claim these ties were real, but were severed after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989.

But according to Edmonds, this narrative is false. “Not just bin Laden, but several senior ‘bin Laudens’ were transported by U.S. intelligence back and forth to the region in the late 1990s through to 2001”, she told this author, “including Ayman al-Zawahiri” – Osama bin Laden’s right-hand-man who has taken over as al-Qaeda’s top leader.

“In the late 1990s, all the way up to 9/11, al-Zawahiri and other mujahideen operatives were meeting regularly with senior U.S. officials in the U.S. embassy in Baku to plan the Pentagon’s Balkan operations with the mujahideen,” said Edmonds. “We had support for these operations from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, but the U.S. oversaw and directed them. They were being run from a secret section of the Pentagon with its own office”.
Edmonds clarified, “the FBI counterintelligence investigation which was tracking these targets, along with their links to U.S. officials, was known as ‘Gladio B’, and was kickstarted in 1997. It so happens that Major Douglas Dickerson” – the husband of her FBI co-worker Melek whom she accused of espionage – “specifically directed the Pentagon’s ‘Gladio’ operations in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan at this time.”

In testimony under oath, Edmonds has previously confirmed that Major Doug Dickerson worked for the Pentagon’s Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) under the weapons procurement logistics division on Turkey and Central Asia, and with the Office of Special Plans (OSP) overseeing policy in Central Asia.

**Gladio B**

Edmonds said that the Pentagon operations with Islamists were an “extension” of an original ‘Gladio’ programme uncovered in the 1970s in Italy, part of an EU-wide NATO covert operation that began as early as the 1940s. As Swiss historian Dr. Daniele Ganser records in his seminal book, *NATO’s Secret Armies*, an official Italian parliamentary inquiry confirmed that British MI6 and the CIA had established a network of secret “stay-behind” paramilitary armies, staffed by fascist and Nazi collaborators. The covert armies carried out terrorist attacks throughout Western Europe, officially blamed on Communists in what Italian military intelligence called the ‘strategy of tension’.

“You had to attack civilians, the people, women, children, innocent people, unknown people far removed from any political game” explained Gladio operative Vincenzo Vinciguerra during his trial in 1984. “The reason was quite simple. They were supposed to force these people… to turn to the State to ask for greater security.”

While the reality of Gladio’s existence in Europe is a matter of historical record, Edmonds contended the same strategy was adopted by the Pentagon in the 1990s in a new theatre of operations, namely, Asia. “Instead of using neo-Nazis, they used mujahideen working under various bin Ladens, as well as al-Zawahiri”, she said.

The last publicly known Gladio meeting occurred in NATO’s Allied Clandestine Committee (ACC) in Brussels in 1990. While Italy was a focal point for the older European operations, Edmonds said that Turkey and Azerbaijan served as the main conduits for a completely new, different set of operations in Asia using veterans of the anti-Soviet campaign in
Afghanistan, the so-called “Afghan Arabs” that had been trained by al-Qaeda.

These new Pentagon-led operations were codenamed ‘Gladio B’ by FBI counterintelligence: “In 1997, NATO asked [Egyptian President] Hosni Mubarak to release from prison Islamist militants affiliated to Ayman al-Zawahiri [whose role in the assassination of Anwar Sadat led to Mubarak’s ascension]. They were flown under U.S. orders to Turkey for [training and use in] operations by the Pentagon”, she said.

Edmonds’ allegations find some independent corroboration in the public record. The Wall Street Journal refers to a nebulous agreement between Mubarak and “the operational wing of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, which was then headed by Ayman al-Zawahiri… Many of that group’s fighters embraced a cease-fire with the government of former President Hosni Mubarak in 1997.”

Youssef Bodansky, former Director of the Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, cited U.S. intelligence sources in an article for Defense and Foreign Affairs: Strategic Policy, confirming “discussions between the Egyptian terrorist leader Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri and an Arab-American known to have been both an emissary of the CIA and the U.S. Government.” He referred to an “offer” made to al-Zawahiri in November 1997 on behalf of U.S. intelligence, granting his Islamists a free hand in Egypt as long as they lent support to U.S. forces in the Balkans. In 1998, Al Zawahiri’s brother, Muhammed, led an elite unit of the Kosovo Liberation Army against Serbs during the Kosovo conflict – he reportedly had direct contact with NATO leadership.

“This is why”, Edmonds continued in her interview, “even though the FBI routinely monitored the communications of the diplomatic arms of all countries, only four countries were exempt from this protocol – the UK, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Belgium – the seat of NATO. No other country – not even allies like Israel or Saudi Arabia, were exempt. This is because these four countries were integral to the Pentagon’s so-called Gladio B operations.”

Edmonds did not speculate on the objectives of the Pentagon’s ‘Gladio B’ operations, but highlighted the following possibilities: projecting U.S. power in the former Soviet sphere of influence to access previously untapped strategic energy and mineral reserves for U.S. and European companies; pushing back Russian and Chinese power; and expanding the scope of lucrative criminal activities, particularly illegal arms and drugs trafficking.

Terrorism finance expert Loretta Napoleoni estimates the total value of this criminal economy to be about $1.5 trillion annually, the bulk of which “flows into Western economies, where it gets recycled in the U.S. and in Europe” as a “vital element of the cash flow of these economies.”

It is no coincidence then that the opium trade, Edmonds told this author, has grown rapidly under the tutelage of NATO in Afghanistan: “I know for a fact that NATO planes routinely shipped heroin to Belgium, where they then made their way into Europe and to the UK. They also shipped heroin to distribution centres in Chicago and New Jersey. FBI counterintelligence and DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) operations had acquired evidence of this drug trafficking in its surveillance of a wide range of targets, including
senior officials in the Pentagon, CIA and State Department. As part of this surveillance, the role of the Dickersons – with the support of these senior U.S. officials – in facilitating drug-trafficking, came up. It was clear from this evidence that the whole funnel of drugs, money and terror in Central Asia was directed by these officials.”

The evidence for this funnel, according to Edmonds, remains classified in the form of FBI counterintelligence surveillance records she was asked to translate. Although this alleged evidence has never made it to court due to the U.S. government's exertion of ‘state secret privilege’, she was able to testify in detail concerning her allegations, including naming names, in 2009.

**Censorship**

In recent interviews, two Sunday Times journalists confirmed to this author that the newspaper’s investigation based on Sibel Edmonds’ revelations was to break much of the details into the open.

“We’d spoken to several current and active Pentagon officials confirming the existence of U.S. operations sponsoring mujahideen networks in Central Asia from the 1990s to 2001,” said one Sunday Times source. “Those mujahideen networks were intertwined with a whole range of criminal enterprises, including drugs and guns. The Pentagon officials corroborated Edmonds’ allegations against specific U.S. officials, and I’d also interviewed an MI6 officer who confirmed that the U.S. was running these operations sponsoring mujahideen in that period.”

But according to Edmonds, citing the investigative team at the paper, the last two articles in the series were spiked under U.S. State Department pressure. She recalled being told at the time by journalists leading the Sunday Times investigation that the newspaper’s editor had decided to squash the story after receiving calls from officials at the U.S. embassy in London.

A journalist with the Sunday Times' investigative unit told this author he had interviewed former Special Agent in Charge, Dennis Saccher, who had moved to the FBI’s Colorado office. Saccher reportedly confirmed the veracity of Edmonds’ allegations of espionage, telling him that Edmonds’ story “should have been front page news” because it was “a scandal bigger than Watergate.” The same journalist confirmed that after interviewing Saccher at his home, the newspaper was contacted by the U.S. State Department. “The U.S. embassy in London called the editor and tried to ward him off. We were told that we weren’t permitted to approach Saccher or any other active FBI agents directly, but could only go through the FBI’s press office – that if we tried to speak to Saccher or anyone else employed by the FBI directly, that would be illegal. Of course, it isn’t, but that’s what we were told. I think this was a veiled threat.”

Saccher’s comments to the journalist never made it to press.

A lead reporter on the series at the Sunday Times told this author that the investigation based on Edmonds’ information was supposed to have four parts, but was inexplicably dropped. “The story was pulled half-way, suddenly, without any warning”, the journalist
said. “I wasn’t party to the editorial decision to drop the story, but there was a belief in the office amongst several journalists who were part of the Insight investigative unit that the decision was made under pressure from the U.S. State Department, because the story might cause a diplomatic incident.”

Although the journalist was unaware of where this belief came from – and was not informed of the U.S. embassy’s contact with the paper’s editor which the other journalist was privy to – he acknowledged that self-censorship influenced by unspecified “interest groups” was a possible explanation. “The way the story was dropped was unusual, but the belief amongst my colleagues this happened under political pressure is plausible.” He cryptically described an “editorial mechanism, linked to the paper but not formally part of it, which could however exert control on stories when necessary, linked to certain interests.” When asked which interests, the journalist said, “I can’t say. I can’t talk about that.”

Edmonds described how, due to the U.S. government’s efforts to silence her, she had no option left except to write her story down. The resultant book, *Classified Woman*, had to be submitted to an FBI panel for review. By law, the bureau was required to make a decision on what could be disclosed or redacted within 30 days.

Instead, about a year later, Edmonds’ lawyer received a letter from the FBI informing them that the agency was still reviewing the book, and prohibiting her from publishing it: “The matters Ms. Edmonds writes about involve many equities, some of which may implicate information that is classified… Approval of the manuscripts by the FBI will include incorporation of all changes required by the FBI. Until then, Ms. Edmonds does not have approval to publish her manuscripts which includes showing them to editors, literary agents, publishers, reviewers, or anyone else. At this point, Ms. Edmonds remains obligated not to disclose or publish the manuscript in any manner.”

The block was another example, Edmonds said, “of the abuse of ‘national security’ to conceal evidence of criminality.” She said that this forced her to release the book herself in March 2012, as no publisher would risk taking it on.

[forwarded by Sonny San Juan Jr. –D]
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Dick Bennett
My blog:
War Department/Peace Department
http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/
Newsletters
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/
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