



Unaccountable Power In America: Two Centers

BY ROBERT B. REICH
Tribune Media Services

There are two great centers of unaccountable power in the American political-economic system today — places where decisions that significantly affect large numbers of Americans are made in secret, and are unchecked either by effective democratic oversight or by market competition. One goes by the name of the “intelligence community,” and its epicenter is the National Security Agency within the Defense Department. If we trusted that it reasonably balanced its snooping on Americans with our nation’s security needs, and that our elected representatives effectively oversaw that balance, there would be little cause for concern. We would not worry that the information so gathered might be misused to harass individuals, thereby chilling free speech or democratic debate, or that some future government might use it to intimidate critics and opponents. We would feel confident, in other words, that despite the scale and secrecy of the operation, our privacy, civil liberties and democracy were nonetheless adequately protected.

But the NSA has so much power, and oversight of it is so thin, that we have every reason to be concerned. The fact that its technological reach is vast, its resources almost limitless and its operations shrouded in secrecy make it difficult for a handful of elected representatives to effectively monitor even a tiny fraction of what it does. And every new revelation of its clandestine “requests” for companies to hand over information about our personal lives and communications further undermines our trust. To the contrary, the NSA seems to be literally out of control.

The second center of unaccountable power goes by the name of Wall Street and is centered in the largest banks there. If we trusted that market forces kept them in check and that they did not exercise inordinate influence over Congress and the executive branch, we would have no basis for concern. We wouldn’t worry that the Street’s financial power would be misused to fix markets, profit from insider



Robert REICH

information or make irresponsible bets that imperiled the rest of us. We could be confident that despite the size and scope of the giant banks, our economy and everyone who depends on it were nonetheless adequately protected.

But those banks are now so large (much larger than they were when they almost melted down five years ago), have such a monopolistic grip on our financial system and exercise so much power over Washington that we have cause for concern. The fact that not a single Wall Street executive has been held legally accountable for the excesses that almost brought the economy to its knees five years ago and continues to burden millions of Americans, that even the attorney general confesses the biggest banks are “too big to jail,” that the big banks continue to make irresponsible bets (such as those resulting in JPMorgan Chase’s \$6 billion “London Whale” loss) and that the Street has effectively eviscerated much of the Dodd-Frank legislation intended to rein in its excesses and avoid another meltdown and bailout all offer evidence that the Street is still dangerously out of control.

It is rare in these harshly partisan times for the political left and right to agree on much of anything. But the reason, I think, both are worried about the encroachments of the NSA on the privacy and civil liberties of Americans, as well as the depredations of “too big to fail or jail” Wall Street banks on our economy, is fundamentally the same: It is this toxic combination of inordinate power and lack of accountability that renders both of them dangerous, threatening our basic values and institutions.

That neither Republicans nor Democrats have done much of anything to effectively rein in these two centers of unaccountable power suggests that if there is ever to be a viable third party in America, it will be born of the ill-fated consequences.

Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of “Beyond Outrage,” now available in paperback. He blogs at www.robertreich.org.

All Eyes Are Now On The U.S.

BY TRUDY RUBIN
© 2013, The Philadelphia Inquirer

The Obama administration’s policy on Syria is a strategic disaster that undercuts its entire foreign policy from the Middle East to Asia. If you think I’m exaggerating, read on.

Bashar al-Assad — whose exit President Obama has demanded for more than a year — is poised to crush the Syrian rebellion, using money, weapons, and manpower provided by Russia, Iran, and the Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah. Washington claims to support moderate rebel fighters, but so far it has delivered only food rations and medical kits — no help against Assad’s missiles and bombs.

After months of debate, White House officials finally announced last week that they will send military aid to the rebels (supposedly because Assad used chemical weapons). But the announcement only made the administration look feckless: The aid will include small arms and ammo, but not the heavy weapons required to stall Assad.

Antiaircraft weapons, crucial for holding off Assad’s air assaults, aren’t even being considered. This plan is too little, too late.

Meanwhile, the White House “strategy” for Syria — based on the hope that Moscow would push Assad to relinquish power at peace talks in Geneva — has collapsed. Why would Assad (or Russian leader Vladimir Putin) bend when victory is in sight?

Obama doesn’t seem to grasp that Syria has become a strategic contest that the whole world is watching — one that involves core U.S. security interests. The president’s invasion on Syria has signaled to Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah (not to mention China and the Taliban) that they can ignore Obama’s tough talk. It has also strained relations with Arab allies who fear Iran and want to see its hold on Syria broken.

Sen. Bob Casey, D-Pa., who has long been out front on Syria, spoke last week with Gen. Salim Idris, the military leader of the Syrian opposition, who urged America to send antitank and antiaircraft weapons to prevent rebel strongholds from falling.

“If the U.S. is not prepared to provide more robust assistance,” Casey said, “I fear that the moderate opposition forces will be defeated.” That would embolden Iran and Hezbollah to act more aggressively throughout the region, undercutting core U.S. security interests and threatening Israel. “The time for U.S. action is overdue,” Casey insisted, rightly, “Assad must go, but this will not happen without decisive leadership from the United States.”

Yet, two years and 93,000 Syrian deaths later, Obama’s advisers still dither, treating the conflict as a local matter, not a wider strategic threat. No doubt the options are daunting, and, at this late date, the chances slimmer than ever for a stable Syria. But the administration’s reluctance is based on refutable myths.

Myth One: The lesson of Iraq is that we shouldn’t get involved in another Mideast conflict.

Reality: The cases are critically different. We invaded and occupied Iraq. In Syria, no one is calling for boots on the ground. The opposition is fractured, but includes militias headed by former army officers or moderate Muslim civilians. The CIA spent a year vetting rebel commanders and had identified several responsible ones by last fall. But Obama rejected proposals from David Petraeus and Hillary Clinton to arm them.

Myth Two: Arming rebels would undercut peace prospects.

Reality: The only hope for serious peace talks lies in convincing Assad and his backers in Moscow that he might lose.

Myth Three: If we send arms to the rebels, they may fall into al-Qaida’s hands.

Reality: Jihadi groups linked to al-Qaeda already have plenty of weapons, provided by wealthy Gulf Arabs. It’s the more moderate commanders who are short of weapons. Indeed, U.S. policy has undercut the moderates and enabled jihadis to become the most prominent rebels, even though their numbers are relatively small.

Myth Four: It’s time to let someone else do it.

Reality: Outsourcing the arming of rebels to Qatar and Saudi Arabia led to the results we most feared. Lacking strong U.S. oversight, the Gulf states armed their favorite militias, often hard-line Islamists. They also ignored U.S. pleas to unify the militias into a coherent force. Meanwhile, the Europeans and Turks remain reluctant to help unless Obama takes the lead.

Myth Five: Arming the rebels will fuel a sectarian war between Shiites and Sunnis.

Reality: Helped by Iran and Hezbollah, Assad is provoking sectarian slaughter to convince Syrians that they need a dictator. The longer this war goes on, the greater the bloodshed. It has already spread beyond Syria’s borders, with dangerous implications for the entire Middle East.

Myth Six: We can afford to stay uninvolved and let the Syrians sort it out themselves.

Reality: Syria has already become a proxy war, with Iran and Moscow testing Obama’s willingness to defend U.S. interests. A swift delivery of antiaircraft and antitank weapons to vetted rebel commanders would make Assad’s allies think twice about the dangerous game they are playing. And it would counter the growing global perception that Obama has abandoned America’s historic leadership role.

Trudy Rubin is a columnist and editorial-board member for the Philadelphia Inquirer. Readers may write to her at: Philadelphiainquirer, P.O. Box 8263, Philadelphia, Pa. 19101, or by email at rubin@phillynews.com.

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN



THE DAKOTAS’ OLDEST NEWSPAPER | FOUNDED 1861
Yankton Media, Inc., 319 Walnut St., Yankton, SD 57078

OPINION | OUR VIEW

On Guard: Scams Are Daily Danger

It showed up at the *Press & Dakotan* office Monday, brought in by one of our employees. What she showed us was new — and yet, quite old by now. It was a letter she had received in the mail the other day. In very general terms, the letter suggested that she had an outstanding debt on her record, but if she paid a fraction of the amount, she could make the debt disappear. What she needed to do was contact the company that sent the letter to verify her account. This, no doubt, would have included providing the company with such information as her Social Security number ...

Need we go on? You probably know this story very well — you’ve probably seen it or been targeted by it. And perhaps you may have even been sucked into it.

It is a damnable fact that we live in a predatory age of scamming and scheming. While con artists have always been around in our society, their scope has accelerated greatly and disturbingly in recent years, particularly with the hyper-growth of the Internet and email.

Oh, email. We can honestly tell you that there practically isn’t a day that goes by when we don’t see an email that is out fishing (or phishing) for a nibble. The emails promise prizes or plea for help, or they tell us that our “account” has been suspended or that our savings are threatened by huge fines unless we act fast, or that our computer security has been compromised and needs a special update.

We’ve seen it so much that it becomes boring and irritating. You probably know the feeling.

In fact, it’s actually disturbing. These missives are from people who are trying to steal from you, who are trying to break into your secure life and injure you. These are scurrilous hunters looking for prey, nothing more.

These are facts of life. We write this today as a reminder that is, unfortunately, applicable every day, because it seems to happen every day. We often see police record items in which someone called in to report a suspicious email, phone call or letter. The police take note but there is little they can really do.

The best advice to offer is the oldest: If you absolutely do not know the sources of such contacts, stay away from them. Ignore the bait. If it’s truly genuine, efforts will likely be made to make contact legitimately.

The employee who brought in the letter this week said she contacted the Better Business Bureau (BBB), who told her that the “firm” who sent the letter had a glowing “F” rating (the glow was probably from radioactivity) and should be ignored. She was advised to go to the newspaper to publicize the scam. The problem we have is that we run into such scam reports so often that we can’t keep up with them all. It’s frustrating to us as well as to the victims, the police, the BBB and everyone else who endures these incidents.

Again, the best defense starts with you. Be on your guard. Don’t be intimidated and don’t be fooled. Be a vigorous skeptic when it comes to these pleas. It’s the safest way to go.

kmh

SPEAK OUT!

Share your thoughts with us. Write to the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** on a topic of the day or in response to an editorial or story. Write us at: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Wednesday, June 19, the 170th day of 2013. There are 195 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History: On June 19, 1953, Julius Rosenberg, 35, and his wife, Ethel, 37, convicted of conspiring to pass U.S. atomic secrets to the Soviet Union, were executed at Sing Sing Prison in Ossining, N.Y.

On this date: In 1862, Congress passed, and President Abraham Lincoln signed, a measure abolishing slavery in U.S. territories.

In 1865, Union troops commanded by Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, with news that the Civil War was over, and that all remaining slaves in Texas were free.

In 1910, the first-ever Father’s Day was celebrated in Spokane, Wash. (The idea for the observance is credited to Sonora Louise Smart Dodd.)

In 1934, the Federal Communications Commission was created; it replaced the Federal Radio Commission.

In 1938, four dozen people were killed when a railroad bridge in Montana collapsed, sending a train known as the Olympian hurtling into Custer Creek.

In 1952, the celebrity-panel game show “I’ve Got A Secret” made its debut on CBS-TV with Garry Moore as host.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy, speaking to Congress, criticized lawmakers for not acting on proposed civil rights legislation and called for passage of a single omnibus bill, the Civil Rights Act of 1963. Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova returned to Earth after three days as the first woman in space.

In 1972, Hurricane Agnes, blamed for at least 122 deaths, made landfall over the Florida Panhandle.

In 1973, the rock musical “The Rocky Horror Show” premiered in London (it was later adapted into the movie “The Rocky Horror Picture Show”).

In 1986, University of Maryland basketball star Len Bias, the first draft pick of the Boston Celtics, suffered a fatal cocaine-induced seizure. Artificial heart recipient Murray P. Haydon died in Louisville, Ky., after 16 months on the manmade pump.

In 1987, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Louisiana law requiring any public school teaching the theory of evolution to teach creation science as well.

In 1999, author Stephen King was seriously injured when he was struck by a van driven by Bryan Smith in North Lovell, Maine. Britain’s Prince Edward married commoner Sophie Rhys-Jones in Windsor, England.

Ten years ago: The FBI put cosmetics heir Andrew Luster aboard a plane in Mexico and flew him back to California, five months after he’d been convicted in absentia of drugging and raping three women. Federal authorities said Iyman Faris, an Ohio truck driver who met Osama bin Laden and admitted plots against trains and the Brooklyn Bridge, had pleaded guilty to felony charges. (Faris was later sentenced to 20 years in prison.) The U.S. Air Force dropped manslaughter and aggravated assault charges against two fighter pilots who’d mistakenly bombed Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan in 2002. (One pilot was later found guilty of dereliction of duty and reprimanded.)

Five years ago: President George W. Bush surveyed the aftermath of devastating floods during a quick tour of the Midwest, assuring residents and rescuers alike that he was listening to their concerns and understood their exhaustion. Democrat Barack Obama announced he would bypass public financing for the presidential election, even though Republican John McCain was accepting it.

One year ago: Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak was moved out of prison to a military hospital after the 84-year-old ousted leader reportedly suffered a stroke and his condition rapidly deteriorated. The Southern Baptist Convention voted to elect its first African-American president, Rev. Fred Luter Jr. Actor Victor Spinetti, 82, died in London.

Today’s Birthdays: Pop singer Tommy DeVito (The Four Seasons) is 85. Actress Gena Rowlands is 83. Singer Spanky McFarlane (Spanky and Our Gang) is 71. Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi (soo chee) is 68. Actress Phylicia Rashad is 65. Rock singer Ann Wilson (Heart) is 63. Musician Larry Dunn is 60. Actress Kathleen Turner is 59. Country singer Doug Stone is 57. Singer Mark DeBarge is 54. Singer-dancer Paula Abdul is 51. Actor Andy Lauer is 50. Rock singer-musician Brian Vander Ark (Verve Pipe) is 49. Actress Mia Sara is 46. Rock musician Brian “Head” Welch is 43. Actor Jean Dujardin is 41. Actress Robin Tunney is 41. Actor Bumper Robinson is 39. Actress Poppy Montgomery is 38. Alt-country singer-musician Scott Avett (The Avett Brothers) is 37. Actor Ryan Hurst is 37. Actress Zoe Saldana is 35. Actress Lauren Lee Smith is 33. Actor Paul Dano is 29. Actor Atticus Shaffer is 15.

Thought for Today: “Free thinkers are generally those who never think at all.” — Laurence Sterne, English author (1713-1768).

FROM THE BIBLE

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 1 Corinthians 12:14. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

YOUR LETTERS

Normandy’s Heroes

Fernande Colette Bitsos, Yankton
Majestic Normandie (Normandy) and the beaches and cliffs where Americans landed in 1944 — the peaceful and well kept American cemeteries.

So much suffering, so many gone, so many tears. Let us not ever forget those brave warriors and their sacrifices to rid us of Nazism and Fascism.

Normandy keeps them in its heart, may God Bless them for Eternity.

CONTACT US

PHONE:
(605) 665-7811
(800) 743-2968
NEWS FAX:
(605) 665-1721
ADVERTISING FAX:
(605) 665-0288
WEBSITE:
www.yankton.net
EMAIL ADDRESS:
news@yankton.net

SUBSCRIPTIONS/ CIRCULATION:
Extension 112
CLASSIFIED ADS:
Extension 108
NEWS DEPARTMENT:
Extension 114
SPORTS DEPARTMENT:
Extension 106
ADVERTISING OFFICE:
Extension 122
BUSINESS OFFICE:
Extension 119
NEW MEDIA:
Extension 136
COMPOSING DESK:
Extension 129

* * *

MANAGERS

Gary L. Wood
Publisher

Michele Schievelbein
Advertising Director

Tonya Schild
Business Manager

David Jeffcoat
Circulation Director

Tera Schmidt
Classified Manager

Kelly Hertz
Editor

James D. Cimburek
Sports Editor

Beth Rye
New Media Manager

Kathy Larson
Composing Manager

Bernard Metivier
District Manager

* * *

DAILY STAFF

Andrew Atwal

Melissa Bader

Derek Bartos

Brett Beyerle

Cassandra Brockmoller

Rob Buckingham

Randy Dockendorf

Jeannine Economy

Jeremy Hoec

Nathan Johnson

Muriel Pratt

Sheldon Reed

Noelle Schlechter

Cathy Sudbeck

Sally Whiting

Brenda Willcuts

Jackie Williams

* * *

Published Daily Monday-Saturday

Periodicals postage paid at Yankton, South Dakota, under the act of March 3, 1979.

Weekly Dakotian established June 6, 1861. Yankton Daily Press and Dakotian established April 26, 1875.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078.

* * *

MEMBERSHIPS

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan is a member of the Associated Press, the Inland Daily Press Association and the South Dakota Newspaper Association. The Associated Press is entitled exclusively to use of all the local news printed in this newspaper.

* * *

SUBSCRIPTION RATES*

(Payable in advance)

CARRIER DELIVERY
1-month . . . \$12.09
3 months . . . \$36.27
6 months . . . \$72.53
1-year . . . \$133.09

MOTOR ROUTE
(where available)
1 month . . . \$14.51
3 months . . . \$43.53
6 months . . . \$87.05
1 year . . . \$139.14

MAIL IN RETAIL TRADE ZONE
1-month . . . \$16.93
3 months . . . \$50.79
6 months . . . \$101.57
1-year . . . \$148.82

MAIL OUTSIDE RETAIL TRADE ZONE
1 month . . . \$19.35
3 months . . . \$58.05
6 months . . . \$116.09
1-year . . . \$186.33

* Plus applicable sales tax for all rates