

## **Ed Snowden, Philip Agee, and Executive Authority**

by BILL BLUNDEN

Though Mike Rogers, the chair of the House Intelligence Committee, has insinuated that Ed Snowden is a Russian spy [1], it's fairly obvious that Ed is currently stuck in Russia because the U.S. government revoked his passport [2]. What many people don't realize is that history is actually repeating itself and that the precedent for passport revocation was established decades ago when a previous CIA employee disclosed classified information.

In the mid-1970s a former case officer named Philip Agee went public, publishing an expose entitled *Inside the Company: CIA Diary* that described U.S. covert operations in intimate detail [3]. Congress responded with the *Intelligence Identities Protection Act of 1982*, making it illegal to blow the cover of government spies. In addition, the State Department also annulled Agee's passport, a move which Agee challenged in court. The legal case, *Haig v. Agee* [4], made it all the way to the Supreme Court, which ultimately upheld the power of the executive branch to revoke passports.

Certain overarching themes recur. Agee saw intelligence services like the CIA as "logical, necessary manifestations of a ruling class's determination to retain power and privilege. [5]" Sound familiar? Snowden arrived at similar conclusions with regard to U.S. surveillance operations, that NSA programs "were never about terrorism: they're about economic spying, social control, and diplomatic manipulation. They're about power. [6]" Preventing terrorism is a pretext for shoring up elite dominance both abroad and at home.

The intelligence services are merely obedient arms of the executive branch, which itself in turn dutifully heeds the call of corporate mandates [7]. Or perhaps you haven't noticed that our financial elite are essentially above the law [8]? After all, the large banking houses have the resources necessary to reward government leaders who serve their interests while in office. Is it any surprise that Keith Alexander, the former director of the NSA, is trying to charge banks something on the order of \$1 million per month for the benefit of his expertise [9]? Just ask Hilary Clinton, she raked in close to half a million for making two speeches at Goldman Sachs [10]. Wow, those must have been epic speeches.

There are additional connections between what's transpiring today and what took place during the Cold War. For instance, while anyone who's not living in a cave probably knows that portions of the 2010 Justice Department "drone memo [11]" (thanks to the ACLU and *New York Times*) have been released to the public [12], not many people are aware that the foundations of extrajudicial killing were established way back in the Reagan era.

On April 3<sup>rd</sup> of 1984, President Reagan signed National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 138. This classified document, entitled *Combating Terrorism*, helped set groundwork for leveraging the U.S. military against terrorism in “an effort to switch from defensive to offensive action [13].” Specifically, NSDD 138 ordered the Pentagon to [14]:

*“Develop a military strategy that is supportive of an active, preventive program to combat state-sponsored terrorism before the terrorists can initiate hostile acts.”*

Shortly after Reagan signed this document, Secretary of State George Schultz made a speech about terrorism which admitted the potential for “preemptive action [15].” Preemptive, as in assassination. For instance, the CIA’s 1985 attempt to kill Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah with a car bomb in Beirut [16]. Readers may want to keep in mind that it was during this same time period that Al-Qaeda was formed with extensive support from the CIA. Alleged freedom fighters or so they said. You see, the Deep State was planting seeds. As former CIA officer John Stockwell presciently observed [17]:

*“Enemies are necessary for the wheels of the U.S. military machine to turn... This is where the thousands of CIA destabilizations begin to make a macabre kind of economic sense. They function to kill people who never were our enemies... to leave behind, for each one of the dead, perhaps five loved ones who are now traumatically conditioned to violence and hostility toward the United States”*

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## End Notes

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