

Obama Arrives at His Watergate Moment of Truth

by Jeffrey Steinberg

May 12—With the House of Representatives vote on May 8 to establish a select committee to probe the circumstances surrounding the Sept. 11, 2012 attacks on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, President Barack Obama is confronting his own “Watergate moment of truth,” in which he could soon find himself facing his long-overdue impeachment. Obama has committed a host of impeachable offenses, from his “kill list” program involving the assassination of at least four American citizens without any due process; to the illegal Libya war to overthrow and execute Muammar Qaddafi without Congressional authorization; to his declaration of Executive branch dictatorship in his January 2014 State of the Union Address. But as in the case of Richard Nixon before him, President Obama is facing his greatest threat of impeachment as the result of a shoddy attempt to *cover up* his Libya crimes, after the fact.

House Republicans, under the leadership of Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio), had been relishing the prospect of big mid-term election victories in the House and Senate in November by pummeling, but not actually moving seriously against, the hated Obama Presidency. But a shift occurred, leading to the vote for a select committee, when documents released under a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit by Judicial Watch confirmed that there had been a White House political coverup of the events leading to the murder of U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other

Americans on the 12th anniversary of the original 9/11 attacks.

National Security Advisor Susan Rice had gone on national television on Sept. 16, 2012, and lied that the fatal attack had been a spontaneous assault in protest against a video slandering the Prophet Mohammed. At the time of her appearances, the White House had solid evidence, including live reports from the CIA station chief for Libya, that the attack was a premeditated assault by a team of coordinated and well-armed terrorists from the Ansar al-Sharia group—a known al-Qaeda affiliate. White House advisor Ben Rhodes wrote a memo prior to the Rice TV appearances, making clear that the objective was to avoid admitting that a serious policy mistake had been made when President Obama, Rice, and others boasted that al-Qaeda was on the run and near defeat, following the killing of Osama bin Laden on May 2, 2011. President Obama was two months away from Election Day at the time that the White House conducted a flagrant coverup of what really happened in Benghazi.

With the release of the Rhodes “smoking gun” memo, it was no longer possible for Boehner and the opportunistic Republican leadership to hold back the rank-and-file demands for a select committee. Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), a senior member of the Republican caucus, had gathered nearly 200 signatures on a bill to create the select committee, assuring that any vote on the measure would sail to passage.

Battle in the Senate

President Obama is facing a number of other equally devastating scandals, any one of which could bring his Presidency to an abrupt end. He remains locked in a battle with Senate Democrats over the release of an unclassified summary of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's exhaustive 6,000-page report on the torture and renditions program of the CIA under the Bush-Cheney post-9/11 regime. Obama not only refused to turn over 9,000 pages of Bush-Cheney White House documents dealing with the torture program—invoking Executive privilege—but he assigned the CIA to vet the Executive Summary and decide what redactions were necessary. This brazen effort to prolong the coverup angered Committee Chair Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), who had previously attacked Obama and the CIA for stalling on cooperation with the oversight body.

In some respects, the Feinstein battle with Obama and Director of Central Intelligence John Brennan is even more dangerous for the President than the Benghazi probe, as serious as that has now become. Feinstein is a widely respected senior Senate Democrat. And it will be the Democrats, ultimately, who will decide whether to put country ahead of party and impeach Obama, or go for a political coverup. When President Nixon was facing impeachment over the Watergate affair, it was not the Democrats who brought the crisis to end-game. It was the leadership of Nixon's own Republican Party who decided that the interests of the nation were more important than saving Nixon and the GOP. Leading Congressional Republicans—Barry Goldwater, Hugh Scott, Howard Baker, and others—informing Nixon that if he did not resign, he would be impeached by an overwhelming bipartisan vote in the Senate. Nixon resigned within days of the visit from Goldwater and company.

The question for Democrats today is whether they will show the patriotism and courage of Goldwater, Scott, and the others who brought down Nixon to save the nation. Today, the issue is even more dramatic, as President Obama has brought the country to the brink of potential thermonuclear confrontation with Russia and China, and has wrecked the U.S. economy even more gravely than the Bush-Cheney team before him.

A Witches' Brew

Obama is surrounded by a coven of witches who have shaped his Presidency in the worst conceivable

fashion. Susan Rice, Valerie Jarrett, Victoria Nuland, Samantha Power, and First Lady Michelle Obama have shaped many key decisions of this administration. Rice and Power are well known as “humanitarian interventionists” who share former British Prime Minister Tony Blair's vision of a “post-Westphalian” system of empire, sweeping away sovereign nation-states under the slogan “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P). This vision is closely matched by the neoconservative moles of the coven, notably Victoria Nuland, who has led the charge against Russian President Vladimir Putin since the outbreak of the drive for a coup d'état against Ukraine's elected President late last year. Nuland is married to neocon ideologue Robert Kagan, and served in Dick Cheney's office when Cheney was Vice President. Numerous national security scholars and even some Obama advisors have urged him to undertake a thorough housecleaning at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue to remove the neocon/R2P crowd from their current positions of power.

But it would take much more of a housecleaning to salvage anything from Obama's remaining time in office. He is a witting agent of the City of London/Wall Street apparatus, who puts the interests of the imperial system above those of the American people he swore to serve in his two oaths of office in 2009 and 2013.

The danger of thermonuclear showdown with Russia is coming exclusively from the U.S. and NATO backing for the neo-Nazi coup in Kiev in February, and the escalating sanctions and other attacks on Putin and Russia. Obama is the key to this program, since the British and other European imperial factions who are pushing for confrontation and war with Russia and China, have no military threat to wield with any credibility except that of the United States. If Obama were to be removed from office for his high crimes and misdemeanors, the British war gambit would be ended immediately. Until that happens, the world remains on a hair-trigger for general war, possibly a thermonuclear war of extinction.

The Pressure Rises

The U.S. House of Representatives established the select committee to probe Benghazi, with a vote of 233-186, with all Republicans voting in favor, and with seven Democrats joining them. Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.), a former Federal prosecutor, was named by Boehner to chair the committee, which will have seven Republicans and five Democrats. It remains to be seen

whether Nancy Pelosi (Calif.), the House Democratic leader, will boycott the committee. Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) has called for Democratic participation.

In the Senate, attention could shift to Feinstein's pressure on the White House and the CIA to allow the public release of the Executive Summary of the torture study, thus deepening the intra-party rift that is so critical. CIA Director Brennan is an intimate Obama advisor, having been the chief White House counter-terrorism advisor during the first Obama term.

Brennan and Obama are also facing a battlefield around the original 9/11 attacks and the White House coverup of a 28-page chapter from the Joint Congressional Inquiry that was classified by then-President George W. Bush, and which remains classified under Obama. The report, according to sources familiar with its content, deals with Saudi funding of the 9/11 hijackers and U.S. government collusion to cover up the crime and the Saudi hand behind the attacks.

Rep. Walter Jones (R-N.C.), who just won a difficult primary re-election campaign against a candidate put up by Wall Street and heavily backed by neoconserva-

tive money, has co-sponsored a bill to declassify the 28-page chapter and reopen the entire 9/11 investigation. He enjoys strong bipartisan support in this effort, including from former Sen. Bob Graham (D-Fla.), who co-chaired the Joint Inquiry that unearthed the Saudi funding, including through then-Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. Prince Bandar bin Sultan.

A Federal lawsuit in Florida is also creating new headaches for the Bush-Cheney and Obama coverup efforts. A Federal judge gave the FBI a deadline of early May to produce over 100,000 documents relating to a Sarasota, Fla., cell of 9/11 hijackers, including ring-leader Mohammed Atta, who frequented the residence of a wealthy Saudi businessman and royal family advisor, who fled the United States on short notice just days before the 9/11 attacks.

In short, the "bodyguard of lies" protecting the Obama Presidency from its day in court is collapsing, and the President has entered the impeachment zone. Whether it leads to his impeachment or resignation is not yet certain, but the prospects of his early removal from office have grown exponentially in the past days.

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