

# The REAL COLOMBIA SCANDAL: When Bedding Prostitutes Is Worse Than Crimes Against Humanity

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*Get caught with a hooker in your hotel room and it's a firing offence; get caught desecrating the corpses of dead Afghans and - nothing.*

*Two scandals emerging this week involving immoral conduct of US Secret Service and military personnel reveal starkly different reactions and priorities among the American ruling elite.*

Revelations from Colombia that up to 21 Secret Service agents and military officers, including five Special Forces, were entertaining prostitutes in their hotel rooms overnight while supposedly on security duty ahead of US President Obama's arrival for the Americas Summit last week, have resulted in swift retribution from superiors.

As news of the scandal broke, all 21 American individuals were immediately recalled to US headquarters and had their security clearances cancelled. So far, three secret service agents are out of their jobs. One was fired, the other two are said to have "retired".

In this US election year, more sackings or "retirements" can be expected soon as the White House tries to limit the political damage from the president's security detail, known as "jump teams", being seen to be more occupied with jumping on prostitutes than would-be assassins.

"We demand that all of our employees adhere to the highest professional and ethical standards and are committed to a full review of this matter," the Secret Service said in a statement.

Meanwhile, revelations from Afghanistan this week show yet more depraved behaviour by US military in that war-torn country. In the latest scandal, photographs published by the Los Angeles Times depict US paratroopers gloating over dead Afghan militants by holding up limbs of their dismembered corpses.

The barbaric images have prompted condemnations from President Obama and Defense Secretary Leon Panetta. "This does not represent who we are," asserted Panetta. He promised a full investigation and that those involved would be held to account.

Panetta's promises of investigation and justice over the latest sickening violation of international law and morality by US forces in Afghanistan can be dismissed as disingenuous platitudes. The truth is that, unlike the Colombian hooker affair, there will be no immediate retribution against American personnel. There will be no credible investigation. There will be

no security clearances cancelled. No sackings.

Recall the incidents of American military urinating on Afghan corpses, hacking off body parts as war trophies, or being photographed humiliating prisoners in Abu Ghraib, Iraq, with mock executions and torture.

We only have to recall, too, the track record of Washington's response to these and countless other atrocities and violations by US forces in Afghanistan and Iraq to realise that the latest obscenity will be shunted down the memory hole or, at best, spun out in some inconsequential tribunal.

How many days passed before the Pentagon reluctantly moved to bring charges against Sergeant Robert Bales over the cold-blooded slaughter of 17 Afghans civilians, including women and children, last month? The Pentagon has also shirked calls for an investigation based on credible claims that more than one US soldier was involved in that particular all-night orgy.

That Obama and Panetta appeared to react with indignation to the latest scandal out of Afghanistan is less about genuine concern for moral decency and international law. After all, these two politicians stand as criminals under international law overseeing wars of aggression or acts of aggression in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Iran, among other countries. Of course their condemnations of the 82nd Airborne platoon violating human remains are meaningless, and are more directed at trying to placate public outrage both in the US and Afghanistan. When Panetta says: "This is not who we are" his assertion belies the exact opposite: "This is exactly who we are."

The violation of corpses in Afghanistan by US military personnel is not some perverse, atypical act of a few individuals. The crime is an integral part of a much bigger systematic crime: the violation of an entire population by the US ruling elite, headed up by the likes of Obama and Panetta.

Jumping on prostitutes in Colombia – some of them believed to be underage girls – by Secret Service agents and US military officers is an offence to moral decency and an embarrassing scandal of indiscipline. It is also misconduct deserving sacking, according to Pentagon employment rules.

But in the eyes of the media tabloids, a CIA sex scandal is always front page news in comparison to the broader issue of crimes against humanity. Ask yourself: how does it compare with desecrating dead Afghans and the many other atrocities committed by the American military in recent years including the rape and murder of children?

The rapid response for retribution in the Colombian hooker scandal from White House and Pentagon chiefs compared with the hackneyed platitudes and inaction over systematic war crimes does not just reflect a distasteful, distorted concern for public relations. It points to the perverse and criminal depth of the US ruling class.

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