

Obama Unmasked: The Total Surveillance State

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The president helped end the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy that locked LGBT military service members in the closet. During his 2012 campaign, he reduced deportations of undocumented youth who came to the U.S. as children. But, with few other exceptions, his actions have served the wealthy elite and expanded the attacks on working people pushed by G. W. Bush.

Immigration: the Iron Curtain Border

Obama has deported more immigrants than predecessor Bush. “We put more boots on the ground on the southern border than at any time in our history,” boasts his official website.

His “reform” proposal includes more border militarization — to be implemented before a supposed path to citizenship opens up for undocumented immigrants. That path is barricaded with high fines and fees, and years of waiting, with social services denied in the meantime.

His mandatory electronic employment verification system, E-Verify, would require all U.S. workers to prove authorization to work. In other words, it is a national ID system.

Low-income “guest workers,” would be deported after 60 days of unemployment, virtually guaranteeing most would be too fearful and desperate to risk their jobs by speaking up for their rights or engaging in union organizing.

Persecuting whistleblowers and activists

Obama has prosecuted more government whistleblowers than any other president — and the list is growing as he ramps up his war on dissent. His take-no-prisoners stance has fallen on Jeremy Hammond, facing up to 10 years for hacking into the website of security contractor Stratfor and giving the lowdown to the WikiLeaks website. Journalist Barrett Brown faces up to 105 years for reporting on exposures on private intelligence firms by the hacker group Anonymous. Environmental activist Tim DeCristopher served 21 months for civil disobedience that saved 22,000 acres of wilderness from illegal sale. See this issue’s article on [Pfc. Manning and Edward Snowden](#) for details.

Pre-emptive strikes against “troublemakers” are common. In May 2012, nine arrests were made of activists preparing for anti-NATO demonstrations in Chicago. Most were baseless, while four involved cases of entrapment by undercover cops who urged the use of incendiary devices.

Civil rights and people’s attorney Lynne Stewart was convicted of “material support to terrorism” for the high crime of passing a press release to the media for a client. Her original sentence of 28 months was extended to 10 years — at age 72 — at the urging of

administration officials. Now the Federal Bureau of Prisons has denied her petition for compassionate release for treatment of an advancing cancer. For a link to her petition see www.lynnestewart.org, and see the FS article [Release Lynne Stewart](#) for words from her.

Two Somali women who sent aid back home were similarly accused of giving “material support to terrorism,” and sentenced to lengthy prison terms. The group they worked with was designated a terrorist organization by Obama’s regime after the fact.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, the Black radical journalist falsely convicted of murder after a racist trial in 1982, has consistently been denied justice in state and federal courts. Obama’s Attorney General, Eric Holder, has upheld this legalized lynching by refusing to intervene or urge the release of Mumia for his long unjust imprisonment, much of it in solitary confinement. [Sign the petition here](#).

International crimes

Obama has failed to deliver on his 2008 campaign promise to close the Guantánamo gulag. Of 166 remaining prisoners, 86 are admitted innocent and have long been cleared for release — to no avail. More than 100 detainees are now hunger striking to protest their long imprisonment without trial, and are being tortured by force feeding.

The president has greatly expanded the use of unmanned drone aircraft. He personally approves targeted assassinations without trial of those deemed “enemies” of the U.S. Innocent civilians are often “collateral damage.” This secret CIA program has provoked outrage in countries whose sovereignty is violated and citizens slaughtered. Protests forced Obama to announce a revised drone policy. Supposedly, strikes would only occur if there was “near certainty” that innocent bystanders wouldn’t be killed. But a month later, when a drone killed a 10-year-old boy, Obama merely referred all questions to the CIA!

The president backed the 2009 coup against elected Honduran President Manuel Zelaya, swiftly recognizing the new government — and effectively endorsing the repression and assassinations carried out ever since.

Total surveillance state

Obama has greatly expanded the Bush administration’s vast surveillance and spying on ordinary people. Edward Snowden recently revealed that the National Security Agency (NSA) has a secret electronic surveillance program called PRISM. It collects emails, live chats, Internet searches, and file downloads of customers of nine of the largest Internet service providers in the U.S. All of the call records of Verizon telephone customers are tracked on an ongoing basis. A report in which the federal government and only half of the states responded, admitted to wiretapping the phones, text messages, faxes, pages and emails of 300,000 people in the U.S. in 2011.

Obama justifies this massive intrusion of privacy because it is overseen by the courts. However, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance court is conducted in secret. And it denied none of the thousands of government requests in the last three years. Under the Patriot Act, the FBI’s secret national security letters require no judicial oversight. The agency issued 50,000 in the last three years. In pursuit of a whistleblower who talked to an Associated Press (AP) reporter, the Obama administration seized all the phone records of the entire AP.

Choosing the top one-tenth of a percent over the people

The 2008 bank bailout passed by Congress provided for federal purchase and renegotiation of troubled mortgages. Instead of helping homeowners, the Federal Reserve and U.S. Treasury opted to give direct, no-strings-attached aid to banks. Obama's senior economic advisor, Lawrence Summers, helped keep the bank bailout from being repealed.

Obama's focus on the federal debt, instead of jobs programs and other economic relief to working people, paved the way for the across-the-board cuts to federal programs called sequestration. Total cuts to non-military programs are more than \$42 billion in 2013, and more than \$54 billion a year from 2014 through 2021.

Obama is pushing severe cuts to Social Security and other earned benefit programs through artificially lowering cost-of-living adjustments. This is done using the so-called chained CPI, which substitutes less expensive items for ones a buyer could no longer afford.

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