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Obama Ensnared in Bush's Abuses

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President Obama's fateful decision – after winning the 2008 election to seek “continuity” rather than “change” and “to look forward, not backward” – has trapped him in a web of constitutional abuses that began in the Bush-43 presidency and extended into his own, as **Coleen Rowley** describes.

It's ironic, to put it lightly, that whistleblower Edward Snowden — whose message of the need for CHANGE essentially repeats President Barack Obama's own original campaign promise — is now so threatened and persecuted by that very same “Change” president that he must seek asylum in foreign countries and cannot safely travel outside of Russia (which granted him temporary asylum).

Snowden's disclosures, backed up by documents, served as a grave warnings that no good can come from empowering a “Deep State, Top Secret America” to secretly and illegally spy on its own citizens. Freedom of the press is now threatened and ordinary citizens are not allowed to know about — or democratically control — the Deep State's “security” surveillance.

We have also reached the point where the CIA secretly and illegally attempts to thwart the Senate Intelligence Committee from investigating the CIA's torture, an assault on congressional oversight powers and responsibilities that has created a real constitutional crisis. This level of dangerous blowback is exactly the danger that Snowden blew the

whistle on!

But isn't it also what Sen. Obama campaigned he would change, if elected to the presidency, before further damage could occur to our Constitutional rule of law? And isn't the current perilous situation a parallel to the similar constitutional crisis involving the FBI's COINTELPRO, CIA's CHAOS and NSA's MINARET programs that occurred in the final years of the Vietnam War, which led to Watergate and President Richard Nixon's resignation?

The spying and intimidation of Sen. Dianne Feinstein's committee is very similar to the spying on Senators Frank Church and Howard Baker, civil rights leaders Martin Luther King Jr. and Whitney Young, and top New York Times and Washington Post newspaper editors and columnists along with thousands of other innocent Americans who found themselves targeted by these secret spy programs during the last six years of the Vietnam War.

These "national security" programs claimed authority not only to listen but to "disrupt" Americans domestically. Wasn't this the important history lesson that Obama actually based his campaign for "Change" on?! Senators Church and Baker have passed on but surviving Church Committee members and staffers have quickly realized that history is repeating which is why they're so urgently calling for a new Church Committee-type investigation.

When Obama came into power, he had a choice to make as to whether to put into effect the "change" that he had promised, a change away from the illegal, unethical and highly counter-productive actions "justified" in secret memos that his predecessor, George W. Bush, had ordered, just days after 9/11 to wage his "war on terror." Obama unfortunately decided to go against his promises.

Maybe the history lesson was lost on him or maybe he believed the strength of his speechifying could distract people from the fact there was to be NO (significant) CHANGE, just some minor tweaking, i.e. in the verbiage from "war on terror" to "overseas contingency operations"; switching the emphasis from capture to kill (in "kill or capture") and the like.

Perhaps Obama gambled that the secret programs would not get out of hand so quickly or that no one would see the official hypocrisy in telling the troops they are fighting "for freedom" when here in the US, government officials had already put the First, Fourth and Fifth Amendments — freedoms of speech, association, religion, and press; protection from unreasonable search and seizure; rights against self-incrimination and for due process — on the chopping block.

Unfortunately, that decision dropped us so far down the rabbit hole that Chairman Feinstein's apt warning of "constitutional crisis" hardly gets a rise out of her fellow spied-on colleagues, many of whom still seem inclined to continue the partisan gaming

of such serious wrongdoing as torture.

By contrast, similar COINTELPRO-type revelations at the end of the Vietnam War and outing of war deceits and cover-ups did meet with widespread outrage and concern, making for bipartisanship that led to the end of the Vietnam War, the Church and Pike Committees' investigations and Nixon's resignation.

Does anyone know whether Senators Frank Church and Howard Baker ever realized (or even guessed) they were themselves being targeted by the NSA's secret Minaret Program? (The NSA also monitored 1,650 other Americans — whose identities still remain largely unknown.)

It seems that Feinstein's seeing of the light could be a kind of deja-vu from that moment when Senators Church, Baker and maybe others realized that the war, its corollary spying, Kent State-type repression, and attempt at public information control, etc., weren't merely directed toward others. They may have realized that they were no longer seen as "us" in "us versus them."

When that truth hits, then the Congress, media and public opinion can turn against continuing the status quo — see the funny "no problem" cartoon depiction — and some real change can become possible.

In this vein, it's darkly funny that the Secret Spy Machine's greatest defender Michael Hayden only seems to have shown concern once about any potential adverse repercussions of his hasty post 9/11 decision to turn the massive spy operation upon US citizens as well as foreign people. It was when some FBI agent (probably not understanding who's in the "Us" insider club) applied "collect it all" to Hayden's buddy, General David Petraeus' sex affairs. Hayden finally became a little concerned that "collect it all" had gone too far when it took down his friend. Information IS power!

I just hope that Feinstein and other congresspersons now understand they really aren't in the trusted top echelons of the Deep State Secret Spy Club and ultimately this "nearly Orwellian" apparatus has already been turned onto even other branches of government just as it was upon those foreign country leaders termed "allies." It's very much a constitutional crisis!

Recall also that the only time Feinstein seemed concerned about NSA spying was learning it included German Chancellor Angela Merkel's cell phone. Maybe she identified with the other powerful female leader who previously thought she was in the Club. A little light was starting to go on. Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi should wake up too that "collect it all" means her legislative oversight efforts are also in the crosshairs.

Congress should realize it must rein in this out-of-control Security State which now threatens the balance of power set up under the Constitution and Bill of Rights. The President needs to fulfill his promises to change the rotten system that has resulted from

years of deceitful “war on terror.”

A good first step would be to listen to Edward Snowden along with other NSA whistleblowers (as well as those from other agencies) who know the truth about these programs instead of threatening them with prison terms and equating them with being “spies.”

Instead of magnifying the vilification of Edward Snowden who happens, for better or worse, to have no option but to remain in a country of asylum, Obama ought to recognize that Snowden and earlier NSA and other government whistleblowers are the ones who possess the insights to help him climb out of this rabbit hole, fix the constitutional mess, and restore the rule of law. Edward Snowden should become the first witness called by a new Church Committee!

Ultimately, common sense tells us that restoring the rule of law will entail: 1) ending the “global war on terror”; 2) focusing on the bad guys, not the innocent. Stop adding hay to the haystack. Restoring due process that allows greater intrusiveness upon individuals’ freedom only as the level of evidence and judicial certitude increases; 3) reducing governmental secrecy to a necessary minimum by making it temporary instead of perpetual; 4) increasing independent oversight of and whistleblower protection in all intelligence agencies and national security contractors; 5) reducing governmental corruption and “revolving door” conflicts of interest that Eisenhower was first to warn about and which were supposed to be banned by Office of Government Ethics rules; and 6) repealing the two provisions of the 1917 Espionage Act, 18 USC. 793 (d) and (e), that are being used to prosecute disclosures to the press, i.e. the copying and retaining of classified information as well as potentially prosecuting news reporters and organizations directly.

We hope to get this message across this week in Washington DC at the Press Club at 1 pm on Tuesday, March 25, and also via delivery of 100,000 “Roots Action” signed petitions to Secretary of State John Kerry and Attorney General Eric Holder at the Departments of State and Justice (further details here).

We may also read aloud some of the 100,000 signers’ comments outside the White House. The moment again seems reminiscent of the days after the popularity of Lyndon Johnson’s war presidency dropped and so many American citizens were forced to shout messages over the fence that he needed to change course.