

New Snowden revelation details vast US intelligence “black budget”

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Friday saw yet another exposure of closely guarded US government secrets by whistle-blower Edward Snowden, as the *Washington Post* published an extensive budget report covering an array of US intelligence agencies. The \$52.6 billion budget published by the *Post*, 178 pages in length, contains a wealth of documentation concerning the finances and activities of the US “intelligence community.” Some of the information in the leaked document is, however, being withheld “after consultation with US officials.”

As the budget document shows, since 9/11 the CIA has metastasized into a global paramilitary operation that kills and tortures people around the planet, carrying out a constant reign of terror and criminality behind the backs of the American people. Funds allocated since 9/11 have financed a massive growth of CIA activities, including the creation of enhanced interrogation programs, secret “black site” prisons, and the use of drones for strike missions by intelligence personnel. As the *Post* wrote, “The document describes a constellation of spy agencies that track millions of surveillance targets and carry out operations that include hundreds of lethal strikes.”

Billions of dollars are collectively allocated to fund this regime of global lawlessness, without any disclosure to the American people. The US has spent more than \$500 billion on intelligence since the 2001 attacks, or over \$100 million per day, and the CIA has seen a gigantic growth of its budget over this period. The CIA’s proposed budget for 2013 totaled \$14.7 billion, for a 56 percent increase since 2004, while the National Security Agency and the National Reconnaissance Office were to receive over \$10 billion each.

The budget contains massive outlays for information collection and processing by the CIA and NSA. The

CIA spends \$1.7 billion annually on data collection, and runs a joint signals intelligence collection effort with the NSA codenamed CLANSIG. The budget lists 35,000 employees as part of a “Consolidated Cryptologic Program” which brings together surveillance teams from the NSA and the four branches of the military. The NSA will also spend \$48.6 million on problems related to “information overload,” that is, on efforts to manage the vast data streams being sucked in on a daily basis by the agency.

The budget also shows large allocations for military-style activities abroad run by the intelligence bureaucracies. US spy agencies will spend \$4.9 billion for “overseas contingency operations” in 2013 alone. This will include \$2.6 billion for covert operations carried out by the CIA, such as the secret wars the agency is waging in Pakistan and Yemen, and payments to proxy militias such as the Al Qaeda-linked proxy forces fighting against the Assad regime in Syria, including the al Nusra Front.

Staggering quantities of money are being spent to sustain America’s intelligence forces. The NSA itself will receive over \$10 billion this year, all of which sustain NSA efforts to spy on the population of United States and of the entire world. Across the United States, schools are being gutted, jobs slashed, and medical facilities shuttered, yet well over \$50 billion per a year is dedicated to unconstitutional spying, extra-judicial murder and systematic torturing in a global prison network.

The release of such detailed and comprehensive information about the intelligence budget to the public is unprecedented. As Steven Aftergood of the Federation of American Scientists told the *Post*, “a real grasp of the structure and operations of the intelligence bureaucracy has been totally beyond public reach. This

kind of material, even on a historical basis, has simply not been available.”

This information about the intelligence bureaucracies and their activities has become available only as a result of Snowden’s actions. The danger that its secrets could be revealed by principled opponents of spying such as Snowden has not been lost on the NSA, however, and the documents show repeated investigations of thousands of analysts this year as part of an attempt to avoid “potential insider compromise of sensitive information.”

That an attack on Syria is going ahead anyway despite massive popular opposition is an expression of the domination of the American state by Wall Street and the vast military-intelligence apparatus exhibited in Snowden’s latest release. These forces are determined to attack Syria, and from all appearances they will carry out their bloody plans. Responsibility for launching another neocolonial catastrophe lies with the reactionary social interests that control the US economy and state, the capitalist class and the upper-middle class layers that defend capitalist rule.

These are the same forces that have poured weaponry into Syria to fund opposition militias dominated by Al Qaeda. Today, in the face of overwhelming opposition, they are pressing for a war in which US planes will ride to the rescue of US-backed Al Qaeda fighters on the ground, in the name of upholding “international norms.” And, as the budget document’s assertion makes clear—that operations are “strategically focused against the priority targets of China, Russia, Iran, Cuba and Israel”—operations in Syria are only a prelude to confrontation with the other major powers. Pakistan is also referred to as an “intractable target.”

According to the authoritarian legal doctrines that have gained influence with the growth of the national security state and the financial oligarchy, which derive from the theories of Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt, the existence of exceptional circumstances, such as a terrorist threat, authorizes the state to override all legal protections, such as those guaranteed by the US Bill of Rights. The prevalence of such conceptions only points to the underlying reality: the intelligence bureaucracy and the social forces that control it are effectively above the law, and will tolerate no limits on their power.

It is only a matter of time before these instruments of

repression are turned against mass struggles within the United States itself. Faced with the deep crisis of world capitalism, the ruling elites will increasingly seek to rely on war abroad and military-police repression at home in defense of their privileges.



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