What’s at stake: “Over the past decades, the fear of terrorism—stoked by consistent exaggerations of the actual threat—has been exploited by US leaders to justify a wide array of extremist policies. It has led to wars of aggression, a worldwide torture regime, and the detention (and even assassination) of both foreign nationals and American citizens without any charges. But the ubiquitous, secretive system of suspicionless surveillance that it has spawned may very well turn out to be its most enduring legacy.” Glenn Greenwald, No Place to Hide (p. 5).

For the poet Nizar Qabbani, “‘terrorism’ is the word used by oppressors to defame a national liberation struggle.” Tariq Ali, Bush in Babylon (pp. 6-7).

There is no incentive to end the “war”: In contrast to the military-industrial complex Pres. Eisenhower warned us against, the “new homeland security-industrial complex... is largely made up of a web of intelligence agencies and their contractors” [my emphasis] that “help Washington determine the scale and scope of the terrorist threat; they make no money if they determine that the threat is overblown or, God forbid, if the war on terror ever comes to an end.” This “permanent national security elite rotates among senior government posts, contracting companies, think tanks, and television commentary, opportunities that would disappear if America was suddenly at peace. To most of America, war has become not only tolerable but profitable, and so there is no longer any great incentive to end it.” James Risen, Pay Any Price, pp. xiv-xv. Support: Michael Glennon, National Security and Double Government. More on both books below.
Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters:

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/ Here is the link to the Index:  
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/


My blog:
We Have a War Department/We Need a Peace Department

http://jamesricharbennett.blogspot.com/

See: 9/11 Newsletters

“Number of private U.S. citizens killed in terrorist attacks in 2010: 15. Number killed by falling televisions: 16.” (“Harper’s Index,” August 2012, p. 9). Yet our warrior leaders and their war-monger supporters have produced two full-scale “anti-terror” wars (and three small-scale invasions) to defend “America” and “freedom” at the price of trillions of dollars and tens of thousands of innocent people. In my 9 newsletters on the “War on Terror” plenty of evidence supports the idea of a War on Falling Televisions! Dick

Contents of #4-11 at end.

Contents of War on/of Terrorism Newsletter #12

War on Terror? War of Terror?
Dick, What Is the Purpose of the so-called “War on Terrorism”?
Tomgram, Tom Engelhardt, What Victims Count in Terror War?
Joanie Connors, US Muslims Contrast to US Christians
Seymour Hersh, Killing bin Laden

Stop Permanent War
Chomsky, US No. 1 Terrorist State
FCNL, No to War Against ISIS
Nawaz, How Stop Global Jihadism

Causes and Consequences of US Wars
Michael Glennon, National Security and Double Government, From Madisonians to Trumanites
James Risen, Pay Any Price: Greed, Power and Endless War
Corporate Media Fear-and-War Mongers
D’Almeida, War of Terror Against Muslims, US Terror Suspects Face Terrifying Justice System
>From 2001 to 2014, Permanent War: PTSD and Suicide, Jacob George

Surveillance State
Jaycox, Patriot Act vs. Democracy

Writing About the War on/of Terror
Warrior Writers, Writing and Art by Veterans of War on/of Terror

Dick Bennett, Why were Abdishakur and Ahmed Abdi Godane Killed?
What is the Purpose of the “War on Terrorism”?

Are our leaders and the troops fighting only to “win” by killing a varied assortment of
“terrorists,” or to expand democracy at home and around the world, or what? Take the recent airstrike in Somalia that killed, according to the headline, a “terror chief.” The “intelligence chief of Somali terror group al-Shabab,” Abdishakur, and “two other Al-Shabab militants” were slain by a U.S. “airstrike.” In September, we are told, an “airstrike” killed al-Shabab’s leader, Ahmed Abdi Godane.

Now, what is al-Shabab? And how does its evil justify the killings? The reporter explains: “Al-Shabab is an ultraconservative Islamic militant group that is linked to the al-Qaida terrorist network. It wants to run Somalia by its strict interpretation of Shariah law.” As a long-time member of the American Humanist Association, strict Shariah law (different degrees exist) seem abhorrent to me, but where does it occur in our Constitution or statutes permission to kill adherents in another country to a repulsive form of religion?

The report abounds with mysteries. What is the al-Qaida network, much hated in the US for organizing the World Trade buildings bombings fourteen years ago, whose leader was murdered by Navy Seals and its members allegedly (“linked”) have fearsomely spread throughout the world, so that we can judge whether al Shabab is “linked” to them, and where is the evidence?

The President of the United States of America, who is also a constitutional law professor, has ordered the execution/murder of an alleged criminal without trial, and we are blithely told of the event without explanation except by association with two bad groups. How did we reach this low point of “justice”?

The “Pentagon provided no details beyond saying it did not believe that the attack caused any civilian or bystander casualties.” Did not believe, was not sure? They and our president are bombing and shooting around the world in other sovereign nations, behavior utterly forbidden by the UN Charter, and they are unsure whom they executed? The President of the U.S., who chooses the “targets,” has ordered the execution of an alleged terrorist, and the Pentagon gives only this lame assurance that innocent people have not also been extra-judicially executed, a euphemism for murder, and by a “senior official” who will not give his name, so on several levels nobody is accountable: “A U.S. airstrike killed. . . .”? Why does he not say drone? Why does he not say assassination? Why does he use the passive voice, when we need to know the agent? Nobody ordered it, nobody pulled the trigger? Only: “A senior defense official” of the Pentagon “ said.

What kind of media have we now if this Somalia “airstrike” report only partly exemplifies a lack of high standards of reporting essential to a democracy? No attributable, accountable source given from the Pentagon, and no media source, only that it came geographically from Nairobi. Associated Press? Reuters? Bloomberg News? The New York Times? Who is responsible for such uninformative, sloppy, uncritical, irresponsible reporting? How did our journalism reach this low point of unprofessionalism?

In one major way, contrast with a real US war exposes the ramified immorality, illegality,
incompetence, and pathetic shabbiness of the empire and militarism of the past several decades underlying the Somalia report and the “War on/of Terror.” Leading up to and during WWII, despite the enormous difficulties posed by Depression, War, and opposition by corporate leaders, the nation under President Roosevelt and the New Deal enlarged democracy by expanding liberty and equality. Class inequalities decreased; for example, the income of the bottom two-fifths of the population increased faster than the top 20 percent, infant mortality declined by one-third, and life expectancy gained, especially for African Americans. War preparation in defense against aggression received widespread support. In all, 16,000,000 men and women entered military service during WWII and at its peak in 1943 55 million had joined the civilian labor force. The U.S. became truly the Arsenal for Democracy.

But after WWII? US leaders—Pentagon, Congress, White House—initiated war after war, intervention after intervention—over forty by one historian’s account—, year after year frightening the public into accepting their nation’s aggressions as normal, and the increases in the Pentagon budget and the expansion of the military-industrial complex as necessary. And democracy—liberty and equality for all—has simultaneously declined, from the Patriot Act to NSA surveillance, and from the widening income divide to the waves of corporate and 1% money flooding our elections.

Killing/assassinating al-Shabab’s intelligence chief and two of his “militants” has nothing to do with US democracy or even with the safety of the world’s still greatest arsenal. What is the purpose of our powerful nation’s permanent fear and aggression? On one thing most agree: they know the assassination of Abdishakur was not committed to secure the status quo of plutocracy.

“Somalia: Airstrike Killed Terror Chief.” Arkansas Democrat-Gazette (December 31, 2014), 4A.


May 3, 2015

Tomgram: Engelhardt, Counting Bodies, Then and Now

[Note to TomDispatch Readers: Don’t forget that the TomDispatch donation page is chock-a-block full of books that matter in our world right now, any one of them ready to be signed and personalized]
for you in return for a $100 donation to this site. Included are Nick Turse’s remarkable volume of independent reportage on the U.S. military’s “pivot” to Africa, *Tomorrow’s Battlefield: U.S. Proxy Wars and Secret Ops in Africa*; Christian Appy’s insightful history of how the Vietnam War played out in America to this moment, *American Reckoning: The Vietnam War and Our National Identity*; and my own *Shadow Government: Surveillance, Secret Wars, and a Global Security State in a Single-Superpower World*. Contributing to TD is a great deal for both of us: you get a book to remember and we get to keep going! Tom]

**Who Counts?**

**Body Counts, Drones, and “Collateral Damage” (aka “Bug Splat”)**

By Tom Engelhardt

In the twenty-first-century world of drone warfare, one question with two aspects reigns supreme: Who counts?

In Washington, the answers are the same: We don’t count and they don’t count.

The Obama administration has adamantly refused to count. Not a body. In fact, for a long time, American officials associated with Washington’s drone assassination campaigns and “signature strikes” in the backlands of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Yemen claimed that there were no bodies to count, that the CIA’s drones were so carefully handled and so “precise” that they never produced an unmeant corpse -- not a child, not a parent, not a wedding party. Nada.

When it came to “collateral damage,” there was no need to count because there was nothing to tote up or, at worst, such civilian casualties were “in the single digits.” That this was balderdash, that often when those drones unleashed their Hellfire missiles they were unsure who exactly was being targeted, that civilians were dying in relatively countable numbers -- and that others were indeed counting them -- mattered little, at least in this country until recently. Drone war was, after all, innovative and, as presented by two administrations, quite miraculous. In 2009, CIA Director Leon Panetta called it “the only game in town” when it came to al-Qaeda. And what a game it was. It needed no math, no metrics. As the Vietnam War had proved, counting was for losers -- other than the usual media reports that so many “militants” had died in a strike or that some al-Qaeda “lieutenant” or “leader” had gone down for the count.

That era ended on April 23rd when President Obama entered the White House briefing room and apologized for the deaths of American aid worker Warren Weinstein and Italian aid worker Giovanni Lo Porto, two Western hostages of al-Qaeda. They had, the president confessed, been obliterated in a strike against a terrorist compound in Pakistan, though in his comments he managed not to mention the word “drone,” describing what happened vaguely as a “U.S. counterterrorism operation.” In other words, it turned out that the administration was capable of counting -- at least to two.

And that brings us to the other meaning of “Who counts?” If you are an innocent American or Western civilian and a drone takes you out, you count. If you are an innocent Pakistani, Afghan, or Yemeni, you don’t. You didn’t count before the drone killed you and you don’t count as a corpse either. For you, no one apologizes, no one pays your relatives compensation for your unjust death, no one even acknowledges that you existed. This is modern American drone reality and the question of who counts and whom, if anyone, to count is part of the contested legacy of Washington’s never-ending war on terror.

[Click here to read more of this dis]
"Despite what the bigots in Washington and in the media will tell you, this survey indicates that American Muslims—compared with American Christians, American Jews, and atheists/agnostics—are the least likely to support terrorism."

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**KILLING BIN LADEN**

Why We Need to Take Sy Hersh’s bin Laden Bombshell Seriously

The dean of American investigative journalism knows a thing or two about how to vet sources and separate fact from fiction.

*Bob Dreyfuss*

May 20, 2015  |  *This article appeared in the June 8, 2015 edition of The Nation.*  [In my print copy the title is “Sy Hersh’s Bombshell.”]  --Dick

Early in 2009, just before Barack Obama took office, I shared an elevator with Michael Vickers, then an assistant defense secretary and chief architect of America’s “war on terror.” “So,” I asked
him, “is ISI [Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence] friend or foe?” Vickers exhaled audibly. “It’s complicated—I’ll put it that way,” he replied. “It’s not black and white.”

Now, thanks to the indefatigable Seymour Hersh, the dean of American investigative journalists, we may have gotten a glimpse into just how complicated those relations are. In a 10,000-word blockbuster in the London Review of Books, Hersh unfurls an astounding counternarrative about the May 2, 2011, raid that killed Osama bin Laden. Hersh dismantles the official story, challenging virtually everything that’s been said about the attack on the Abbottabad compound by Special Operations commandos, including the fictionalized version in Kathryn Bigelow’s nail-biter Zero Dark Thirty and the avalanche of commentary from self-styled terrorism experts, including CNN’s Peter Bergen.

According to Hersh, the United States didn’t find bin Laden by diligently sifting intelligence data and tracking an alleged courier, but because a Pakistani defector walked into the US embassy in Islamabad and told the CIA that Al Qaeda’s chief was holed up in Abbottabad. Nor was bin Laden hiding—instead, says Hersh, he had been captured by the ISI in 2006 and was being held prisoner. Pakistan, called out on its deception, then opted to cooperate with Washington in a staged raid on bin Laden’s prison, withdrawing guards and clearing the airspace for US helicopters, Hersh writes. Nor was there a heroic firefight; instead, US forces executed bin Laden, an ailing invalid, in a hail of gunfire.

Hersh’s story, if true, explains two big mysteries about the 2011 operation: Why was bin Laden in a compound smack in the middle of Pakistan’s military and intelligence establishment, rather than in Waziristan or some village in Yemen? And given his location, is it really possible ISI didn’t know where he was? Back in 2009, during her first visit to Pakistan as secretary of state, Hillary Clinton stunned her hosts by saying, “I find it hard to believe that nobody in your government knows where [bin Laden and other Al Qaeda leaders] are.” (Yet, two years later, just weeks after the 2011 raid, Clinton reversed herself, insisting that Washington had “absolutely no evidence that anyone at the highest level of the Pakistani government” had known bin Laden’s whereabouts. If Hersh is right, Clinton’s second comment was part of an official cover story.)

Predictably, the mainstream media’s reaction to Hersh’s scoop was mostly one of disbelief, with many disparaging him for not naming his sources—even though, in cases involving spies and skulduggery, few sources ever speak on the record—and for retailing what some dismissed as a conspiracy theory. “Journalists have largely attempted to tear down the messenger,” wrote Trevor Timm in the Columbia Journalism Review. Paul Farhi, who covers media for The Washington Post, summed up the criticism like this: “Too thinly sourced, they say. Too conspiratorial. Even kind of crazy.” CNN’s Bergen—described by Hersh, in a hilariously irascible Slate interview, as someone who “views himself as the trustee of all things bin Laden”—called the piece “a farrago of
nonsense.” According to CJR, Slate ran five separate “hit jobs” on Hersh within 36 hours. One of them was by James Kirchick, a kind of neocon-in-training who called Hersh’s article a “fantasia.” Similar criticism came from Politico and Vox. Few were deterred by Hersh’s nearly half-century-long track record of uncovering government crimes and corruption.

Writing in The Wall Street Journal, former CIA deputy director Michael Morell disputed Hersh’s story and said he was troubled by the fact that Hersh’s “allegations gained some traction.” In fact, Carlotta Gall, who has spent a dozen years covering Afghanistan and Pakistan for The New York Times, wrote for the Times that in her reporting, she learned “that it was indeed a Pakistani Army brigadier…who told the CIA where bin Laden was hiding, and that bin Laden was living there with the knowledge and protection of the ISI.” NBC News, citing two intelligence sources, also reported (before partially retracting its story) that a walk-in revealed bin Laden’s whereabouts to the CIA. Pakistan’s The News International confirmed the story and even named the defector. And back in August 2011, security analyst R.J. Hillhouse reported many of the details in her blog that Hersh later expanded on in his piece.

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So is Hersh’s report accurate? I’d say that it is. However, the measuring stick for a determination like that won’t be found in the opinions of bloggers, upstart critics, and media-watchers, but in hard-nosed follow-up reporting by journalists with a track record in South Asia and the murky world of intelligence.

“It’s not my fault I have fucking sources that most reporters don’t have,” Hersh told the Post’s Farhi. Perhaps he got some details wrong, and perhaps he was led astray by Pakistani spies with an ax to grind. But after decades at the highest level of journalism, Hersh might know a thing or two about how to separate fact from fiction, how to vet sources, and how to tell whether or not he’s being played.

Read Next: Greg Grandin on how to discredit Seymour Hersh

Bob Dreyfuss

May 20, 2015

This article appeared in the June 8, 2015 edition of The Nation.
Noam Chomsky | The Long, Shameful History of American Terrorism

Noam Chomsky, Reader Supported News, Nov. 15, 2014
Chomsky writes: "It's official: The U.S. is the world's leading terrorist state, and proud of it.' That should have been the headline for the lead story in the New York Times on October 15, which was more politely titled 'CIA Study of Covert Aid Fueled Skepticism About Helping Syrian Rebels.' The article reports on a CIA review of recent U.S. covert operations to determine their effectiveness."

READ MORE

13 years, with what result?  Stop War Against Isis

Michael Shank, FCNL via uark.edu October 29, 2014
Dear James Bennett,

The U.S. has launched airstrikes, drone strikes and two land invasions in a dozen or more countries since 9/11 under the auspices of the "war on terror."

Have they worked? Have they made any country safer in the past 13 years?

Right now, there are at least seven proposals in Congress to authorize new military force against the Islamic State. But more than a decade of "war on terror" has shown, at a tragic cost, that violence begets violence. Militant groups like the Islamic State thrive in atmospheres of violence and fear, and these new proposals will only perpetuate the violence.

Urge your members of Congress to end the "war on terror."

We know that violent extremism won't be stopped by "killing bad guys." Instead, we need a strategy to address the reasons people join these dangerous groups in the first place: political instability, unemployment, poverty and fear. More bombs will only make these problems worse.

Tell Congress: the "war on terror" isn't working.

As Congress considers whether to expand the "war on terror" to include the Islamic State, make sure your members of Congress know where you stand.

Sincerely,

Michael Shank
Associate Director for Legislative Affairs

P.S. We've answered some of your most common questions about the Islamic State on our website. Take a look!
The recent Senate report about the CIA’s use of torture against suspected terrorists renews important questions about the most effective and ethical means to counter the threat of global jihadism. Maajid Nawaz, a former Islamist extremist turned liberal activist, offered an assessment of how and why young men around the world are recruited into jihadist groups as well as provide policy prescriptions to reverse these trends. Carnegie’s Karim Sadjadpour moderated.

MAAJID NAWAZ

Maajid Nawaz is co-founder and chairman of Quilliam, a globally active think tank focusing on matters of integration, citizenship and identity, religious freedom, extremism, and immigration. Having served four years as an Amnesty International–adopted “prisoner of conscience” in Egypt, Nawaz is now a leading critic of his former Islamist ideological dogma. Nawaz is a Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate in the May 2015 British general election. His autobiography *Radical* has been released in the United Kingdom and United States.

NAWAZ DISCUSSES WHAT FUELS GLOBAL JIHADISM

KARIM SADJADPOUR

Karim Sadjadpour is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He joined Carnegie after four years as the chief Iran analyst at the International Crisis Group based in Washington and Tehran, where he conducted dozens of interviews with senior Iranian officials and hundreds with Iranian intellectuals, clerics, dissidents, paramilitaries, businessmen, students, activists, and youth, among others.

ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST PROGRAM

The Carnegie Middle East Program combines in-depth local knowledge with incisive comparative analysis to examine economic, sociopolitical, and strategic interests in the Arab world. Through detailed country studies and the exploration of key crosscutting themes, the Carnegie Middle East Program, in coordination with the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, provides analysis and recommendations in both English and Arabic that are deeply informed by knowledge and views from the region. The program has special expertise in political reform and Islamist participation in pluralistic politics.

CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF US WAR OF TERROR
Elections matter. But they matter far less than we like to think, according to Michael J. Glennon. In “National Security and Double Government,” he argues that while congressional and White House control waxes and wanes, America’s national-security apparatus is essentially set in stone—a shadowy “second government” made up of mostly nameless, faceless individuals who determine and administer our policies.

Though we typically think about the separation of powers in regards to the three branches of federal government, Mr. Glennon argues that, at least when it comes to matters of national security, the more significant division is between traditional representative government (the people we vote for who are perceived to wield power) and nonrepresentative government (the people who actually move all the key levers).

He labels the first group “Madisonians” after James Madison, who firmly believed that the checks and balances of our republic rest ultimately on “civic virtue—an informed and engaged electorate,” without which “the governmental equilibrium of power would face collapse.” Too late, argues Mr. Glennon, a professor at Tufts University’s Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and former legal counsel to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. This collapse is now decades old.

The author’s term for the government’s thousands of civil servants and appointees is equally fitting. These are the “Trumanites,” in homage to the president who signed the 1947 National Security Act, thus creating the security state as we know it today, including the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. To run these
complex organizations, the Madisonians need experts, and the Trumanites are nothing if not experts. MORE http://www.wsj.com/articles/book-review-national-security-and-double-government-by-michael-j-glennon-1419983619

JAMES RISEN, PAY ANY PRICE

1. James Risen's 'Pay Any Price' - NYTimes.com

The New York Times
Oct 15, 2014 - In “Pay Any Price: Greed, Power, and Endless War,” James Risen holds up a mirror to the United States in the 13 years since 9/11, and what it ...

2. In 'Pay Any Price,' James Risen Examines the War on Terror ...
www.nytimes.com/.../in-pay-any-price-james-risen-ex...

The New York Times
Oct 12, 2014 - In “Pay Any Price: Greed, Power, and Endless War,” James Risen, a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter for The New York Times, sets ...

In the news

3. Daydream Believers: James Risen's Pay Any Price

Antiwar.com - 14 hours ago

The money should stagger you. Journalist James Risen, author of Pay Any Price: Greed, Power, and Endless War, a revelatory new book about ...
More news for **Risen, Pay Any Price**


   Democracy Now!
   
   Oct 14, 2014 - Read "Pallets of Cash," an excerpt from **Pay Any Price**: Greed, Power, and Endless War, the new book by New York Times investigative ...

5. [James Risen Prepared to "Pay Any Price" - Democracy Now!](www-democracynow-org-dist-james-risen-prepared-to...)

   Democracy Now!
   
   Oct 14, 2014 - **Risen's** answer to this saga has been to write another book, released today, titled "**Pay Any Price**: Greed, Power, and Endless War.


   Firedoglake
   
   2 days ago - In Pay Any Price, James Risen reveals an extraordinary litany of the ... **James Risen – Pay Any Price**: Greed, Power, and Endless War on Terror ...

**US CORPORATE MAINSTREAM MEDIA (MM) PROMOTION OF**
FEAR AND WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST, From Extra! The Magazine of FAIR—the Media Watch (vol. 7, no. 10, Nov. 2014). Special Issue on ISIS: Selling a New War

Five articles, one comic strip, one “Sound Bite.”

The comic, Tom the Dancing by Ruben Bolling, “How the Ape Brain Assesses Risk,” gives four major causes of massive deaths—diabetes, traffic fatalities, and heart disease, and global warming—and in the last two pictures the ape declares war on ISIS.

Rania Khalek, “Drone-Strike Feminism.” MM uses the oppression of women to sell another Iraq War, when sexual violence is also extreme in other countries.

Steve Rendall, “Addicted to Intervention.” US interventions in Iraq and Syria helped create the chaos that enabled ISIS.

Peter Hart, “Debating How—Not Whether—to Launch a New War.” Shows how little debate exists in Obama and mm over this new phase of the “war on/of terror.”

Raed Jarrar (AFSC) Interviewed, “We Can’t Defeat Extremism by Dropping More Bombs.” Explodes several myths dominating US government and mm.

Excerpt from Patrick Cockburn’s new book, The Jihadis Return: ISIS and the New Sunni Uprising. More refutations of myths used to justify the four wars fought and being fought in the ME.

US Terror Suspects Face "Terrifying" Justice System

Kanya D'Almeida, Inter Press Service, Reader Supported News, April 19, 2014

D'Almeida writes: "The vigil has drawn a mixed bag of supporters - some have their heads covered, a few are modestly concealed by hijabs, others are simply attired in jeans and T-shirts. Whatever their dress, they have gathered here for one reason - to protest the use of 'lawfare' on Muslim citizens accused of terror-related activity."

READ MORE

Soldier’s Heart: Remembering Jacob George, Afghan War Vet Turned
Soldier’s Heart: Remembering Jacob George, Afghan War Vet Turned Peace Activist Who Took Own Life

We air a remembrance of Jacob George, an Afghanistan War veteran and peace activist who took his own life on September 17. He was 32 years old. George co-founded the Afghan Veterans Against the War Committee, part of Iraq Veterans Against the War. George was also a musician who biked around the country playing music for peace, a campaign he called "A Ride Till the End." In 2012, at the NATO summit in Chicago, he was among the veterans who hurled their military medals toward the summit gates in an act of protest against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. George spoke openly about his struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder and with getting Veterans Affairs counselors to understand what he saw as a "moral injury" from his time in Afghanistan. In a storybook that accompanied his musical album "Soldier’s Heart," George wrote: "A wise medicine woman from Arkansas once told me that grief is pain trying to leave the body. If you don’t allow yourself to grieve, it gets stuck. But once you grieve, the body can heal itself. I won’t lie, some of this stuff is heavy. But telling my story is a part of my healing process. And it’s not just veterans who need to heal: all of us need to heal from war and the roster of ailments produced by a nation at war." Hear George playing the banjo and singing his song, "Soldier’s Heart."

AMY GOODMAN: We end the segment with a remembrance of Jacob George, an Afghanistan War veteran and peace activist who took his own life earlier this month. George co-founded the Afghan Veterans Against the War Committee, part of Iraq Veterans Against the War. In 2011, he and fellow veteran Brock McIntosh returned to Afghanistan to meet with young Afghan peace activists. McIntosh remembers George bonding with a 15-year-old Afghan boy, who, like George, was a farmer. Together, they discussed, quote, "the absurdity of poor farmers being sent to kill poor farmers while people are starving," McIntosh said. George was also a musician who biked around the United States playing music for peace, a campaign he called "A Ride Till the End." In 2012, at the NATO summit in Chicago, he was among the veterans who hurled their military medals toward the NATO summit gates in an act of protest against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

JACOB GEORGE: My name is Jacob George. I’m from the Ouachita Mountains in Arkansas. I’m a three-tour veteran of the Afghan War, paratrooper and sergeant. And I have one word for this Global War on Terrorism decoration, and that is "shame."

Jacob George killed himself on September 17th, one week after President Obama unveiled the new U.S. military mission against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. George was 32 years old. We go to break with Jacob George singing "Soldier’s Heart."
JACOB GEORGE: [singing] Now, I'm just a farmer from Arkansas.
There's a lot of things I don't understand,
Like why we send farmers to kill farmers
In Afghanistan.
Now I did what I was told
For my love of this land,
And I come home a shattered man
With blood on my hands.
And now I can't have a relationship,
I can't hold down a job.
Oh, while some may say I'm broken,
I call it a soldier's heart.
Because every time I go outside,
I've got to look her in the eyes,
Oh, and knowing that she broke my heart,
And it turned around and lied.
Oh, I said red, white and blue,
I trusted in you,
And you never even told me why.
Now in the summer of 2002,
I just got off the Pakistan border....

AMY GOODMAN: Jacob George singing "Soldier's Heart." You can link to the whole song on our website at www.democracynow.org. He committed suicide on September 17th, an Afghan War veteran. This is Democracy Now!, democracynow.org, The War and Peace Report. I'm Amy Goodman.

A Remembrance and Celebration of Jacob was arranged by the OMNI Center for Peace, Justice, and Ecology and other friends, Sunday, October 5, 11am-3pm Teatro Scarpino, 329 West Ave, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701. His friends from all around the country attended the event. As Jacob recognized, all who abhor war, grieve. "And it's not just veterans who need
to heal: all of us need to heal from war and the roster of ailments produced by a nation at
war." By “nation at war” Jacob came to understand that the US was engaged in permanent
aggression—over forty invasions and interventions since 1945, and personally in his lifetime
from 2001 to the present and seemingly never to cease. Jacob also understood, I think, that
just as grief is intensely individual and personal, so is sympathy. Countless more people, in
personal, private ways, grieve with Jacob over the endless wars. And then, even though it
was not successful for Jacob, I think he would want us to rise, to arouse ourselves, to see
clearly what we must do, and work equally unceasingly against those wars, that war.

SURVEILLANCE

How We Learned That the Government Was Watching Us

Glenn Greenwald’s No Place to Hide chronicles the publication of secret NSA files that reshaped global conversations about government surveillance.

Betty Medsger. The Nation.

June 3, 2014

Glenn Greenwald speaks to reporters in Hong Kong, June 10, 2013. (AP Photo/Vincent Yu)

For several months journalist Glenn Greenwald ignored the efforts of Cincinnatus, an anonymous source who later identified himself as Edward Snowden, to give him information he promised would be of interest. Greenwald thought he was just another nut with a “big” story, the kind that seldom pans out. The aspiring source also irritated Greenwald by instructing him to install encryption software so they could communicate securely. Forget it. Greenwald was a busy guy and didn’t have time for such complications.

Fortunately, documentary film maker Laura Poitras, also contacted by Snowden, pushed Greenwald to respond to the source. After meeting with Snowden last June in Hong Kong, Greenwald and Poitras, along with Guardian reporter Ewen MacAskill, began reporting on what the world now knows as the Snowden files—the thousands of files that continue to inform Americans and people throughout the world that since 9/11 the National Security Agency has turned the Internet and all forms of electronic communication, even video games, into a vast
Greenwald’s new book, *No Place to Hide*, reports the full story of what has flowed from private NSA contractor Snowden’s decision to sacrifice his freedom and, if necessary, his life in order to collect and hand over to journalists a massive archive of files he thought the public needed access to: evidence of the NSA’s use of massive surveillance to spy on Americans without regard to suspicion of crime, to influence foreign policy, to conduct industrial and economic espionage and to develop new cyber warfare capacities.

As the revelations poured into the public domain, it become clear that congressional intelligence oversight committees—established in the mid-1970s after the exposure of secret FBI files led to the first congressional investigations of intelligence agencies—had lost their adversarial function and become largely cheerleaders for the agencies. Telecommunication companies, the files revealed, are partners in the massive surveillance and readily supply records of the calls of all of their customers.

It is staggering to review the importance of the Snowden files released so far, including a report that explains that “collect it all,” the motto of General Keith B. Alexander, director of the NSA, is not a joke about grandeur; it is the actual goal that has governed expanding operations in pace with the ever-increasing capacity of data-gathering technology rather than in line with what technical prowess is actually needed in order to improve national security. One NSA file documented the staggering volume collected was “far more content than is routinely useful to analysts.” The agency, according to another file, processes more than 20 billion communication events (Internet and telephone) from around the world every day.

In Greenwald’s account of the remarkable year he has been at the helm of the reporting of one startling intelligence revelation after another, he strongly criticizes mainstream news media for being what he sees as primarily protectors of the government’s secrets:

US establishment journalism…is wholly integrated into the nation’s dominant political power…. They are one and the same. …Insider journalists do not want to subvert the status quo that so lavishly rewards them. Like all courtiers, they are eager to defend the system that vests them with their privileges and contemptuous of anyone who challenges that system.

Like Greenwald’s sometimes sledgehammer analysis of mainstream journalism, reports about him, as well as about Snowden, also were extremely harsh. Though Greenwald reported the files in a straightforward way, some journalists described him as an activist, as someone who expressed opinion. It was a description that seemed calculated to suggest his reporting should not be taken seriously. (Since 2001 he had been writing a political blog; he later wrote for Salon and
had been a columnist since 2011 at *The Guardian*. In early 2014, Greenwald, Poitras and Jeremy Scahill became editors of The Intercept, the new journalism website funded by eBay founder Pierre Omidyar.)

On CNN, Alan Dershowitz said of Greenwald’s reporting on the Snowden files, “Greenwald—in my view—clearly has committed a felony.” His reporting “doesn’t border on criminality—it’s right in the heartland of criminality.” David Gregory, host of NBC’s *Meet the Press*, asked Greenwald, “To the extent that you have aided and abetted Snowden…why shouldn’t you, Mr. Greenwald, be charged with a crime?” A hostile story about Greenwald’s reporting by longtime *Washington Post* reporter Walter Pincus required a 200-word correction. *New York Times* financial columnist Andrew Ross Sorkin stated on his CNBC show: “I would arrest him [Snowden], and now I would almost arrest Glenn Greenwald.”

Major news organizations published baseless speculation about Snowden from nameless sources. *The New York Times* reported: “Two Western intelligence experts, who worked for major government spy agencies, said they believed that the Chinese government had managed to drain the contents of the four laptops that Mr. Snowden said he brought to Hong Kong.” Snowden was accused by officials and journalists of being a traitor who gave the NSA files to Russia in exchange for asylum there, and who gave files to China before he flew to Russia for a connecting flight to Latin America he was unable to make because the United States cancelled his passport while he was en route. Snowden has repeatedly stated that he took no files with him when he left Hong Kong and that he gave all of the files he had to journalists and not to any country.

The significance of Snowden’s revelations could not be denied. Nor could the high quality of the reporting by Greenwald and Poitras and also by Barton Gellman of *The Washington Post* and others with whom Greenwald and Poitras collaborated. Their stories prompted an international debate about the implications of massive surreptitious surveillance, about surveillance intended to humiliate targeted Muslims, about the right to privacy and about the far-reaching implications of a plan, being carried out with the NSA’s British counterpart GCHQ, to develop the capacity to tap into any phone, any time, anywhere in the world.

Nowhere was the anger about the surveillance of other countries’ citizens greater than in Germany, where brutal experiences with the Nazis’ Gestapo and the East German secret police, the dreaded Stasi, planted a deep and abiding understanding that creating the capacity to conduct mass surveillance portends using that capacity to engage in mass control of citizens.

In January, seven months after Greenwald’s first NSA reports, *The New York Times* called for Snowden, “in light of his role as a whistle-blower,” to be granted clemency: “Considering the enormous value of the information he has revealed, and the abuses he has exposed, Mr.
Snowden deserves better than a life of permanent exile, fear and flight. He may have committed a crime to do so, but he has done his country a great service. It is time for the United States to offer Mr. Snowden a plea bargain or some form of clemency that would allow him to return home."

In April, Greenwald, Poitras and Barton Gellman and their publications, *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post*, were awarded the top prize in American journalism, the Pulitzer Prize for public service reporting, and also the prestigious George Polk award, for their reports on the NSA files.

Despite intense global response to the the Snowden files, discussions in government chambers in many countries about the need for new intelligence policies and Greenwald’s major role in bringing the files to light, the publication of Greenwald’s book has prompted perhaps the harshest criticism of him. As more Americans moved toward seeing Snowden as a whistleblower rather than as a traitor, and Greenwald’s peers muted their criticism and honored him, Michael Kinsley declared in *The New York Times Book Review* that neither Greenwald nor other journalists should be able to decide to publish government secrets.

“The Snowden leaks were important,” wrote Kinsley, “and we might never have known about the N.S.A.’s lawbreaking if it hadn’t been for them.” Nevertheless, he continued, “In a democracy… that decision must ultimately be made by the government. … Someone gets to decide, and that someone can’t be Glenn Greenwald.”

His assertion that journalists should not decide to publish government secrets stands in opposition to some of the most important journalism. The Constitution provides for the press to be an important check on the power of government. History is replete with examples that show the necessity of that check. Intelligence agencies and other high-level government agencies seldom voluntarily reveal their excessive or illegal practices. Reporting by journalists—usually made possible by whistleblowers willing to risk their freedom to provide documentary evidence of official wrongdoing—is the usual path to exposure of government wrongdoing. For example, the public learned about the lies that were the basis of much of the rationale for the Vietnam War because *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* in 1971 published the Pentagon Papers, the secret official history of the war given to newspapers by former Defense Department official Daniel Ellsberg, who was prosecuted. Similarly, the wall of secrecy that shielded a half-century of illegal cruel operations by the FBI under Director J. Edgar Hoover was cracked by a group of citizens determined to find evidence of whether the FBI was systematically suppressing dissent. They stole files from the FBI office in Media, Pennsylvania, in 1971 and gave them to journalists, including this writer, then a reporter at *The Washington Post*. 
Snowden, the 30-year-old whistleblower at the heart of Greenwald’s important book, has been criminally charged under the 1917 Espionage Act for making public the evidence that the NSA conducts countless operations that are the antithesis of what most Americans would be willing to have done in their name. In doing so, he challenged journalists, the government, the American people and the international community to assume responsibility for what the future of this vast international electronic spying machine will be.

Read Next: A condensed version of the first chapter of Greenwald’s No Place to Hide

Betty Medsger

June 3, 2014

GREENWALD’S SUMMARY OF THE HARMS CAUSED BY THE US WAR ON (OF!) TERROR: “Over the past decades, the fear of terrorism—stoked by consistent exaggerations of the actual threat—has been exploited by US leaders to justify a wide array of extremist policies. It has led to wars of aggression, a worldwide torture regime, and the detention (and even assassination) of both foreign nationals and American citizens without any charges. But the ubiquitous, secretive system of suspicionless surveillance that it has spawned may very well turn out to be its most enduring legacy” (5). –Dick

FALSE JUSTIFICATION OF PATRIOT ACT’S DISMANTLING OF FOURTH AMENDMENT

Only 1/2 of 1% of "Patriot" Act Secret Warrants Used Against Terrorism

Mark Jaycox, Electronic Frontier Foundation, Reader Supported News (October 31, 2014).

Jaycox reports: "Throughout the Patriot Act debate the Department of Justice urged Congress to pass Section 213 because it needed the sneak and peak power to help investigate and prosecute terrorism crimes 'without tipping off terrorists.'"

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AFTER ACTION REVIEW: A COLLECTION OF WRITING AND ARTWORK BY VETERANS OF THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

Our third anthology features powerful and vibrant creative writing, poetry, and visual artwork by post 9/11 veterans. Secure your copy of our new book for only $20!

From the “Afterword” by James A. Moad II: “The words and images are much more than the collective expressions of America’s current generation of warriors—men and women who bear the physical and mental scars of war—they’re also powerful testimonials to future generations about the individual cost of war” (176). See Consequences of War Newsletter. Let’s hope the next book by the Warrior Writers will anthologize Afghan and Iraqi warriors and their physical and mental scars. And then the next on the civilian victims of invasion and occupation. --Dick

CONTACT ARKANSAS' CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_congressional_delegations_from_Arkansas

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END WAR ON/OF TERRORISM NEWSLETTER #12

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Dick Bennett

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