

Chairmen Hunter, Goss Block Probes of Torture

by Scott Thompson and Carl Osgood

In early June, Democratic Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche called for the ouster of the Republican committee heads in the House of Representatives who are obstructing, in a manner “worse than Watergate,” investigations into the Abu Ghraib and other military prison torture and the Cheney corruption scandals. LaRouche’s vow to destroy these GOP obstructionists came after six Democratic members of the House wrote to President George W. Bush on June 3, to decry the obstructionism by Congressional Republicans, and to request his help in obtaining 35 documents, for purposes of weighing the consequences of American actions. The letter noted that “with the exception of the closed sessions of the Intelligence Committee and a single Armed Services Committee hearing, these requests [for hearings] have been rebuffed” by the Republican House leadership.

“This is a dereliction of Congress’ oversight responsibility that ill serves our nation and our troops,” the letter said. It was signed by the senior Democrats on six House committees: Henry A. Waxman (Calif.), Committee on Government Reform; John Conyers (Mich.), Jr., Committee on the Judiciary; David R. Obey (Wisc.), Committee on Appropriations; Ike Skelton (Mo.), Committee on Armed Services; Tom Lantos (Calif.), Committee on International Relations; and, Jane Harman (Calif.), Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. A few days later, they were joined by John Dingell (Mich.) of the Energy and Commerce Committee, and Charles Rangel (N.Y.) of the Ways and Means Committee.

LaRouche immediately demanded that putative Democratic nominee John Kerry support that complaint. “He must stop being wishy-washy,” LaRouche insisted. “I challenge Kerry to have the guts to support these House Democrats.”

LaRouche warned, “If the Republicans continue to Stonewall on this investigation, the elimination of certain relevant Republicans in the coming election campaign is going to be a big issue. This is Watergate stuff.”

Obstructionist Duncan Hunter

Probably the single loudest obstructionist voice in the House of Representatives in support of the Cheney “Beastman” policy in Iraq has been Armed Services Committee chairman Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.). Hunter has been able to use his position to block any meaningful inquiry into the Abu Ghraib prison scandal and at every public opportunity, has railed against those who are demanding such an investigation. He even went after his GOP counterpart in the Senate, John

Warner (Va.), for holding three hearings in two weeks on the scandal, practically accusing Warner of treason.

Under great public pressure, Hunter has since held one hearing, for part of one day, and has *no intention* of having any more. During debate on the Fiscal Year 2005 Defense Authorization bill, on May 19, Hunter declared, “We have had enormous publicity the last number of days about the mess at Abu Ghraib. I estimated we have probably devoted as much media attention to that mess involving now, as identified, some seven personnel, as we did to the Normandy invasion. And that is an imbalance. It is time to refocus.” What did he want to refocus on? “The 135,000 great personnel doing their job in Iraq.”

On June 14, when the committee took up a resolution of inquiry sponsored by some 40 Democrats, demanding the Pentagon be more forthcoming with documents relating to the prison scandal, Hunter placed the 6,000 pages of the report on the abuse and torture of prisoners filed by U.S. Army General Anthony Taguba (the Taguba Report) on a table at the head of the hearing room and railed at the Democrats, “Isn’t that enough for you?”

Perhaps the real reason Hunter wants to “refocus” the discussion on Iraq is because of his own involvement with the Titan Corp., whose employees have been directly involved in the torture of prisoners in Iraq. The Taguba Report cited two Titan employees as implicated in the prisoner abuses, and one, Adel L. Nakhla, is explicitly identified as a suspect by General Taguba. Titan Corp., one of the two private contracting firms involved in military prison interrogations, is one of Hunter’s biggest political supporters. According to data compiled by the Center for Responsive Politics, top officials of the San Diego-based Titan have been Hunter’s number-one source of campaign contributions each of the last two election cycles. They gave him \$16,950 for 2002, and \$18,000 so far for 2004. Whether via individual contributions of company officials or through the company PAC, Titan and its president, Gene Ray, have given more than 80% of their contributions to the GOP.

Nor is Titan the only major defense contractor supporting Hunter’s campaign. The list includes several others with contracts in Iraq, including SAIC, which was accused in a recent Pentagon audit of mismanagement of a contract it received last year to establish an Iraqi media operation that would be friendly to the occupation.

According to his Democratic opponent, Brian Kelliher, Duncan used his campaign funds to entertain supporters, including taking them on very expensive golf outings, and hunting and fishing trips. Kelliher charges that Hunter lives a jet-setting lifestyle that is paid for by his campaign. Kelliher



would do better to focus on Rep. Hunter's treasonous obstruction of the investigation into war crimes "legalized" in cold-blooded memoranda penned by the attorneys for Dick Cheney and George W. Bush.

Ban Goss from the CIA

The biggest obstructionist, by far, is Florida's Rep. Porter Goss (R), chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI). Goss, a former CIA case officer, is not campaigning for another term in Congress, but to become Director of Central Intelligence replacing George J. Tenet. Darling of the neo-cons, Goss is "Cheney's cat's-paw," charges 27-year CIA veteran Ray McGovern, in an article published below.



For more than a year, Goss, whose committee has the mandate to investigate intelligence activities, and the policies related to them, has systematically blocked public hearings when the question emerged of who faked intelligence to drum up war with Iraq. Goss has continued this coverup, despite a near-revolt by Democratic Committee members, who had exerted pressure on Democratic ranking member Rep. Jane Harman.

Now, since early May, Goss has also tried to sweep under the rug, the evidence about the torture scandal at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere out of the front offices of the White House, the office of the Vice President, and the neo-con leadership of the civilian side of the Pentagon.

Even before he became the HPSCI chairman in 1997, Goss had a history of putting the lid on dirty intelligence community operations, especially the evidence of the Iran-Contra drug-running scandals of the 1980s. Goss declared, on CNN's "Both Sides" TV show back on Sept. 29, 1996, after the "CIA-Contra crack-cocaine" scandal had emerged, that the information was untrue. He said, "Senator John Kerry, in the mid-'80s, when this was very topical, conducted quite an expensive investigation and came up with absolutely no evidence." Actually, as panelist John Newman of the University of Maryland pointed out, the Kerry investigation had "found there had been a lot of drug smuggling; number two, that the infrastructure for the Contras was used to bring cocaine up here."

After Goss became chairman of HPSCI in 1997, the committee further covered up the Ollie North/Contra drug-trafficking, although even the CIA itself had acknowledged that some of the Contra operatives with whom it worked were involved in drug-trafficking.

On the domestic policy front, from his position as a member of the House Rules Committee and chairman of its Budget and Legislative Process subcommittee, Goss played a key role

in pushing through Newt Gingrich's and the Conservative Revolution's Contract on America after the Republicans took over the House in 1995. He was at the forefront of efforts to pass into law a line-item veto for appropriations bills (later ruled un-Constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court); a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution; and a tax-limitation amendment which would have required a three-fifths "super-majority" to pass any law that would result in an increase in taxes.

By 2002, in the "post-9/11" world of the Dick Cheney doctrine of "pre-emptive war," Goss' willingness to mount coverups earned him a two-page *Washington Post* puff piece touting him for Director of Central Intelligence. But his latest stunt at HPSCI shows that he should never—under any circumstances, be given anything more than a "visitor's pass" to CIA headquarters: the Goss Committee's report accompanying the 2005 Intelligence Authorization Bill might have been written by an "enemy combatant." It would give total control of intelligence to the Cheney neo-con cabal that has made the United States and the world, more vulnerable to terrorism.

Under "Areas of Special Interest," the Goss report is highly critical of both the CIA's Directorate of Operations and Directorate of Intelligence. "All is not well in the world of clandestine human intelligence collection," the report states. "The committee, in the strongest possible terms, asserts that the Directorate of Operations needs fixing. For too long, the CIA has been ignoring its core mission activities. There is a dysfunctional denial of any need for corrective action."

This excoriation led to a highly unusual step: It prompted outgoing DCI George Tenet, Acting CIA Director John McLaughlin, and former Deputy Director of Operations James Pavitt to state publicly that Goss knew that they had been *fixing* the Agency after years of neglect. Tenet wrote a letter to Goss, posted on the CIA's open-access website, noting that since he expected that Goss would leak his own criticisms of the Agency, Tenet had made his own reply public as well.

Tenet blasted Goss' "dysfunctional CIA" charge, questioning how it could be possible when "without exception, the goal of the various elements of the Intelligence Community has been to protect the lives of Americans everywhere. The Committee is within its rights to suggest different priorities, but I find it hard to accept that any serious observer would believe, as the Committee apparently does, that there is an unhealthy emphasis on counterterrorism and counterproliferation efforts, or that we are placing too much effort into supporting the nation's efforts in Iraq." Tenet charged that Goss was contributing to the process of bullying intelligence professionals into bending the truth in favor of political agendas—as done at the CIA by Cheney and his henchman "Scooter" Libby, in the build-up to the Iraq war.

There is no doubt that Cheney wants Goss in the CIA director's position. The good of the nation demands that a Goss appointment to this position be blocked.