

Why In-Q-Tel Is A Crime Against Humanity

10 times the intel community violated the trust of US citizens, lawmakers and allies

BY SHARYL ATTKISSON, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR — 12/26/17 12:30 PM EST

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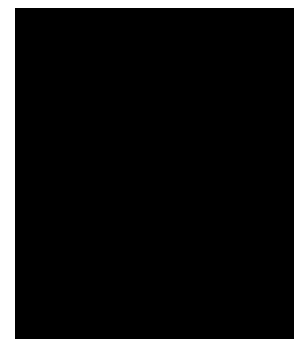
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No matter where you stand politically, a growing body of facts raises the question: Is there systemic corruption or misfeasance at work inside America's intelligence agencies?

By that, I don't mean people stealing money. I mean officials who are stealing our privacy — using the tools of intelligence-gathering and law-enforcing, which are meant to protect Americans, to instead spy on them, to gather information that isn't the government's business (at least not without a court's approval). And, in some instances, it appears, to punish or silence those with whom they disagree — personal and political foes, in and out of government — rather than to pursue and protect Americans from the country's real enemies.

Perhaps more alarming is the growing evidence that suggests some officials at all levels in intelligence and justice agencies are operating in a way that is clearly intended to serve their own political beliefs and interests — not the public's interests.

And sometimes, it appears, they operate not just in direct defiance of their superiors but of the Congress, the courts and the very laws of



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the land as well.

(Almost as disturbing, Congress, for its part, seems all too willing to allow all of this to take place, when it becomes known, rather than using its authority to stop the misfeasance, punish the miscreants who lie or stonewall, and protect their constituents.)

This is not, in my view, a partisan political question. The evidence leading us to ask such a disturbing question indicates there are forces inside our intelligence agencies that are more persistent and powerful than any single political party or administration. They can usurp the intentions of the many fine intelligence officers serving our country.

The following examples are not a comprehensive list; instead, they are a representative guidepost that demonstrates the cause for concern while showing that this is not a new phenomenon or one confined to a single administration:

Telecom takeover

Joe Nacchio, CEO of telecom giant Qwest, said that after he refused to spy on his customers for the National Security Agency (NSA) without a warrant in February of 2001, the government retaliated by yanking a contract worth hundreds of millions of dollars and filing an insider trading case against him. He went to prison. The government denied charges of retaliation.

Olympic spying

In 2002, the NSA reportedly engaged in "blanket surveillance" of the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah, collecting and storing "virtually all electronic communications going into or out of the Salt Lake City area, including ... emails and text messages" to "experiment with and fine tune a new scale of mass surveillance." NSA officials had denied such a program existed.

Spying on Congress

In 2005 intel officials intercepted and recorded phone conversations between then-Congresswoman Jane Harman (D-Calif.) and pro-Israel lobbyists who were under investigation for espionage. In 2009, someone — exactly who was never revealed — leaked Harman's "unmasked" name to the press. In 2011, intel officials captured private communications between then-Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) and a Libyan official. The wiretapped recordings were later leaked to the press — again, by unknown sources.

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Journalist "witch hunts"

Internal emails from a "global intelligence company" executive in 2010 stated: "Brennan is behind the witch hunts of investigative journalists learning information from inside the beltway sources. Note -- There is specific tasker from the [White House] to go after anyone printing materials negative to the Obama agenda (oh my.) Even the FBI is shocked." The name "Brennan" appears to reference then-U.S. homeland security adviser John Brennan, who went on to become CIA director.

Misleading on mass spying

On March 12, 2013, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told Congress that intel officials were not collecting mass data on tens of millions of Americans. NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden soon revealed material that proved Clapper's testimony false: The government had been gathering and storing data from ordinary Americans' phone records, email and Internet use.

More spying on Congress

CIA officials improperly accessed Senate Intelligence Committee computers, according to an Inspector General report in July 2014, contradicting denials by then-CIA Director Brennan. Meantime, Obama intel officials secretly captured communications of a half-dozen members of Congress and organizations in the U.S. while wiretapping Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

NSA privacy violations

In fall 2016, the government confessed to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court "significant non-compliance" of crucial procedures designed to protect privacy rights of U.S. citizens. The judge accused the NSA of "institutional 'lack of candor'" and declared: "This is a very serious Fourth Amendment issue."

Intel mutiny?

Government requests to see or "unmask" names of Americans whose communications are "incidentally" captured during national security surveillance are supposed to be rare and justified. Yet Obama administration officials made them on a near-daily basis during the 2016 election year. U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice admitted under pressure that she "unmasked" senior Trump transition officials who met with a

foreign official under surveillance at Trump Tower. In early 2017, the CIA, NSA and FBI refused congressional requests to provide a list of unmasking requests made by Obama officials. Meantime, the FBI also stonewalled Congress about the opposition research “dossier” against Trump that the FBI obtained during the campaign.

Politically motivated press leak

In May 2017, former FBI Director James Comey secretly orchestrated a “leak” to The New York Times of negative memos he said he wrote contemporaneously about President Trump, with the motive of spurring the appointment of a special counsel to investigate the president’s alleged Russia ties. Special counsel Robert Mueller (who has served under Presidents Reagan, Clinton, Obama and both Bushes) was appointed a short time later.

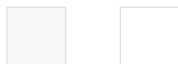
Conflicted investigators

One purpose of special counsel investigations, such as the Russia investigation being led by former FBI Director Mueller, is to avoid the appearance of conflicts of interest. But multiple investigators working on Mueller’s team have been removed after being caught in compromising positions. They include FBI agent Peter Strzok who sent a questionable text message to a fellow agent with whom he was having an affair. The message talks about needing an “insurance policy” in case Donald Trump were elected president.

Think all this really doesn’t matter to you, as a private citizen? You never know. Reality hit home for me when multiple computer forensics reports confirmed extensive government surveillance of me while I reported for CBS News during the Obama administration. Rather than cooperate or expose the bad actors, today’s Department of Justice is opposing my lawsuit over those intrusions in Virginia federal court.

Sharyl Attkisson ([@SharylAttkisson](#)) is an Emmy-award winning investigative journalist, author of The New York Times bestsellers “The Smear” and “Stonewalled,” and host of Sinclair’s Sunday TV program “Full Measure.”

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