

BURGLING FOR BIG BROTHER

I found this interesting little tale about a CIA agent who specialized in burglary. After years of success in his field, he became disgruntled over a badly planned operation. It's a fascinating story on its own, and includes some background about the CIA's history.

What was even more interesting, though, was a short section about an issue that we are dealing with right now:

"In a secret program called HTLINGUAL, the CIA screened more than 28 million first-class letters and opened 215,000 of them between 1953 and 1973, even though the Supreme Court held as far back as 1878 in Ex parte Jackson and reaffirmed in 1970 in U.S. v. Van Leeuwen that the Fourth Amendment bars third parties from opening first-class mail without a warrant. The program's stated purpose was to obtain foreign intelligence, but it targeted domestic peace and civil rights activists as well. In a 1962 memo to the director of the CIA's Office of Security, the deputy chief of the counterintelligence staff warned that the program could lead "to grave charges of criminal misuse of the mails" and therefore U.S. intelligence agencies must "vigorously deny" HTLINGUAL, which should be "relatively easy to 'hush up.' "

[The CIA Burglar Who Went Rogue](#)

The advent of email and cellphones, and the current "war on terror" did not begin American espionage invasion of our privacy. It was wrong then, and they knew it, just as it is now. Congress may end the NSA data collection, or it may not, but it didn't have the right to authorize it in the first place.

It is likely that, even if authorization ends, and even if, as should be done, a law is passed that reaffirms our Constitutional right to privacy in communications, the NSA, CIA, or another acronymed entity, will continue to disregard the Constitution, believing that if we don't know about it or can't prove it, nothing can be done to stop them.

Secrecy, in effect, confers the power to do just about anything. Though in theory, with a democratic government, the people determine the laws and choose leaders who promise to conduct ethical and principled foreign policy, a secret agency can act against the laws and against the will of the voting public as long as it isn't caught.

Theoretically, the CIA and NSA are at least subject to the will of the President, who should be told what they are doing before they do it. But, how can we know that is true in practice?

[2012 Defense Intelligence Agency document: West will facilitate rise of Islamic State "in order to isolate the Syrian regime"](#)

This story is rather startling, especially since it seems that ISIS is far more murderous and dangerous than Asaad ever was. The DIA even admits that they knew it would be, yet the policy was evidently pursued.

Did President Obama think this was a good idea? If so, he was quite wrong, and it was oddly inconsistent with his attempts to negotiate peace in other situations.

I wonder if the operation was already underway before he was aware of it.

Remember that this strategy was used against the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan, when Al Qaeda was created and supplied by the US to defeat the occupation there. Once that was done, a dangerous organization was left, looking for another enemy to smite.

Was that such a great idea that it deserved another try? And why, after the September 11 attack by Sunni extremists, would we want to ally with Sunnis against Shiites?

I suspect that if we ever want our foreign actions to make sense, and our country to become a good citizen of the world, we need to rid ourselves of agencies with the power to act in secret.

[End C.I.A. Covert Operations](#)

"In the aftermath of the failed C.I.A.-led invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, John F. Kennedy angrily told his top aides that he wanted to "splinter the C.I.A. into a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds....they have repeatedly done damage to U.S. values and laws -- as well as to our international foreign policy interests, not to mention America's reputation, which is now permanently stained by C.I.A.-conducted torture."

--cosmic rat May 23 2015