

The Obama Administration's War on Civil Liberties and Free Speech

As Clinton Hawks 'Freedom to Connect,' Justice Department Shields 'War on Terror' Fraudsters, Targets WikiLeaks

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Global Research, February 21, 2011

[Antifascist Calling...](#) 21 February 2011

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

While Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was praising the role that the internet played in toppling oppressive regimes (ironically enough, close U.S. allies), the Justice Department was in court in Alexandria, Virginia seeking to invade the privacy and political rights of WikiLeaks supporters even as it shields well-connected "War on Terror" fraudsters.

Scarcely batting an eyelash, Madame Clinton **told** her audience at George Washington University that "the goal is not to tell people how to use the internet any more than we ought to tell people how to use any public square, whether it's Tahrir Square or Times Square."

Rich with rhetorical flourishes that should have evoked gales of laughter but didn't (this is America, after all), Clinton averred that "together, the freedoms of expression, assembly, and association online comprise what I've called the freedom to connect. The United States supports this freedom for people everywhere, and we have called on other nations to do the same."

Really?

Has the honorable Secretary attended a demonstration of late, or found herself on the receiving end of a police baton, a rubber bullet, a jolt from a taser or ear-piercing blast from a "nonlethal" sonic weapon?

Or perhaps Madame Clinton has been served with a National Security Letter that arrives with its own built-in, permanent gag order, had her organization infiltrated by provocateurs, been the focus of "spear phishing" attacks by a secret state agency, say the FBI or one of their private contractors, who've implanted surveillance software on her laptop or smart phone, or summoned by subpoena to appear before a Star Chamber-like grand jury?

I didn't think so.

The Secretary's hypocrisy and mendacity would be amusing if the American people hadn't already lived through a decade where the cheapening of constitutional rights, particularly First and Fourth Amendment guarantees, hadn't been eroded to the point of savage annihilation by *all* branches of government and by both capitalist parties.

After all, in the filthy Washington trough where [money rules](#), "liberal" Democrats and "conservative" Republicans alike are joined at the hip and outdo one another in paying

obedience to the National Security State.

Indeed, just a hop, skip and a jump across the icy Potomac, an Alexandria courthouse witnessed the “change” regime’s Justice Department move to seize the contents of private Twitter accounts, including those of left-wing Icelandic parliamentarian Birgitta Jonsdottir, and other WikiLeaks supporters.

While Mrs. Clinton hypocritically praised the role of social networking sites in helping to bring down torture-friendly, corrupt regimes in [Egypt](#) and [Tunisia](#) (close U.S. allies in the multibillion dollar kabuki dance known as the “War on Terror”), a grand jury was investigating whether there are grounds for filing criminal charges against WikiLeaks, its founder Julian Assange, and the heroic [Bradley Manning](#), the incarcerated Army private suspected of leaking compromising files to the organization.

Outraged by revelations of American war crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Apache helicopter gunship [murder](#) of a dozen people, including two *Reuters* journalists, as well as the release of thousands of diplomatic cables, the secret state is bringing the full weight of its formidable machinery down upon anyone, anywhere who have the temerity to challenge the lies of our militarist masters.

Denouncing the Obama regime’s latest assault, the American Civil Liberties Union ([ACLU](#)) and the Electronic Frontier Foundation ([EFF](#)) argued that forcing Twitter to turn over users’ data to the government would hand the state a veritable road map of people connected to WikiLeaks, including journalists who may have communicated with the group, and would seriously chill free speech.

EFF Legal Director Cindy Cohn pointed out that “Twitter is a publication and communication service, so the information sought by the government relates to what these individuals said and where they were when they said it. This raises serious First and Fourth Amendment concerns. It is especially troubling since the request seeks information about all statements made by these people, regardless of whether their speech relates to WikiLeaks.”

Public knowledge of U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder’s criminal probe recently surfaced when U.S. Magistrate Theresa Carroll Buchanan, granted a motion by three Twitter clients that partially unsealed some government filings in the case.

Plaintiffs’ attorneys argued that Buchanan should overturn her earlier ruling ordering Twitter “to disclose its clients’ data, as well as unseal documents in the case, including requests from prosecutors to get information from other technology companies,” the [The Washington Post](#) reported.

When news of the federal government’s fishing expedition first broke in January, [The New York Times](#) reported that what made the case unusual weren’t de rigueur secret state subpoenas, but the fact that Twitter challenged the Justice Department’s gag order “and won the right to inform the people whose records the government was seeking.”

The *Times* noted that “WikiLeaks says it suspects that other large sites like Google and Facebook have received similar requests and simply went along with the government.”

Such demands, and long-suspected capitulation by internet behemoths Google and Facebook, are at the heart of current debates over data retention.

As security analyst and surveillance critic Christopher Soghoian [pointed out](#) last month, “The hypocrisy of the government’s push for such data retention is clear when compared to the extreme efforts that government agencies go to in order to shield their own communications, documents and other records from the American people.”

Particularly when lawbreaking by favored contractors are cloaked by bogus claims of “national security.”

Shielding a “War on Terror” Fraudster

One sordid example among hundreds of similar cases which have come to light was recently uncovered [The New York Times](#).

Investigative journalists Eric Lichtblau and James Risen disclosed that for “eight years, government officials turned to Dennis Montgomery, a California computer programmer, for eye-popping technology that he said could catch terrorists.”

Montgomery’s “eye-popping technology” was a fraud, a multimillion grift that bamboozled the Pentagon’s Special Operations Command and other secret state agencies and almost resulted in the 2003 shoot-down of passenger planes heading towards the U.S.

Hardly the “smartest guy in the room,” Montgomery is awaiting trial in Nevada on charges “of trying to pass \$1.8 million in bad checks at casinos.” However, “he has not been charged with wrongdoing in the federal contracts, nor has the government tried to get back any of the money it paid.”

In the last few months Obama’s Justice Department, Lichtblau and Risen inform us, have “gotten protective orders from two federal judges keeping details of the technology out of court,” and “says it is guarding state secrets that would threaten national security if disclosed.”

According to the *Times*, the software suite Montgomery sold the Pentagon was chock-a-block with snake-oil claims that it “could find terrorist plots hidden in broadcasts of the Arab network Al Jazeera; identify terrorists from Predator drone videos; and detect noise from hostile submarines.”

These claims “prompted an international false alarm that led President George W. Bush to order airliners to turn around over the Atlantic Ocean in 2003.”

In a famous incident of Bush administration fear mongering that coincided with the Christmas holidays for maximum effect, and hyped of course by the media as the latest in a series of “grave threats” to the *heimat*, Montgomery reported the alarming news to his CIA contacts.

But as [Global Research](#) analyst Michel Chossudovsky pointed out at the time, the Bush administration had “chosen the Christmas holiday to wage a campaign of fear and intimidation. Its ultimate objective consists in manipulating Americans into accepting a de facto military government, as a means to ‘protect their civil liberties’.”

Chossudovsky averred, and facts that came to light years later proved beyond all reasonable doubt that “the terrorist alert was fabricated by the CIA.” A cynical deceit

facilitated by “War on Terror” fraudster Montgomery.

According to the *Times*, Montgomery had claimed that “hidden in the crawl bars broadcast by Al Jazeera, someone had planted information about specific American-bound flights from Britain, France and Mexico that were hijacking targets.”

CIA officials then “rushed the information to Mr. Bush, who ordered those flights to be turned around or grounded before they could enter American airspace.”

“Senior administration officials,” the *Times* revealed, “even talked about shooting down planes identified as targets because they feared that supposed hijackers would use the planes to attack the United States, according to a former senior intelligence official who was at a meeting where the idea was discussed.”

While the anonymous official later called the idea “crazy,” nevertheless snake-oil salesman Montgomery had convinced intelligence officials that the fabricated threat was “real and credible.”

Despite the fact the United States was a hair’s breath from blasting commercial airliners from the skies and killing hundreds of innocent people, the CIA “never did an assessment to determine how a ruse had turned into a full-blown international incident, officials said, nor was anyone held accountable.”

“In fact,” the *Times* reports, “agency officials who oversaw the technology directorate—including Donald Kerr, who helped persuade George J. Tenet, then the director of central intelligence, that the software was credible—were promoted, former officials said.”

““Nobody was blamed,” a former CIA official told the *Times*. “They acted like it never happened.”

Kerr, a long-time fixture in the national security establishment, was formerly an executive vice president with the Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC). After serving as the CIA’s Deputy Director for Science of Technology, he was rewarded for his role in the “planes incident” fiasco with an appointment by Bush as the Director of the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), the top secret Pentagon satrapy that flies America’s fleet of intelligence satellites. And since being well-connected means never having to say your sorry, Kerr is currently the Deputy Director of U.S. National Intelligence where he continues to labor mightily to “keep us safe.”

Despite serious misgivings about Montgomery’s firm, eTreppid Technologies, the secret state was eager to buy his company’s dodgy software. Why? As it turns out, Montgomery was, as they say, *juiced*.

Along with partner Warren Trepp, described as a former “top trader for the junk-bond king [and convicted fraudster] Michael Milken,” Montgomery’s company “with the help of Representative Jim Gibbons, a Republican who would become Nevada’s governor and was a longtime friend of Mr. Trepp’s, the company won the attention of intelligence officials in Washington.”

Some of Montgomery’s “friends” also included “Edra Blixseth, a onetime billionaire who with her former husband had run the Yellowstone Club in Montana.”

Back in October, the [Associated Press](#) reported that the FBI had opened a criminal probe and was investigating the former co-owner of the swank Yellowstone Club, whose members include Bill Gates and former Vice President Dan Quayle, over charges that she bilked creditors at the time of her messy divorce.

A well-connected Republican insider, according to AP, investigators are probing “a massive real estate scheme fueled by greed, fraud and hundreds of millions of dollars in ill-advised loans.”

“The current federal inquiry into Edra Blixseth,” AP informed us, “involves a series of multimillion dollar loans she took out or guaranteed around the time of her divorce, according to an attorney familiar with the matter.”

“Court records show,” according to AP, that “she claimed to be worth \$782 million at the time of another loan, for \$950,000. Within months, she filed for personal bankruptcy owing creditors at least \$157 million.”

Like her pal Montgomery, Blixseth claims she did “nothing wrong.” What’s that old saw about birds of a feather?

“Hoping to win more government money,” the *Times* reported, “Ms. Blixseth turned to some influential friends, like Jack Kemp, the former New York congressman and Republican vice-presidential nominee, and Conrad Burns, then a Republican senator from Montana. They became minority stakeholders in the venture, called Blxware.”

Burns told the *Times* he was “impressed” by a video presentation Montgomery gave to an unnamed “cable company.” The former senator told Lichtblau and Risen that the security grifter “talked a hell of a game.”

For his part, Kemp leveraged his connections with war criminal and then-Vice President Dick Cheney, “to set up a meeting in 2006 at which Mr. Kemp, Mr. Montgomery and Ms. Blixseth met with a top Cheney adviser, Samantha Ravich, to talk about expanding the government’s use of the Blxware software.”

When Ravich didn’t jump fast enough and hand over more taxpayer boodle, Montgomery’s former attorney Michael Flynn “sent an angry letter to Mr. Cheney in May 2007” and “accused the White House of abandoning a tool shown to ‘save lives’,” the *Times* reported.

But Montgomery and Blixseth still had a card to play and had some powerful friends in the Air Force who helped play them.

Lichtblau and Risen disclosed that “an Air Force contracting officer, Joseph Liberatore,” who described himself as a “believer,” despite skepticism from other secret state agencies including the CIA, was concerned by “problems with the no-bid contract.”

According to an email obtained by the *Times*, Liberatore wrote that if other agencies examined the deal “we are all toast.”

“In 2009,” Lichtblau and Risen inform us, “the Air Force approved a \$3 million deal for his technology, even though a contracting officer acknowledged that other agencies were

skeptical about the software.”

As Montgomery’s firm crashed and burned, the Bush and now, the Obama administration, sought to cover their ass-ets and “declared that some classified details about the use of Mr. Montgomery’s software were a ‘state secret’ that could cause grave harm if disclosed in court.”

“The secrecy was so great that at a deposition Mr. Montgomery gave in November,” Lichtblau and Risen report, that “two government officials showed up to monitor the questioning but refused to give their full names or the agencies they worked for.”

Bottom line: while the U.S. government affirms that the private communications of American citizens are fair game to be trolled by secret state snoops, fraud and serious crimes carried out under the dark banner of an endless “War on Terror” are treated, like evidence of torture and other crimes against humanity, as if they “never happened.”

Criminalizing Whistleblowing

The National Security State’s assault on our right to privacy comes hard on the heels on moves in Congress, spearheaded by troglodytic Republicans (with “liberal” Democrats running a close second) to criminalize whistleblowing altogether.

Last week, the Muslim-hating Rep. Peter King (R-NY) introduced the SHIELD Act in the House, a pernicious piece of legislative flotsam that would amend the Espionage Act and make publishing classified information, and investigative journalism, a criminal offense.

Also last week, legislation was introduced in the Senate that “would broadly criminalize leaks of classified information,” [Secrecy News](#) reported.

Sponsored by Senator Benjamin Cardin (D-MD), the bill ([S. 355](#)) “would make it a felony for a government employee or contractor who has authorized access to classified information to disclose such information to an unauthorized person in violation of his or her nondisclosure agreement,” *Secrecy News* disclosed.

In an Orwellian twist, Cardin, who received some \$385,000 in campaign swag from free speech advocates such as Constellation Energy, Goldman Sachs and Patton Boggs (Mubarak’s chief lobbyist in Washington) according to [OpenSecrets.org](#), said that the bill would “promote Federal whistleblower protection statutes and regulations”!

As *Secrecy News* points out, the bill “does not provide for a ‘public interest’ defense, i.e. an argument that any damage to national security was outweighed by a benefit to the nation.” In other words, you don’t need to know about government high crimes and misdemeanors. Why? *Because we say so.*

In November, shortly after WikiLeaks began publishing Cablegate files, King fired off a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Attorney General Eric Holder demanding that WikiLeaks be declared a “foreign terrorist organization” and the group’s founder declared a “terrorist ringleader.”

We know the fate reserved for “terrorists,” don’t we?

As the United States sinks ever-deeper into a lawless abyss where the corporate state is

lowering the boom on democracy altogether, is the day far off when Madam Clinton's avowal that we ought not "tell people how to use any public square, whether it's Tahrir Square or Times Square," come back with a vengeance to haunt America's venal ruling class?

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