

"Carlucci" bleeped from HBO version of Lumumba

Ex-CIA official threatened lawsuit

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Home Box Office (HBO), the US cable television network, is currently broadcasting a censored version of *Lumumba*, the award-winning film about Patrice Lumumba, the first prime minister of independent Congo, assassinated by imperialist agents in January 1961.

Haitian-born director Raoul Peck's work fictionally reconstructs Lumumba's coming to power in 1960 and the intrigues which led to his brutal murder. The film shown on HBO is a version of the French-language original dubbed into English, which bleeps out the name of Frank Carlucci, a future deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and secretary of defense, in the dialogue and masks his name in the credits. At the time of Lumumba's death, Carlucci was the second secretary at the US embassy in the Congo and, covertly, a CIA agent.

This attempt to keep Carlucci's role in the Congo from television audiences follows the release of US government documents revealing that President Dwight Eisenhower ordered the CIA to murder Lumumba. Minutes of an August 1960 National Security Council meeting confirm that Eisenhower told CIA chief Allen Dulles to "eliminate" the Congolese leader. The official note taker, Robert H. Johnson, testified to this before the Senate Intelligence Committee in 1975, but no documentary evidence had been previously available to back up his claim.

Carlucci's lawyers threatened Peck and distribution company Zeitgeist Films with legal action if the name of the former US official was not bleeped out of a scene that shows American Ambassador Clare Timberlake and Carlucci, along with Belgian and Congolese officials, plotting Lumumba's assassination. Carlucci insisted that only the altered version of the film, with his name missing, could be used for mass market venues, such as television, video and DVD, allowing the original track to remain intact for theater showings. Zeitgeist officials said they were too small and weak financially to fight a case in court.

Carlucci is an immensely wealthy individual, with

connections at the highest levels of the US government. Deputy chief of the CIA under Jimmy Carter and secretary of defense under Ronald Reagan, Carlucci is now chairman of the Carlyle Group, a private equity investment group with billions of dollars of assets in the defense industry. The company employs prominent ex-officeholders, such as former president George Bush, former British prime minister John Major and former president of the Philippines Fidel Ramos. Carlucci has the closest financial, political and personal ties to the Bush family. Other figures involved in Carlyle Group operations include former secretary of state James Baker, who headed up George W. Bush's effort to block vote recounts in Florida in 2000 and hijack the presidential election. Carlucci has a long-term political relationship with his former classmate and wrestling buddy from Princeton, the present secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld.

At a January 24 screening of the film in New York held at the Council on Foreign Relations (CRF), publisher of *Foreign Affairs* magazine, Peck confirmed that the film had been changed in response to Carlucci's legal threats. Despite considerable media presence at the event, during which *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen, for one, raised a question about Carlucci's name being removed, virtually nothing has appeared in the mainstream media about the issue.

The WSWWS spoke with freelance journalist Lucy Komisar, who attended the screening and wrote an article about Carlucci's action for the Pacific News Service. She commented: "This is censorship. This is a story that he [Carlucci] does not want to talk about. Although he was not in charge [of the CIA's Congo activities in 1960], he was involved in what was going on. It is a part of his history. The honorable thing to do would have been to acknowledge that the Americans helped in doing away with a man who could have helped that region—that they supported Mobutu, who for decades led a brutal dictatorship which caused enormous

suffering. I think the incident shows the extremes to which people like Carlucci will go to cover up actions they know were wrong—even to censoring a movie.”

The panel at the CFR screening included Brian Urquhart, chief assistant to Ralph Bunche, who headed up the United Nations (UN) mission in Congo during the Lumumba crisis. According to Urquhart’s own account of the affair recently published in the *New York Review of Books*, he was in touch with Lumumba on nearly a daily basis until the latter broke off relations with Bunche. Urquhart’s article, as his statements at the film screening, depicted the UN as an independent, neutral force that was, albeit reluctantly, helping Lumumba.

Contrary to Urquhart’s version of events, Peck’s film depicts the UN as an instrument of the US and Belgium and an accessory to the campaign of subversion mounted by the imperialist powers against Lumumba and the newly independent Congolese government. Lumumba invited in the UN “peacekeepers,” but broke contact with them when their role became clear. UN officials and troops, in turn, refused to take any action to prevent his murder.

Carlucci’s attack on the film dates back at least to last summer. At a July 25 screening of *Lumumba* in Washington, DC, he was a panelist along with Howard Wolpe, the former congressman and chairman of the House subcommittee on Africa. Carlucci called the subsequently censored scene in the movie “a cheap shot.” He did make a mild—and thoroughly cynical—criticism of the US role. “Did [the United States] handle him [Lumumba] right?” Carlucci asked. “It’s clear we were too strident,” he replied.

In an interview with Komisar, Carlucci claimed that the US had “no role whatsoever” in plotting Lumumba’s death. He referred to Madeleine Kalb’s book, *The Congo Cables*, and asserted, “You’ll find no references to me.” As Komisar notes, “Carlucci has a bad memory.” Not only does Kalb’s book refer to Carlucci, it describes “the efforts by the US Embassy and the CIA to topple Lumumba.” The book, she writes, “contains documents by [US ambassador] Timberlake and CIA chief Lawrence Devlin talking about their desire and efforts to stop Lumumba, and even Devlin’s unhappiness [about] one leader’s refusal to commit murder. The State Department’s official ‘Analytical Chronology of the Congo Crisis’ talks about a plan ‘to bring about the overthrow of Lumumba and install a pro-western government...Operations under this plan were gradually put into effect by the CIA.’”

In a letter to Peck, Belgian Ludo De Witte—author of the recent book, *The Assassination of Lumumba*—also made clear that Timberlake, Devlin and Carlucci worked together “on Congolese efforts to get rid of Lumumba.” De Witte further commented: “We know that Devlin and other US

personnel in the capital were informed about the transfer of Lumumba to the Kasai or Katanga... Everybody knew that there were waiting some subcontractors to do the dirty job, and, given the rank and involvement of Carlucci in Lumumba-related activities from the US embassy, we may assume (although it’s not proven) that Carlucci knew of what equaled a death sentence for Lumumba.”

After leaving the Congo, Carlucci was in Brazil at the time of CIA and US State Department efforts to overthrow the Goulart government, which led to a military coup in March/April 1964. He was the US ambassador to Portugal during the years of intense revolutionary crisis in 1974-77, before returning to Washington and assuming top posts in the military and intelligence apparatus.

Carlucci’s efforts to suppress his role demonstrates that US complicity in Lumumba’s death remains a sensitive issue. The American establishment does not care for anyone to know that its interventions—past, present and future—are guided by the economic and political interests of US capitalism and often carried out by criminal and bloody means.

The bleeping of Carlucci’s name from *Lumumba* is not simply a matter of covering up the past. Carlucci remains a major figure in both the US state and the American corporate world, as well as within the Republican Party. The US, moreover, is intensifying its intrigues in Africa, and a reminder of its dirty past complicates its present-day activities on the continent.

The crude censorship of the film underscores as well the increasingly open assault on democratic rights and freedom of expression in the US.



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