

Bush picks Kissinger to head official probe: new stage in the September 11 coverup

The Editorial Board
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The nomination of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to head the official US commission into the September 11 terrorist attacks guarantees that the inquiry will be a whitewash, not an independent investigation. Bush's selection of Kissinger is a statement of the administration's contempt for the public and its implacable opposition to any serious investigation into the most deadly terrorist attack in the nation's history.

With this choice, the US government is thumbing its nose at international public opinion, choosing a man who is notorious around the world for his direct role in orchestrating some of the most bloody interventions carried out by Washington over the past five decades.

Kissinger's appointment makes a mockery of the independence of the commission. He is a former close associate of many of those whose actions before and on September 11 should be investigated. He was in charge of US foreign policy from 1969 to 1976. During the last two of those years, Donald Rumsfeld was White House chief of staff, then secretary of defense. When Rumsfeld moved to the Pentagon, Richard Cheney, now vice president, succeeded him as White House chief of staff. The current president's father, the senior George Bush, was head of the CIA.

The appointment was immediately accepted by congressional Democrats, who chose former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell—who has made a second career as a US diplomatic representative to regional trouble spots (Northern Ireland, the Middle East)—to serve as vice chairman of the commission.

Because of judicial proceedings in various countries concerning his role in sanctioning assassinations and state terrorism during the years when he directed American foreign policy, Kissinger can no longer travel freely in Europe and Latin America. He had to cancel a

trip to Brazil last year because of human rights protests. He was sought for questioning by French police during a visit to Paris, in a case involving a French citizen murdered by the US-backed military dictatorship in Chile. He is the subject of lawsuits in Chile and the US for his role in the assassination of General Rene Schneider, the Chilean military commander whose elimination paved the way for the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet.

There is hardly a corner of the world which has not felt the impact of the crimes associated with the US government during Kissinger's tenure as national security adviser and secretary of state, first under Richard Nixon, then under Gerald Ford:

- * Bangladesh: Kissinger sanctioned the military coup in Pakistan by General Yahya Khan in 1971 and bloody, albeit unsuccessful, attempts to suppress a rebellion by the Bengali people of what was formerly East Pakistan.

- * Greece: Kissinger maintained close relations with the torture regime of the Greek colonels who seized power in 1967.

- * Indonesia: Kissinger and Ford visited Indonesian military ruler Suharto on the eve of his 1975 invasion of East Timor, approving in advance a slaughter in which over 200,000 people died.

- * Chile: Kissinger closely supervised the CIA preparation of the 1973 military coup that killed Salvador Allende, the elected social-democratic president, and 20,000 other Chileans. "I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go Communist due to the irresponsibility of its people," he declared.

- * Argentina: Kissinger backed the 1976 coup, establishing a military dictatorship that made "disappearance" and "death squad" terms with

international currency.

* Operation Condor: Kissinger approved the continent-wide policy of assassinating leftists, in which military juntas in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay participated.

* The Middle East: Kissinger backed the massive rearmament of the Israeli government after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, which brought the US and the Soviet Union to the brink of a nuclear confrontation. His celebrated “shuttle diplomacy” was the first stage in the process of inducing the Arab bourgeois regimes to abandon the Palestinians and make their peace with Zionism.

But it is the crimes committed by American imperialism in southeast Asia which are most indelibly associated with Kissinger and Nixon: the secret bombing of Cambodia and Laos, the “Christmas bombing” of North Vietnam, the 1970 invasion of Cambodia that set the stage for the rise of the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot, the prolongation of the Vietnam War over seven years, at the cost of 30,000 American and more than a million Vietnamese lives.

Kissinger was also one of the architects of the policy of illegal political spying against domestic opponents of the Vietnam War, which was eventually to produce the downfall of the Nixon administration in the Watergate crisis. He ordered the illegal wiretapping of his own aides at the National Security Council in 1971, after the leaking of the Pentagon Papers to the press by former NSC official Daniel Ellsberg. Nixon subsequently organized the “plumbers unit” to burglarize the offices of Ellsberg’s psychiatrist, and then the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate complex.

This political record gives Kissinger’s selection to head a commission of inquiry, purportedly aimed at discovering the truth of September 11, the combined character of political provocation and farce. There is no one in recent American history, with perhaps the exception of his co-conspirator, Richard Nixon, who is more closely identified with methods of behind-the-scenes maneuver, cover-up and lies.

Kissinger declared, at a press appearance to announce his appointment, that the commission would “go where the facts lead us.” He added, “We are under no restrictions, and we will accept no restrictions.” However, when Kissinger left office in 1977, he had all

of his State Department and NSC papers deposited at the Library of Congress with the provision that nothing would be released to the public until five years after his death.

When Bush announced his decision to appoint the former secretary of state, he declared, “Dr. Kissinger and I share the same commitments.” That was the only true sentence uttered at the ceremony. Both Bush and Kissinger are committed to the defense of the US military/intelligence apparatus, which is deeply implicated in the events of September 11, 2001. At best, the CIA, FBI and Pentagon are guilty of gross negligence. More likely, there was some level of direct collaboration between agencies of the state and the terrorists who carried out the suicide hijackings.

The Bush administration fought for more than a year to prevent any genuine investigation into the circumstances of September 11. After initially opposing any probe at all, it accepted an investigation by the House and Senate intelligence committees, whose members, trusted defenders of the national security apparatus, agreed to largely secret hearings.

This toothless procedure, however, failed to quell widespread suspicions of possible government involvement in the attacks, and an even broader conviction that the government was involved in a massive coverup. After family members of victims of the terrorist attacks publicly denounced the administration for opposing a serious investigation, Bush was compelled to agree to the appointment of an independent commission.

Selecting Kissinger to head this body amounts to an admission that the US government has much to hide in relation to September 11, and that the Bush administration, working in tandem with the congressional Democrats and the media, is determined to bury the truth.



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