

What CIA Director Michael Hayden Told President-Elect Barack Obama

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As part of the anti-Trump offensive of Republican former national security officials working in conjunction with the presidential campaign of Democrat Hillary Clinton, former CIA and NSA director Michael Hayden has been playing a particularly aggressive role.

The Clinton campaign and its media propagandists, first and foremost the *New York Times*, have enthusiastically embraced this architect of the Bush administration's CIA torture program and the mass spying on the American people exposed in 2013 by Edward Snowden. This in itself is an indisputable indicator of the right-wing, war-mongering character of a future Clinton administration.

On Wednesday, the *Times* published an op-ed piece by Hayden titled "Classified Briefings and Candidates," which argued that giving a President Trump access to the secrets and conspiracies of the US intelligence agencies would be a high-risk proposition with potentially serious consequences for US imperialist enterprises around the world.

The column includes two extraordinary paragraphs. The first reflects the combination of arrogance and contempt with which the unelected "deep state," of which the CIA is a part, looks upon those more ephemeral figures elected to high office by the voters. The second is a blunt account of Hayden's first briefing in November 2008 of President-elect Barack Obama and Vice President-elect Joe Biden.

Here are the paragraphs:

"The briefings themselves will be intense. The president-elect will be shown great deference personally, but his or her campaign positions could be treated more harshly. This is the chance for the intelligence professionals to set the record, as they see it, straight.

"I had my own experience. After Election Day in 2008, I was briefing Mr. Obama on CIA renditions when Joseph R. Biden Jr., the vice president-elect, interrupted to observe that the agency had conducted that program—which entailed sending suspected terrorists to third countries—simply to "rough them up." I rejected the contention and advised him that he needed to stop saying that. I haven't heard him say it again."

In the latter paragraph, Hayden quite openly refers to the CIA program that included systematic torture at CIA "black sites" around the world. He makes no bones about the

program or his role in it. He brags of having silenced the impudent Mr. Biden and put him in his place.

Among other things, this little tale demonstrates that Obama and Biden knew about the CIA program of abductions and torture from day one and kept their mouths shut, concealing the existence of this illegal and criminal program from the American people.

At the onset of his administration, Obama announced that he would not seek to prosecute Bush administration officials for criminal actions either abroad or at home. That may be the only promise he has kept.

There is a postscript. The Senate Intelligence Committee conducted an investigation of the CIA torture program and drafted a detailed and voluminous report documenting its sordid operation and its cover-up by CIA and Bush administration officials. The 6,000-page report was approved by the committee in December of 2012, but the CIA and the Obama administration blocked its release.

In March of 2014, Senator Dianne Feinstein, at the time the chair of the intelligence committee, made an extraordinary appearance in the well of the Senate chamber to denounce Obama's CIA director, John Brennan, for having hacked into the computers of intelligence committee investigators as part of his efforts to disrupt their work and block their report. This, she explained, was a violation of federal law and the constitutional separation of powers.

The White House sided with Brennan, who was never prosecuted or reprimanded, and finally, in December of 2014, the Senate Intelligence Committee released a 525-page declassified, redacted summary of its report. It is an official US government account of criminal activities at the highest levels of the state.

With the help of Feinstein and company, and a corrupt media, the report disappeared from the news and public view almost as soon as it was released.

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