

America's "Coercive Diplomacy". Washington Threatens Allies Over CIA Kidnapping and Torture Programs

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Global Research, December 12, 2010

[Antifascist Calling...](#) 12 December 2010

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

As revelations of U.S. government coercive "diplomacy" continue flowing from the whistleblowing web site [WikiLeaks](#), much to the consternation of official Washington, ruling class circles are working feverishly to downplay the seriousness of the leaks.

On the one hand, senior State Department and intelligence officials claim the cables offer "few surprises" and, at least according to [The New York Times](#), the disclosures "have been more embarrassing than revelatory or harmful to national security."

On the other hand however, "conservative" loons in Congress, their "liberal" colleagues across the aisle and the far-right media noise machine have denounced WikiLeaks and the group's director Julian Assange, as an imminent threat to "national security" and are seeking to have the secret-spillers declared "terrorists." Presumably they could then be tossed into one of America's global gulags or even hunted down and murdered as some have countenanced.

Despite a steady barrage of lies and disinformation, as well as moves by the Obama administration and their corporatist allies to shutter the web site, with some 1,900 [mirrors](#) now disseminating [Cablegate](#) files world-wide, those efforts have *failed*.

A CIA Kidnapping Gone Awry

Amongst the treasure-trove of files released last week, we learned that the U.S. Embassy in Berlin was angered over the issuance of arrest warrants for 13 CIA officers for the kidnapping and torture of Lebanese-born German citizen Khaled el-Masri; one of the more infamous cases to have emerged from Washington's secret vaults.

In 2007, after a public outcry in Germany over media revelations, senior Bavarian state public prosecutor Christian Schmidt-Sommerfeld issued warrants for CIA officers on suspicion of kidnapping el-Masri.

Prosecutors charged that that the Agency had wrongfully imprisoned the German citizen and caused him grievous bodily harm during his illegal detention.

In late 2003, in a case of mistaken identity, el-Masri was abducted in Macedonia by a CIA snatch-and-grab team and local security agents. After a series of brutal beatings, el-Masri

was stripped naked, shot full of drugs, given an enema and a diaper and flown out of the country on an Agency airline, the CIA cut-out, Aero Contractors Ltd.

A 2006 cable from the U.S. Embassy Skopje, Macedonia, [06SKOPJE118](#), “Macedonia: Prime Minister on Elections, NATO,” U.S. Ambassador Gillian Milovanovic reported to Washington that then-Prime Minister Vlado Buckovski pledged that the “GOM will keep its head down and guard up regarding allegations that Macedonia has assisted the USG in the ‘el-Masri’ case.”

The Confidential dispatch labelled “NOFORN” (no foreign distribution) revealed that the Macedonian government “would stay the course” and “would continue to support the Minister of Interior, who has declined to discuss the matter with the local press” over charges that Skopje’s security service had collaborated with the CIA in el-Masri’s kidnapping and torture.

Skopje’s collusion with Washington was all the more ironic considering that prior to the 9/11 provocation, the U.S. secret state had conspired with Kosovo Liberation Army-linked drug traffickers and al-Qaeda terrorists grouped in the shadowy National Liberation Army (NLA) in a violent destabilization campaign that targeted the Macedonian government for “regime change.”

As *Global Research* analyst Michel Chossudovsky has [documented](#), the NLA was “a proxy of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)” and, “in a bitter twist, while supported and financed by Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda, the KLA-NLA is also supported by NATO and the United Nations mission to Kosovo (UNMIK).”

Chossudovsky described how “drug money” helped finance the group and that the NLA’s ranks were drawn from “Mujahideen from the Middle East and the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union” and “senior US military advisers from a private mercenary outfit on contract to the Pentagon [Military Professional Resources, Inc., MPRI, currently holding a Pentagon contract to “assist” Afghanistan’s Ministry of Defense, AFC] as well as ‘soldiers of fortune’ from Britain, Holland and Germany.”

Learning perhaps, that it was in their interest to play ball with Washington, or else, the Skopje regime eagerly sought to do their master’s bidding by covering-up the abduction and torture of an innocent man.

Spirited away first to Baghdad and then on to the CIA’s notorious “dark prison” known as the “Salt Pit” in Afghanistan, el-Masri was detained for four months where, as described by [Harper’s](#) columnist and constitutional law scholar Scott Horton, he was “repeatedly beaten, drugged, and subjected to a strange food regime that he supposed was part of an experiment that his captors were performing on him.”

Months later, his torturers realized they had detained an innocent man and after weeks of bickering, with some Agency officials arguing he should continue to be held incommunicado because he “knew too much,” [The Washington Post](#) reported he was dumped penniless, on the side of a road in Albania, on orders from then-National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice.

Washington Threatens Their German “Ally”

The WikiLeaks cable, labelled "Secret/NOFORN," [07BERLIN242](#), "Al-Masri Case-Chancellery Aware of USG Concerns," was fired off from the U.S. Embassy in Berlin on February 6, 2007.

The file provides startling details of a conversation between John M. Koenig, Washington's number two man in Berlin and German National Security Adviser Rolf Nikel.

Koenig warned "that issuance of international arrest warrants would have a negative impact on our bilateral relationship," and, in a thinly-veiled threat "reminded Nikel of the repercussions to U.S.-Italian bilateral relations in the wake of a similar move by Italian authorities last year."

Cynically, Koenig claimed "our intention was not to threaten Germany, but rather to urge that the German Government weigh carefully at every step of the way the implications for relations with the U.S."

Despite assertions that "we of course recognized the independence of the German judiciary," the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission wrote that American diplomatic capos "noted that a decision to issue international arrest warrants or extradition requests would require the concurrence of the German Federal Government," and would therefore be subject to coercive threats from the Godfather in Washington.

His German counterpart Nikel "also underscored the independence of the German judiciary," but seeking wiggle room with an eye towards denying el-Masri his day in court, said "the case was subject to political, as well as judicial, scrutiny."

After his summons to imperial chambers, the German National Security Adviser admitted that the warrants had been issued only because of a popular outcry and revulsion by German citizens over U.S. torture policies.

The cable noted, "Nikel also cited intense pressure from the Bundestag and the German media" to bring forth indictments.

This is polite way of saying that despite widespread public outrage, Angela Merkel's right-wing government would be Washington's willing accomplice. After taking the "entire political context" of el-Masri's case against the CIA into account, the German government would capitulate to American demands.

Nikel assured the U.S. Embassy that "the Chancellery is well aware of the bilateral political implications of the case, but added that this case 'will not be easy'." Expressing his willingness to cave-in to Washington at the earliest moment, the German National Security Adviser promised that the Chancellery would "try to be as constructive as possible."

With an eye towards managing the fallout, not doing justice to an innocent man, Koenig "pointed out that the USG would likewise have a difficult time in managing *domestic* political implications if international arrest warrants are issued." (emphasis added)

This is simply a diplomatic way of telling his German "colleague" that Washington's chief concern was to suppress damaging information here in the *heimat* that America's "partners" in the global "War on Terror" view the United States as little more than a gang of criminals and torturers. "He [Koenig] reiterated our concerns and expressed the hope that the Chancellery would keep us informed of further developments in the case, so as to avoid surprises."

Nikel promised to do so “but reiterated that he could not, at this point ‘promise that everything will turn out well’.”

Washington’s machinations eventually paid off in spades for the beleaguered Bush regime. [***Der Spiegel***](#) noted “it would be easy to write off the details from the cables as mere trifles if they hadn’t been confirmed by reality.”

“In 2007,” journalists Matthias Gebauer and John Goetz reported “then-Justice Minister Brigitte Zypries decided not to further pursue the 13 CIA agents.”

Although their names were still on an Interpol arrest warrant, “the United States stated that it would not recognize its validity.”

Compare this with the chorus of voices in official U.S. and European circles now claiming that the Interpol “Red Notice” issued for Julian Assange’s arrest possess near-mystical properties!

In collusion with the Bush gang, and doubtless made aware of “implications for relations with the U.S.,” Gebauer and Goetz wrote that “Zypries explained that the Americans had made clear to her that they would neither arrest nor hand over the 13 CIA agents,” therefore “it made no sense to even try to get them extradited.”

Nor did it subsequently “make sense” that German courts in the aftermath of the scandal, would provide el-Masri with even a scintilla of justice.

The [***Associated Press***](#) reported last week that the Cologne Administrative Court rejected el-Masri’s lawsuit December 7, “seeking to force Berlin into prosecuting suspected CIA agents” who had abducted him seven years earlier.

The court ruled that “the German government’s decision not to seek the extradition of the agents, despite the arrest warrant issued by a German court, was legal.”

El-Masri’s attorney, Manfred Gnjidic, said the WikiLeaks documents “‘clearly show’ the ‘massive efforts’ on the part of the U.S. government to keep el-Masri’s case out of the courts.”

Here in the United States, similar efforts have been met by collusive behavior between the federal judiciary and the Bush and Obama administrations.

In squashing the American Civil Liberties Union lawsuit, [***El-Masri v. Tenet***](#), the court upheld the notorious “state secrets privilege” asserted by the government.

“The release of the cable,” the [***World Socialist Web Site***](#) notes, “only further underscores that American diplomacy is as filthy as its torture policy, and that the European governments are complicit in the policy of kidnapping and extrajudicial prosecution.”

Despite unsuccessful efforts thus far to shutter WikiLeaks and with threats to prosecute Julian Assange under the 1917 Espionage Act a distinct possibility were the journalist extradited either by Britain or Sweden to the United States in some dirty deal, Washington rages like a wounded beast even as new revelations, and scandals, unfold.

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