

Hersh: 'Executive assassination ring' reported directly to Cheney

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Investigative reporter Seymour Hersh dropped a bombshell on Tuesday when he told an audience at the University of Minnesota that the military was running an “executive assassination ring” throughout the Bush years which reported directly to former Vice President Dick Cheney.

The remark came out seemingly inadvertently when Hersh was asked by the moderator of a public discussion of “America’s Constitutional Crisis” whether abuses of executive power, like those which occurred under Richard Nixon, continue to this day.

Hersh replied, “After 9/11, I haven’t written about this yet, but the Central Intelligence Agency was very deeply involved in domestic activities against people they thought to be enemies of the state. Without any legal authority for it. They haven’t been called on it yet.”

Hersh then went on to describe a second area of extra-legal operations: the Joint Special Operations Command. “It is a special wing of our special operations community that is set up independently,” he explained. “They do not report to anybody, except in the Bush-Cheney days, they reported directly to the Cheney office. ... Congress has no oversight of it.”

“It’s an executive assassination ring essentially, and it’s been going on and on and on,” Hersh stated. “Under President Bush’s authority, they’ve been going into countries, not talking to the ambassador or the CIA station chief, and finding people on a list and executing them and leaving. That’s been going on, in the name of all of us.”

Hersh told MinnPost.com blogger Eric Black in an [email exchange](#) after the event that the subject was “not something I wanted to dwell about in public.” He is looking into it for a book, but he believes it may be a year or two before he has enough evidence “for even the most skeptical.”

Stories have been coming out about covert Pentagon assassination squads for the last several years. In 2003, Hersh himself reported on [Task Force 121](#), which operated chiefly out of the Joint Special Operations Command. Others stories spoke of a proposed [Proactive, Preemptive Operations Group](#).

As Hersh noted in Minnesota, the *New York Times* on Monday [described](#) the Joint Special Operations Command as overseeing the secret commando units in Afghanistan whose missions were temporarily ordered halted last month because of growing concerns over excessive [civilian deaths](#).

However, it appears that Hersh is now on the trail of some fresh revelation about these squads and their connection to Vice-President Cheney that goes well beyond anything that has previously been reported.

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