

The return of the “enemies list”

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The attempt by the Bush White House to use the Central Intelligence Agency to uncover incriminating information on University of Michigan professor Juan Cole is one more indication of Washington’s increasing turn to police state methods.

Glenn Carle, a former senior counter-terrorism officer in the CIA, has charged that the Bush administration asked the spy agency in 2005 to gather information on Cole with the aim of discrediting him. Carle said his supervisor at the National Intelligence Council, David Low, told him that White House officials “wanted ‘to get’ Professor Cole, and made clear that he wanted Mr. Carle to collect information about him, an effort Mr. Carle rebuffed,” the *New York Times* reported Thursday.

Cole’s offense in the eyes of the White House was to use his knowledge of Arabic and his abilities as a Middle East historian to produce an Internet blog that called into question the pretenses used to justify the US war of aggression against Iraq.

Carle further charged that his supervisor, Low, pressed him even after the CIA officer protested that such an investigation would violate US statutes barring CIA spying on American citizens. “But what might we know about him,” he quoted Low as saying. “Does he drink? What are his views? Is he married?” According to Carle, Low prepared a memorandum with “inappropriate derogatory remarks” about Cole.

Carle further recounts being informed of a request from an assistant to the CIA’s deputy director for intelligence for information to be collected on Cole. When he challenged the assistant, he was told, “Have you read his stuff? He’s really hostile to the administration.”

The episode strongly recalls the infamous “enemies list” employed by the Nixon administration that became known to the public in the course of the investigation of the 1972 break-in at the Watergate

Democratic Party offices in Washington by five burglars with close CIA ties.

As the House of Representatives investigation recounted, White House counsel John Dean testified that in August 1971, “he prepared a memorandum entitled *Dealing with our Political Enemies*, which addressed the matter of how the Administration could use the available federal machinery against its political enemies. Among Dean’s suggestions was that key members of the staff should determine who was giving the Administration a hard time, and that they develop a list of names ... as targets for concentration.”

Three years later, the Judiciary Committee of the US House of Representatives voted to recommend articles of impeachment against Richard Nixon. Within a month, on August 8, 1974, recognizing that the US Senate would vote for impeachment, Nixon became the first serving US president to resign from office.

Among the most serious articles of impeachment leveled against Nixon were the following:

“He misused the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Secret Service, and other executive personnel, in violation or disregard of the constitutional rights of citizens, by directing or authorizing such agencies or personnel to conduct or continue electronic surveillance or other investigations for purposes unrelated to national security, the enforcement of laws, or any other lawful function of his office...”

“He ... authorized and permitted to be maintained a secret investigative unit within the office of the President, financed in part with money derived from campaign contributions, which unlawfully utilized the resources of the Central Intelligence Agency, engaged in covert and unlawful activities ...”

In a posting on his blog Thursday, Cole commented: “What alarms me most of all in the nakedly illegal deployment of the CIA against an academic for the explicit purpose of destroying his reputation for

political purposes is that I know I am a relatively small fish and it seems to me rather likely that I was not the only target of the baleful team at the White House.”

This is undoubtedly the case. And, while the *World Socialist Web Site* has made clear its fundamental differences with Professor Cole over his endorsement of the US-NATO war against Libya, it unreservedly defends his democratic rights and demands a full and independent investigation of the use of the CIA to spy on him and other opponents of Washington’s militarist policies.

It would be the gravest political error to believe that such practices have ended with the departure of Bush and the advent of Obama. The Obama administration has continued and expanded the power of the state to spy on, imprison without charges, torture and assassinate its opponents, including US citizens.

The Democratic president has been unwavering in his opposition to any serious investigation into the crimes carried out by the CIA under the Bush administration, much less prosecution. His Justice Department has intervened repeatedly to quash lawsuits over domestic spying, extraordinary rendition and torture, invoking the “state secrets” privilege.

The infamous Guantánamo prison camp remains open, and, on orders from the White House, drumhead military tribunals have resumed.

In an escalation of political repression and intimidation, the Obama administration has launched a globally orchestrated witch-hunt against WikiLeaks for exposing US war crimes and is preparing to try Private Bradley Manning, the alleged source of the incriminating state secrets released by the group, on charges that could cost him his life.

And, as the *New York Times* reported earlier this week, the FBI has prepared new rules allowing its agents far more leeway to spy on US citizens, going through their trash, using surveillance squads and sending agents into meetings of targeted groups.

Nearly four decades after the Watergate crisis, the White House and the US intelligence agencies have arrogated for themselves police state powers that go far beyond anything Richard Nixon could have even have dreamed of.

These processes are not fundamentally a matter of the particular policies of a Bush or an Obama, but are rooted in the uninterrupted growth of social inequality

at home and militarism abroad.

The prosecution of illegal and deeply unpopular wars of aggression in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Libya, Yemen and elsewhere is impossible without the attempt to criminalize and repress opposition at home.

At the same time, the ruling elite is acutely aware that its attempt to exploit the world capitalist crisis to further enrich itself while imposing the full burden upon the working class in the form of mass unemployment, wage cutting and austerity must inevitably provoke mass social upheavals. It is preparing methods of political repression accordingly.

There exists no constituency within the existing political establishment or the corporate media for the defense of basic democratic rights, as the largely indifferent response to the revelations about the CIA spying on professor Cole has once again made clear.

The fight to defend these rights is today bound up inseparably with the independent political mobilization of the working class on a socialist program to break the grip of the financial oligarchy.

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