

Chapter 2

Déjà Vu

What Happened to Previous Top Censored Stories

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That men do not learn very much from the lessons of history is the most important of all the lessons that history has to teach.

—Aldous Huxley

Each year, Project Censored reviews stories that were featured in previous years’ Top 25 lists. These reviews focus on the stories’ subsequent corporate coverage and the extent to which they have become part of broader public discourse, or whether they remain “censored” by corporate media and marginal in terms of public exposure and attention.

Too often, we find that Censored stories continue to suffer from neglect by the corporate media. In such cases, but for the original reports by independent journalists, these stories would languish unknown to any segment of the public. For instance, Censored story #1 for 2009, “Over One Million Deaths Caused by US Occupation,” remains unacknowledged by corporate media. Consequently, few Americans understand the extraordinary toll of US military operations in Iraq.

For Censored stories that the big media outlets do eventually cover, we have noticed a consistent lag of roughly one to two years between the moment when independent journalists cover a particular story and the time when the corporate news “breaks” it. This is the same lag that
Project Censored founder, Professor Carl Jensen, noted in analyzing press coverage of the Watergate scandal that led to United States President Richard Nixon’s resignation in 1974. Stories about the scandal circulated in the independent press in early 1972, but corporate coverage lagged. Jensen wondered how the outcome of the 1972 election might have differed if Watergate had broken as a prominent news feature much sooner. That was the genesis of Project Censored.

Over thirty-seven years later, the trend of lagging corporate coverage continues. For instance, story #1 from Censored 2012, “More US Soldiers Committed Suicide than Died in Combat” has finally gained momentum in corporate news coverage. And, as reported in this chapter, the devastating consequences of US drone strikes in Yemen, Somalia, and especially Pakistan—which featured in independent news coverage at least two years previously—have at last broken through to the attention of corporate media in a meaningful way in 2013. In addition to an update of Censored story #3 from 2012, “Obama Authorizes International Assassination Campaign,” this year Project Censored reviews subsequent coverage of the following stories from Censored 2013: #1, “Signs of an Emerging Police State”; #4, “FBI Agents Responsible for Majority of Terrorist Plots in the United States”; #6, “Small Network of Corporations Run the Global Economy”; #12, “US Joins Forces with al-Qaeda in Syria”; and #16, “Sexual Violence Against Women Soldiers on the Rise and Under Wraps.”

As we try to learn lessons from our recent history, let us strive for these significant yet underreported stories to get a fair and broad hearing in the present, such that future people’s historians can more accurately and assuredly learn and share their own.

Censored 2013 #1
Signs of an Emerging Police State

SUMMARY: In 2011 and 2012, the United States showed more signs of moving towards a police state. Some examples of such a shift include the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which President Barack Obama signed into law on December 31, 2011. The NDAA’s vague language gave the president the right to use military force to
detain American citizens indefinitely without trial. In March 2012, passage of the National Defense Resources Preparedness Executive Order gave the federal government and military widespread control over the national economy and resources during “national emergencies” as well as “peacetime.” Along with these laws came an increase in surveillance, including the National Security Agency’s construction of a two-billion-dollar electronic intelligence compound in Utah. American citizens continue to have their civil liberties threatened more and more each day.

**UPDATE:** Until National Security Administration (NSA) whistleblower Edward Snowden galvanized the public’s attention on the pervasive nature of domestic surveillance in the US, the continuation of NDAA and NSA policies had been almost completely ignored by the corporate media. The NDAA has received little corporate media coverage since Censored 2013.

In January 2012, journalist Chris Hedges filed a lawsuit to challenge section 1021 (b)(2) of the NDAA, which authorized indefinite detention for anyone who is “a part of or substantially supports al-Qaeda, the Taliban, or associated forces.” Federal Judge Katherine B. Forrest issued a permanent injunction on September 11, 2012, blocking the government’s use of NDAA to detain citizens indefinitely. The Obama administration responded with an emergency block and appeal. As Censored 2014 went to press, no decision had been made on the appeal. Hedges v. Obama received corporate media coverage, mostly in the New York Times. An editorial by the Washington Post offered support for the Obama administration’s appeal, calling Judge Forrest’s ruling an “overreaction.” Originally signed into law with little fanfare on December 31, 2012, when Americans were busy celebrating the New Year’s holiday, the NDAA remains law in 2013 while the appeal is decided. It was signed on for another year by the president in January 2013. Corporate media coverage focused on whether or not President Obama would sign the bill rather than the bill’s specific implications, or Hedges’s lawsuit.

However, also as Censored 2014 went to press, three other major stories about government secrecy and police state power surfaced. One covered the revelations of the Obama justice department spying on
Associated Press (AP) and Fox News journalists. A Democracy Now! story with Chris Hedges on May 15, 2013, rightfully called it a terrifying step in the state assault on press freedom, and while the corporate media covered the story and even vilified the Obama administration over it, this faded from memory fairly quickly. After being declared legal by the Obama administration, there was little fanfare as if all this was simply the new normal—eerily, it is. The second story, which involved Supreme Court case Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project, had arguably even broader civil rights implications than the NDAA or AP scandal and received almost no attention in the media. In this case, justices ruled that speech (and other forms of nonviolent advocacy) could be construed as material support for terrorist organizations.

The last of these stories, however, did break, blowing up in the media even more than both of the preceding stories—in fact, overshadowing them. This involved Edward Snowden, a former NSA contractor who leaked information regarding an NSA program, PRISM, that collects data on all Americans, creating a massive spy database. Journalist Glenn Greenwald broke the story in the Guardian (out of London, so not a US media outlet). The story was quickly pounced upon by the US press, but mostly to deny or downplay the claims of America’s latest whistleblower. Many prominent liberals like Jeffrey Toobin attacked Snowden as a narcissist who should be in prison, a sentiment echoed by most Washington establishment politicians and the press. For most in the corporate media, there was little interest in the specifics of what Snowden was revealing via Greenwald, and, rather, a great focus on spinning the information and how these programs are part of the war on terror, while framing Snowden as a traitor, not a hero exposing controversial and dubious government spy programs. This is a common theme, as we will see.

In what should be the high-profile legal case of the year, most US major media are absent from or locked out of the WikiLeaks whistleblower Bradley Manning trial that began in early June (see story #1 in chapter 1 of this volume). According to Rainey Reitman of Freedom of the Press Foundation, the Military District of Washington Media Desk, which issues press passes, only granted 70 out of 350 requests for media access. Reader Supported News filed a motion to intervene and secure media access, or at least a video feed of the proceedings,
and the judge ruled against the motion even though many of the seventy people granted access were apparently not even showing up to the media operations room.9

Further, what corporate media coverage there was regarding the Manning trial seemed to miss the point, as was shown by Matt Taibbi of Rolling Stone. Taibbi wrote that “the government couldn’t have scripted the headlines any better.”10 The government court marshal and compliant corporate media have tried to make the case about Pfc. Manning, a troubled young man with gender identity issues, and frame the case by posing the question of “Is he a hero or traitor?” Taibbi rightfully called out this distraction, saying, “In reality, this case does not have anything to do with who Bradley Manning is, or even, really, what his motives were. This case is entirely about the ‘classified’ materials Manning had access to, and whether or not they contained widespread evidence of war crimes.”11 Most in the corporate media have missed this point,12 and it’s likely that Pentagon public relations people couldn’t be happier with the coverage (and they didn’t have to dip into their five billion dollar budget specifically for Pentagon PR). Further proving Taibbi’s point, Time magazine’s cover story during the second week of June equated whistleblowers like Manning and Snowden with spies. Again, a government PR team couldn’t do a better job disseminating such propaganda.13

This “shoot the messenger” ad hominem/red herring approach is standard fare in the US when dealing with those who dare to engage in fearless speech in fateful times, especially when revealing government secrecy and lies. From Daniel Ellsberg to Julian Assange, the US political establishment has sought to discredit, attack, and prosecute those who dare announce that the emperor has no clothes. The Obama administration has targeted whistleblowers more than all previous US administrations combined (see story #4 in chapter 1 of this volume), further evidenced by the legal proceedings involving Bradley Manning; the prosecution of CIA whistleblower John Kiriakou, the source exposing CIA torture program; and the federal prosecutorial overreach and legal haranguing14 of Creative Commons tech prodigy and Internet freedom activist Aaron Swartz, which led to his suicide.15 It is clear the Obama administration wants to make examples out of those who are strong advocates of freedom of information and the
public’s right to know. It appears that in failing to point out these attacks on the state of press freedom and public rights, corporate media is missing key elements of the story.

SOURCES:


Censored 2013 #4

FBI Agents Responsible for Majority of Terrorist Plots in the United States

SUMMARY: The Federal Bureau of Investigation has embarked on an unusual approach to ensure that the United States is secure from future terrorist attacks. The agency has developed a network of nearly 15,000 spies to infiltrate various communities in an attempt to uncover terrorist plots. However, these moles are actually assisting and encouraging people to commit crimes. Many informants receive cash rewards of up to $100,000 per case.
UPDATE: In November 2010, Mohamed Mohamud was arrested for attempting to detonate a car bomb at a Christmas tree-lighting ceremony in Portland, Oregon. Before his arrest, Mohamud had been under FBI surveillance for one year because he had written for a jihadi magazine and had been in email contact with two accused terrorists and a man who fought against coalition troops in Afghanistan. The FBI agents who established contact with Mohamud posed as al-Qaeda operatives and claimed that Mohamud had expressed an interest in car bombing. During his trial, Mohamud’s lawyers argued that undercover FBI operatives entrapped the young Somali-American and coerced him. The jury determined that Mohamud was guilty as charged and found no fault with the FBI. He was sentenced to life in prison. Mohamud’s case is one of at least eleven in which defendants have claimed entrapment in terrorism trials though none have been acquitted.

The FBI is accused of devising plots and then targeting operatives who are alienated loners or are easily manipulated. In the case of the Cleveland Five, who were accused of plotting to destroy a bridge outside Cleveland, friends and family members described them as “lost
souls.” As in Mohamud’s case, the Cleveland Five involved an FBI-inspired plan. An FBI informant allegedly brought them to the bridge and argued that blowing it up would help the Occupy movement. He then connected them to another undercover FBI operative who provided them with C4 explosives.

The corporate media, at least in print, have picked up on these stories. David K. Shipler of the New York Times wrote in April of 2012 (note the one- to two-year lag mentioned in the introduction of this chapter), that while it may seem the FBI is thwarting terror plots at home, they are rather more intimately involved with the actual carrying out of these very incidents via under cover officers and informants. Shipler rightfully picked up on Trevor Aaronson’s original story highlighted in Censored 2013 as story #4.

The Cleveland scenario was repeated with Quazi Mohammad Nafis. Nafis, a Bangladeshi-born US visitor on a student visa, was described by acquaintances as unintelligent, flunking out of the university he attended in Bangladesh. Within six months of his arrival in the US, the FBI began investigating the twenty-one–year-old. According to public documents, in a phone call Nafis expressed admiration for Osama bin Laden and a desire to wage jihad in the US. In that conversation, Nafis’s contact—who turned out to be an FBI informant—offered to put Nafis in contact with an al-Qaeda operative. Nafis told the informant that he wanted to bomb the New York Stock Exchange. The informant provided everything for Nafis, from the fake bomb and its detonator to the van used to contain the supposed explosives. He even drove with Nafis to the proposed bomb site—the Federal Reserve Bank in New York City—and parked the van outside. The two then went to a nearby hotel where Nafis proceeded to attempt a detonation by dialing a cell phone code. He tried several times before being arrested by FBI agents. Nafis awaits trial.

Several major news outlets like CBS and Huffington Post have covered the Nafis case, but neither mentions the FBI’s heavy involvement with the planning and facilitation of the plot. Nafis and Mohamud and at least 150 others have been arrested as a result of FBI involvement in terror plots. These stings have involved 15,000 registered informants, some are paid up to $100,000 per assignment. The FBI is paying known criminals in order to prevent po-
potential FBI encouraged criminals from executing terrorist acts. The largest portion of the FBI’s budget is for counterterrorism, which receives three billion dollars annually, and which goes to fund these operations.

Often, however, coverage by corporate media about these plots frame the event as if the FBI simply prevented the attacks, with no other details given outside of sweeping statements about agency efforts or local cooperation. This was the case with the May 2013 incident in Minnesota as it was simply announced that the FBI prevented an attack. No other information was given by the prominent *US News and World Report* story by Steven Nelson, “FBI: ‘Terror Attack’ Plot Disrupted in Minnesota Raid in Rural America Prevented ‘Potential Tragedy,’ FBI Says.” “The FBI says” . . . and no follow report was done by Nelson.

Given the FBI’s past with its Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), it is astounding that more reporters don’t do more probing. The public would be wise to pay more attention to domestic “terror” attacks (like the one in Boston this past spring, during which the FBI gave several conflicting stories about their knowledge of the suspects) and to begin pressuring the media and government to investigate these matters more fully, more transparently, and with more detail paid to FBI involvement.

**SOURCES:**


SUMMARY: A University of Zurich study reported that a small group of companies—mainly banks—wields huge power over the global economy. The study was the first to look at all 43,060 transnational corporations and the web of ownership among them. The researchers’ network analysis identified 147 companies that form a “super entity,” controlling 40 percent of the global economy’s total wealth. The close connections mean that the network could be prone to “systemic risk” and vulnerable to collapse.

UPDATE: The corporate media continues to ignore growing evidence of the systematic dangers produced by increasing concentration of corporate wealth. Corporate coverage of the Zurich study has been lacking, but the London Interbank Offered Rate (Libor) scandal has resulted in corporate news coverage. Libor is an estimated average interest rate that the world’s leading banks use to determine borrowing charges. Members of the press first documented the Libor scandal in 2007, when an employee at the British bank Barclays argued that Libor rates were “unrealistically low.” In 2008, another Barclays employee admitted that they had been manipulating Libor since at least 2005. In July 2012, the Financial Times reported that the numbers had been fixed since 1991. The Wall Street Journal reported that during the economic collapse of 2007–08, the big banks used manipulated Libor scores to make their banks appear healthier, and to gain access to better loans. At least three banks and possibly as many as sixteen were involved in manipulating $500 trillion worth of assets.


Andrew Gavin Marshall offered an analysis on Occupy.com that compared the global corporate network of financial elites to a “global supra-government.” Marshall argued that the “super entity” of connected corporations provides a dangerous amount of power to few and creates a controlling global force on government policies and fi-
financial markets (see chapter 9 of this volume for more analysis and exposure of the global ruling elite, also referred to as the transnational capitalist class).

In April 2013, Matt Taibbi of *Rolling Stone* documented that economic price-fixing goes far beyond the banks implicated in the Libor scandal. His investigation found that the financial elite not only had a hand in fixing Libor, the interest rates of swaps, but also gold and silver prices, which together would compromise “60 percent of the nation’s GDP.” He argued that fixing continues because banks use “loopholes” that do not require verified data. Taibbi concluded that “the world’s largest banks may be fixing the prices of . . . just about everything.” He went on to note that Libor was the biggest financial scam in history of markets.

But it gets worse. Taibbi continued:

Libor may have a twin brother. Word has leaked out that the London-based firm ICAP, the world’s largest broker of interest-rate swaps, is being investigated by American authorities for behavior that sounds eerily reminiscent of the Libor mess. Regulators are looking into whether or not a small group of brokers at ICAP may have worked with up to 15 of the world’s largest banks to manipulate ISDAfix, a benchmark number used around the world to calculate the prices of interest-rate swaps.¹⁶

That’s right, a conspiracy from the top of the world’s leading financial institutions to manipulate interest-rate swaps. The very companies that can manipulate these are the very ones who can profit, while potentially trashing other sectors of the global economy. Taibbi concluded grimly:

The only reason this problem has not received the attention it deserves is because the scale of it is so enormous that ordinary people simply cannot see it. It’s not just stealing by reaching a hand into your pocket and taking out money, but stealing in which banks can hit a few keystrokes and magically make whatever’s in your pocket worth less. This is cor-
ruption at the molecular level of the economy, Space Age stealing—and it’s only just coming into view.¹⁷

As Censored 2014 went to press, Taibbi noted stories from the Bloomberg business press on a possible scandal that could dwarf Libor involving the currency market, or foreign exchange rates, where insiders once again were poised to rig the system.¹⁸ A small network is still running the global economy.

SOURCES:

Censored 2013 #12
US Joins Forces with al-Qaeda in Syria

SUMMARY: The US, Britain, France, and some conservative Arab allies have funded and armed the Syrian rebellion from its start in 2011. In fact, the US has been funding groups against the administration of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad since the mid-1990s. However, the anti-Assad ranks include members of al-Qaeda, Hamas, and other groups that the United States lists as terrorist organizations.

UPDATE: Since the beginning of Syria’s civil war in 2011, the US and other international powers have considered intervening on behalf of opposition forces that seek to unseat President Bashar al-Assad, whose family has held the presidency since 1971. Trade agreements and other interests led to a bloc against United Nations intervention. Russia, which supplies the regime with weapons, led the block-
ade. The US has officially claimed it will support Syria unless they cross a “red line” by using chemical weapons. However, according to WikiLeaks, emails from the private intelligence firm Stratfor indicate that, as of 2012, Special Operations Forces (SOF) teams—presumably from US, UK, France, Jordan, and Turkey—“are already on the ground focused on recce (reconnaissance), missions . . . and training opposition forces.”

Independent news sources found that the CIA is operating on the Turkish border, attempting to organize and train Syrian opposition forces. The CIA has also reportedly given fourteen stinger missiles to the opposition. In March 2013, the New York Times revealed that arms were being supplied from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan, to Syria, and that supplies for the opposition, brought into Syria through Turkey, came from dummy corporations run by the CIA. In addition, the United Kingdom’s Daily Star reported that “British MI6, US CIA, and both French and American soldiers” were operating in Syria, seeking Assad’s chemical weapons. Israeli Special Forces were also implicated.

In 2012, the US government began to give public indications of support for the opposition. On February 28, 2013, the US government announced its pledge of sixty million dollars to the Syrian opposition. The BBC reported that the “US would provide direct support to rebel forces in the form of medical and food supplies.” When the New York Times inquired into the covert program of training opposition forces, the State Department refused to answer. However a private source informed the Times that the CIA “has been training groups of Syrian rebels in Jordan” since the previous year.

Groups deemed terror organizations by the US operate among the Syrian opposition. In November 2012, many of the opposition forces united under the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces. Several groups, most notably Jabhat al-Nusra or the al-Nusra Front, joined the coalition. Al-Nusra is designated a terrorist organization by the US because of its pledges of allegiance to al-Qaeda. Al Jazeera reported that the UN Security Council has blacklisted al-Nusra, claiming it is an alias for al-Qaeda. Al-Nusra has claimed responsibility for bombings that have racked Syria for the past year, targeting Assad’s regime and supporters. In April 2013, al-Nusra and al-Qaeda publicly announced support of each other.
Corporate reporting follows a well-worn Western narrative, emphasizing the dilemmas posed by humanitarian intervention—a frame much favored by officials in the Obama administration, and likely to become more pronounced since the appointments of Samantha Power and Susan Rice, to serve as US ambassador to the United Nations and as the president’s national security advisor, respectively. The only corporate publication to offer a differing perspective was the New York Times, which investigated the claims of CIA involvement in Syria’s civil war. All other major corporate news outlets have primarily focused on terror attacks in the region, the invisible “red line,” John McCain’s secret trip to Syria, and the true humanitarian crisis.

That stated, as Censored 2014 went to press, the US officially announced it would arm and train the Syrian rebels via a CIA-run program.

SOURCES:


Censored 2013 #16

Sexual Violence Against Women Soldiers On The Rise and Under Wraps

Summary: The 2005 death of US Army Private LaVena Johnson, officially ruled suicide by the Department of Defense, in fact exemplifies the sexual violence that female soldiers encounter while serving their country. Johnson’s autopsy revealed wounds inconsistent with suicide, including chemical burns that many believe were intended to destroy DNA evidence of rape. The Pentagon has tried to intimidate reporters and editors working on stories about Johnson. Johnson’s case is among at least twenty in which female soldiers have died under suspicious circumstances. The mysterious deaths are coinciding with an increase in sexual violence against women in the military. According to the Department of Defense, in 2010, there were 3,158 total reports of sexual assault in the military. The DOD estimates that this number represents only 13.5 percent of the actual assaults, making the total number of military rapes and sexual assaults over 19,000 for the year.

Update: The near-epidemic of rape in the military has been covered heavily by the corporate media since its release in Censored 2013. For example, NBC News covered Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel’s decision to strip the authority of commanding generals to void military
court convictions. This prevents generals from overturning sexual assault sentences. The defense department launched a “public relations campaign to show they’re serious about cracking down on sexual assault in the military.” The department “expanded its victim-assistance programs, sought help from outside advocacy groups, and required sexual assault to receive attention higher up the chain of command.”

Much attention was brought to this previously underreported issue of rape inside the military by the documentary The Invisible War. Directed by Kirby Dick and produced by Amy Ziering, The Invisible War received nominations for numerous awards including Best Documentary Feature at the Academy Awards. The Chicago Film Critics Association named it the Best Documentary of 2012. It appeared on numerous year-end best lists, including those published by the New York Times and the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures.

Although media attention on sexual assault in the military has increased, statistics do not reveal an improvement on the situation. Independent news center Common Dreams reported that, despite the changes in oversight championed by Hagel, issues persist. Abby Zimet reported, “The military’s annual report shows sexual assaults are in fact on the rise, with at least 26,000 a year. That’s about 70 a day.” Foreign Policy reported that the Air Force’s attempt focused on giving servicemen and women “a box of breath mints, which has a bold sticker on the cover that says ‘NO MEANS NO!’” and a “2.5-ounce hand sanitizer bottle shaped like an open palm. Printed on the bottle: ‘KEEP UR HANDS 2 YOURSELF,’ along with the telephone number for the Sexual Assault Response Coordinators 24-hour hotline.”

Another problem for victims is that those tasked with policing assaults are themselves assaulting victims. In 2013, Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Krusinski was charged with sexual battery against a woman in a parking lot. Krusinski’s job until the charge was chief of the US Air Force’s Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program. Officially the program “reinforces the Air Force’s commitment to eliminate incidents of sexual assault.” Krusinki’s arrest occurred the day before the Pentagon released its annual report on the epidemic of sexual assaults in the military. “How many more reasons do we need to take cases of rape and sexual assault out of the chain of command?” questioned Representative Jackie Speier (D-CA).
That is an excellent question. And given that this issue has become a much more high-profile one, deservedly so, this is one question the corporate media should press to have answered. The Senate’s Committee on Armed Services was meeting to take action on this important issue in June as *Censored 2014* went to press, but at that time, there was very little coverage in the corporate media about this crucial hearing.19

**SOURCES:**


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**Censored 2012 #3**

Obama Authorizes International Assassination Campaign

**SUMMARY:** Advancing a policy set forth by the George W. Bush administration, the Obama administration created an “international assassination program” to carry out “targeted killings” of suspected terrorists. Under this program, the president has authorized the high-profile killing of Osama bin Laden, as well as the killings of US citizens, such as Anwar al-Awlaki. The Obama administration has gone even further by leading covert drone wars in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia.

**UPDATE:** Despite coverage from both corporate and independent media outlets, the Obama administration’s targeted killing program remains shrouded in secrecy. In January 2013, a federal judge dismissed a parallel Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit, by the
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the New York Times, that would have required the government to disclose documents that justify with evidence the targeted killing of US citizen Anwar al-Awlaki. Judge Colleen McMahon stated in response to her ruling, “I can find no way around the thicket of laws and precedents that effectively allow the executive branch of our government to proclaim as perfectly lawful certain actions that seem on their face incompatible with our Constitution and laws while keeping the reasons for their conclusion a secret.” Both the ACLU and New York Times appealed this decision, while the ACLU filed another FOIA lawsuit requesting information to be released on who and how many people have been killed in targeted drone strikes. The number is currently estimated to be around 4,000 casualties.

On February 4, 2013, NBC News published a “white paper” leaked by the Department of Justice, which meant to give legal justification for the US government to carry out the extrajudicial killing of a US citizen. The document, which is not an official legal memo, offers the broad explanation that a citizen can be targeted if “an informed, high-level official” determines the person to be “an imminent threat,” “capture is infeasible,” and the killing is carried out within “applicable law of war principles.” More examples of the white paper’s vague language include the targeted individual being a part of al-Qaeda or “associated forces,” with little definition of what an associated force is.

As a journalist whose sources include members of groups such as the Taliban, Chris Hedges is concerned that, under the guidelines of the DOJ white paper, the US might consider him included among those “associated” who could be targeted. The memo offers no geographical restrictions as to where these killings can occur. Furthermore, it effectively eliminates due process by stating there is no court that can evaluate the constitutional issues because “matters intimately related to foreign policy and national security are rarely proper subjects for judicial intervention.” As a response to the overly broad language, Mother Jones reported that members of the House sent a letter to President Obama requesting further clarification on several points of the white paper.

On March 6, 2013, Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky performed a thirteen-hour filibuster during the nomination hearings on John
Brennan’s appointment to become director of the CIA. Paul sought to encourage the Obama administration to release information concerning its drone program. The next day, Paul stated that he had received the desired information from the White House. On Fox News, he read a brief letter of response from Attorney General Eric Holder, which stated, “It has come to my attention that you have now asked an additional question: ‘Does the President have the authority to use a weaponized drone to kill an American not engaged in combat on American soil?’ The answer to that question is no.” Attorney General Holder’s response in effect further stalled the corporate media’s coverage of the topic.

Then, on March 10, 2013, a lengthy New York Times article chronicled the events leading to the Obama administration’s decision to kill Anwar al-Awlaki. Citing interviews with legal and counterterrorism officials, the report described a decade of investigation of al-Awlaki by the FBI, alleging that he “was clearly a direct plotter, no longer just a dangerous propagandist,” and which concluded by declaring that al-Awlaki posed sufficient threat to US security that “his constitutional rights did not bar the government from killing him without a trial.”

The Times came under criticism for its coverage from multiple outlets, with Glenn Greenwald in the Guardian stating that the article only “summarizes the unverified justifications” of officials, and expressing concern that the Times’ account allowed government officials to present evidence after the fact without having “done the same thing in a court of law prior to killing him.” The ACLU and Center for Constitutional Rights called the report “the latest in a series of one-sided, selective disclosures that prevent meaningful public debate and legal or even political accountability for the government’s killing program, including its use against citizens.”

While the issue of drone strikes is now covered by the corporate media, the issue has still oft been framed in ways that do not highlight the many civilian deaths associated with the program, or what appear to be clear violations of due process. In President Obama’s national security speech on May 23, 2013, which corporate media covered extensively, he stated that America could not be on a permanent war footing, and that the government needed to close Guantánamo, curtail drone strikes, and have more oversight of such matters. Conservatives decried the
talk as a “victory for terrorists,” while many liberals tried to support the president’s strong reformist rhetoric. Meanwhile, ACLU executive director Anthony Romero’s remarks were covered in some independent online sources, but not much was covered elsewhere besides cursory mentions on the Washington Post blog and in USA Today. Romero remained skeptical of Obama’s claims and added,

To the extent the speech signals an end to signature strikes, recognizes the need for congressional oversight, and restricts the use of drones to threats against the American people, the developments on targeted killings are promising. Yet the president still claims broad authority to carry out targeted killings far from any battlefield, and there is still insufficient transparency. We continue to disagree fundamentally with the idea that due process requirements can be satisfied without any form of judicial oversight by regular federal courts.

SOURCES:


Notes

2. See Peter Phillips and Andrew Roth, eds., Censored 2009, (New York: Seven Stories, 2008), 20–25; and Peter Phillips and Mickey Huff, eds., Censored 2010 (New York: Seven Stores, 2009), 121–122. For more on this theme, see the Censored News Cluster, “Technologies and Ecologies of War,” in this volume. In fact, not only has the corporate media not addressed the significance of Iraqi casualty rates, organizations like the Associated Press have repeated grossly undercounted figures of 87,000, which dips well below even the most conservative counts of academic studies on the matter. So in this case, it’s not just under reporting, it’s willful ignorance coupled with misinformation at best, if not outright disinformation to mislead the American public.
4. All previous Project Censored stories, and their original sources, are available online at http://www.projectcensored.org.

11. Ibid.

12. One notable exception, it could be argued, is Denver Nicks, “Bradley Manning and Our Real Secrecy Problem,” *Time*, June 5, 2013, http://ideas.time.com/2013/06/05/viewpoint-our-real-secrecy-problem/#ixzz2VNWKyi68. Taibbi attacked Nicks’s article in his article criticizing the corporate press, though it seems Nicks and Taibbi agree that the Manning case is about excessive government secrecy at the very least. However, a week later, the publication in question, *Time*, ran a cover story equating whistleblowers with spies. Taibbi’s overall claim seems to stand up at least in terms of corporate media missing the point, and showing their bias, even if Nicks’s piece had a different angle. See Kevin Gosztola, “*Time* Magazine Equates Whistleblowers with Spies in Cover Story on Snowden, Manning & Swartz,” *FireDogLake*, June 13, 2013, http://dissenter.firedoglake.com/2013/06/13/time-magazine-equates-whistleblowers-with-spies-in-cover-story-on-snowden-manning-swartz/.

13. Gosztola, “TIME Magazine Equates Whistleblowers with Spies.” See also story #1 in ch. 1 of this volume, as well as Brian Covert, “Censored News Cluster: Whistleblowers and Gag Laws.”


17. Ibid.
