

The Insecurity of Security: When U.S. “Intelligence” Becomes an Oxymoron or Just Moronic

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On October 26, the NSA scandal finally triggered a protest in Washington. Activists of the left, liberal and libertarian persuasion took to the streets rallying behind pictures of Edward Snowden who our government considers a traitor but many consider a hero.

A day later, on Sunday, in mid afternoon, a prominent black South African businessman was arrested at JFK airport because he was on a list of people banned from entering the United States.

No reason was given for his being on the list, although he is a well-known former Minister in the South African government, a one time head of the country's most populated province, and, yes, a former member of the underground anti-apartheid military wing of the African National Congress, Umkonto we Sizwe (The Spear of the Nation.)

<http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2013/10/27/business/27reuters-safrica-sexwale.html?hp>

His name: Tokyo Sexwale, so named because of his martial arts prowess as a kid. He spent years alongside Nelson Mandela behind bars in Robben Island, South Africa's notorious political prison.

At that time. Mandela was the founder of the ANC's guerilla army and had been sentenced to life imprisonment for his role.

Sewale told me back in 1995, when I filmed a reunion at the prison for a documentary called Prisoners of Hope, that after he had been captured in a fire fight, he had been thrilled to be sent to the prison housing his Commander in Chief. He also told me how he and other prisoners left their cells at night—in their imaginations—to visit places like far away New York.

Ironically, Mandela was on this very same enemies list for years after his release from prison and even his election as the country's first black President.

In that period, he even toured the United States and returned to visit The White House. Tokyo has also visited several times, most recently as the Housing minister and a corporate executive.

Perhaps these ridiculous rules have been tightened in the Obama years.

In Mandela's case, he was removed from the list near the end of his Presidency on July 1,

2008 after President Bush signed into law a bill allowing then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice the authority to waive travel restrictions on Mandela and other members of the ANC.

It took a bi-partisan measure in Congress to allow the President to remove the embarrassing restriction.

On that occasion, New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof wrote, "Sometimes government officials become intoxicated by the counter-terrorism portfolio. Indeed, totally inebriated. To put it simply, they go nuts."

Kristof ridiculed our government's secuocrats then, asking of Mandela: "what did we think he would do, strap on a suicide belt?"

Now, five years later, it looks like the guardians of our surveillance state are the ones committing suicide, by turning the United States into a global laughing-stock through tapping the phones of millions of people including as many as 35 heads of State, many from countries we consider allies.

It is also the intelligence of our policies that are being questioned, not just the heavy-handed practices of our snoops and spies. There is clear evidence that Washington worked with and armed real terrorists of the Al Qaeda "brand" in Libya and now in Syria.

The people who run these agencies seem to be making no sense either, as the New Yorker reported in quoting the NSA's General Keith Alexander who denied whistle-blower Snowden's charges in these terms:

"It's like when you were younger—well, this is for boys—you know, when you're younger you say, "I don't want to take a bath." You say, "No, I'll never to take a bath." Why would you want to take a bath, well, you have to take a bath, clean, da da, da. You say, "But isn't there a better way?" So we had to take baths, right. Or showers,"

Huh? Asks Amy Davidson in the New Yorker:

"So is reading e-mails the bath and metadata collection the shower? And girls are supposedly O.K. with both? More mysteriously, why is Alexander comparing people who question his agency's work to dirty children? Alexander then went on to say that leakers might have blood on their hands, and, as Politico noted, [accused newspapers of "selling" Snowden's documents.](#)"

<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/cloread/2013/10/the-indiscreet-charm-of-the-nsa.html>

Years ago, statements like his belonged to "the theater of the absurd;" now they are reported as if they are statements to be taken seriously by well-informed government officials.

No wonder the Obama Administration is having credibility problems. The President himself recently visited Sewale's former prison and spoke movingly of the ordeal Mandela and his comrades went through.

Now, one of the prison's most prominent "graduates" is having an ordeal here in the United

States and is back in detention.

Imagine being in Tokyo's exhausted shoes as he gets off a 14 hour flight only to be challenged at the "border" because of his name on a "list" that goes back to the commie-bashing days of Senators McCarthy and McCarren in the 1950's.

'Sorry Sir, not only can't you come in, but you are under arrest. Your name came up on our computer as a threat to our national security. Here's a Go Directly to Jail Card!'

There are some in South Africa who may wish Tokyo was still the militant he once was, not a billionaire who went over to the other side in the class war. But, whatever his income and controversial recent history—fired from his post, divorced by his wife etc—he shouldn't be jailed because our intelligence operation so clearly lacks intelligence.

Reuters reported, "The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which runs the airport, did not immediately respond to a request for a comment."

What can they say?

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