
National News

How U.S. Switched Sides In the War on Terror

April 26—The Citizens' Commission on Benghazi, composed mainly of retired U.S. military and intelligence officers, issued its Interim Report on April 22. Entitled "How America Switched Sides in the War on Terror," the report states that the U.S. facilitated the delivery of weapons and military support to al-Qaeda-linked rebels in Libya. The rebels had made no secret of their al-Qaeda affiliation, yet the White House and senior Members of Congress deliberately pursued a policy that provided material support to terrorist organizations to topple a ruler who had been working with the West to suppress al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda-linked guerrillas killed U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans in 2011.

The report also notes:

- The war in Libya was unnecessary, served no articulable U.S. national security objective, and led to preventable chaos regionwide.
- The rebel forces were dominated by the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaeda.
- Muammar Qaddafi had expressed his willingness to abdicate shortly after the beginning of the 2011 Libyan revolt, but the United States ignored his calls for a truce.

The Commission reiterated its call for a Select Committee to investigate Benghazi, and urged the release of then-Deputy National Security Advisor for Homeland Security and Counter-terrorism John Brennan's recommendations on overthrowing Qaddafi.

Court Orders Release of Papers on Drone Killings

April 21—Three judges of the Second Circuit Court of Appeals today 21 unanimously ordered the Obama Administration to re-

lease a copy of a Justice Department memo ostensibly creating the legal basis for authorizing the Executive Branch to order drone strikes to kill Americans. This reverses the ruling made in the government's favor by a lower court over a year ago, on Jan. 2, 2013.

The court stated, as part of its ruling, that it was primarily because of the administration's arrogant behavior that the court had ruled against it. In the weeks following the 2013 decision, the DoJ had paraded its justification for the assassination program, in the form of a 16-page "White Paper," which it leaked to NBC News. Taking this new "evidence" into consideration, Judge Jon O. Newman, wrote for the panel, "Whatever protection the legal analysis might once have had has been lost by virtue of public statements of public officials at the highest levels and official disclosure of the DOJ White Paper." The ruling additionally cited speeches by Attorney General Eric Holder, CIA Director John Brennan, and others.

The new ruling allows the Administration to redact the documents before their release, and does not specify a date by which they must be released.

Federal Prisons Are Full to Overflowing

April 26—The U.S. Federal prison population far exceeds the capacity of the prison system to properly house and maintain it, according to a report from the Congressional Research Service on the Bureau of Prisons. "The number of inmates under the BOP's jurisdiction has increased nearly eight-fold (790%) from approximately 24,600 inmates in FY1980 to nearly 219,300 inmates in FY2013."

Federal Prison Industries, Inc., aka Unicon, a government-owned corporation that is part of the Bureau of Prisons, employs thousands of Federal inmates to work at prison factories and workshops that produce over \$900 million in goods for various contractors, including military clothing. Many pris-

oners are paid between 12 cents and 40 cents an hour.

The Justice Safety Valve Act, S.619, a bill co-sponsored by Sens. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Rand Paul (R-Ky.), would allow judges to impose sentences below the mandatory minimum in many cases, including drug-related sentences. This could alleviate some of the overcrowding in the prisons. But RepublicReport.org notes that the Correctional Vendors Association, which represents companies that use prison labor to produce everything from furniture to clothing, spent \$240,000 on lobbying over the past year, and is interested in shaping the outcome of the bill.

It has been in large part due to the lobbying of the CVA that the prison labor program has survived the many legal challenges to it over the years.

NASA Cooperation with Russia Is Restored

April 26—In response to widespread criticism in the United States, and in recognition that every other space-faring nation has ignored the Obama Administration's attempt to halt cooperation with Russia, the National Security Council, which promulgated the sanctions against Russia, has apparently had to exempt nearly all space programs from its suspension of cooperation.

While initially the International Space Station was the only project specifically exempt, due to absolute necessity (it cannot function without both major partners), now NASA scientists have been cleared to attend an international space conference in Moscow this Summer, to continue joint experiments with the Curiosity rover on Mars, and to supply mirrors for the Russian Spektr-RG astronomy satellite. At this point, only one or two joint science projects are not yet exempt.

Space analyst Jim Oberg observed after the sanctions were announced: "Outer space is a severe punisher of foolishness and pretense and posturing, and people who operate there all understand this."