

Thoughts On Our War Against Terrorism

By Rep. Cynthia A. McKinney

April 13, 2002

Authorities tell us that the world changed on September 11. As a result, university professors must watch what they say in class or be turned in to the "speech" police. Elected officials must censor themselves or be censured by the media. Citizens now report behavior of suspicious-looking people to the police. Laws now exist that erode our civil liberties. Americans now accept these infringements as necessary to win America's New War.

America, the world's only superpower, is stifled in its ability to defend human rights and democracy abroad because it has failed the fundamental test at home. Our combination of money and military might, and our willingness to use them, did not make us a superpower. We are the most powerful nation on the face of the planet because we have combined raw power with American ideals such as dignity, freedom, justice, and peace. These ideas and ideals are admired around the world and are more important, in my view, to our position of global strength than our ability to shoot a missile down a chimney. We might be feared because of our military, but we are loved because of our ideals.

Sadly, we have put American goodwill at risk around the world because of an imbalance in our foreign policy that is palpable to even the most disinterested observer. In 1994, after an act of terrorism killed two sitting presidents, the Clinton Administration purposely failed to prevent the genocide of one million Rwandans in order to install favorable regimes in the region. In 1999 Madeleine Albright OK'd a Sierra Leone peace plan that positioned Foday Sankoh as Chairman of the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, a position that placed him answerable only to the President despite the fact that his terrorist organization raped little girls and chopped off their hands as it financed its way to power with illegal diamond sales. Jonas Savimbi, recently killed on the battlefield, helped the US protect the minority rule of racists in South Africa and his organization continues to rampage across southern Africa in Angola, Namibia, parts of Congo-Kinshasha, and Rwanda without restriction, financed by illegal diamond sales. The continued plunder of Africa's rich resources without penalty and sadly with the knowledge and support of powerful people in the US, serves as the foundation of the particular terrorism that victimizes Africans.

And now, as Africans grapple with the fundamental right to control their own resources and despite United Nations reports making no such links, Bush Administration experts seem prepared to link African diamonds with anti-US terrorism, thus "necessitating" tightened US control over Africa's resources.

And so, with no concern at all for the effects on others of US-supported terrorism, the US, with its bombs and military, embarks on a worldwide crusade against terrorism that Bush says likely will last as many as twenty years. The list of target countries is long with

Afghanistan, Somalia, Tanzania, Kenya, Sudan, the Philippines, and Iraq offering the starters. But what of the fact that Henry Kissinger and the current new US Ambassador to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, both once lobbied Washington, DC on behalf of a US oil company, Unocal, and a softer policy toward the Taliban?

Whose war is this really?

In November 2000, Republicans stole from America our most precious right of all: the right to free and fair elections. In an organized manner, Florida Governor Jeb Bush and his Secretary of State Katherine Harris created a list of convicted felons--57, 700 to be exact--to "scrub" from the state's voter rolls. The names were created from Florida records and from lists provided by 11 other states, the largest list coming from Texas. We now know that most of the people on that list were innocent of crimes. The list was a phony. And worse, the majority of these rightful voters were people of color and likely Democratic voters. Of the thousands who ultimately lost their vote through this scrub of voters, 80% are African-American. Had they voted, the course of history would have changed: Harris declared Bush the victor by only 537 votes. President Carter has said that the Carter Center would not certify the US 2000 Presidential elections had they had been asked to do so.

Consequently, an Administration of questionable legitimacy has been given unprecedented power to fight America's new war against terrorism.

Before September 11, two million Americans found themselves behind bars: 80% of them people of color. Millions of Americans are sleeping on the streets of American cities. All over America, unarmed black men are targeted by rogue police officers, who shoot first and ask questions later. While 52% of all black men feel they have been victims of racial profiling, the Supreme Court declines to hear an important case on racial profiling. The Bush Administration totally "disses" the World Conference Against Racism and the people around the world who care about eliminating racism. In February 2001, The United States Commission on National Security, including Newt Gingrich, recommended that the National Homeland Security Agency be established with a hefty price tag. Most people chuckled at the suggestion.

After September 11, we have OK'd the targeting and profiling of certain groups of people in America while not arresting in any way the racial profiling and discrimination that existed prior to September 11. Mass arrests, detention without charge, military tribunals, and infringements on due process rights are now realities in America. Even more alarming are the calls in some circles to allow the use of torture and other brutal methods in pursuit of "justice." Sadly, US administration of justice will be conducted by an Administration incapable of it. Interestingly, prominent officials explain to us that September 11 happened because we are free. And "they" hate us because we are free.

Moreover, persons close to this Administration are poised to make huge profits off America's new war. Former President Bush sits on the board of the Carlyle Group. The Los Angeles Times reports that on a single day last month, Carlyle earned \$237 million selling shares in United Defense Industries, the Army's fifth-largest contractor. The stock offering was well timed: Carlyle officials say they decided to take the company public only after the Sept. 11 attacks. The stock sale cashed in on increased congressional support for hefty

defense spending, including one of United Defense's cornerstone weapon programs.

Now is the time for our elected officials to be held accountable. Now is the time for the media to be held accountable. Why aren't the hard questions being asked. We know there were numerous warnings of the events to come on September 11. Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, delivered one such warning. Those engaged in unusual stock trades immediately before September 11 knew enough to make millions of dollars from United and American airlines, certain insurance and brokerage firms' stocks. What did this Administration know, and when did it know it about the events of September 11? Who else knew and why did they not warn the innocent people of New York who were needlessly murdered?

September 11 erased the line between "over there" and "over here." The American people can longer afford to be detached from the world, as our actions abroad will have a direct impact on our lives at home. In Washington, DC, decisions affecting home and abroad are made and too many of us leave the responsibility of protecting our freedoms to other people whose interests are not our own. From Durban to Kabul to Atlanta to Washington, what our government does in our name is important. It is now also clear that our future, our security, and our rights depend on our vigilance.

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Cynthia McKinney on Flashpoints, 25 Mar 2002

Georgia Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney reads her essay/commentary on the "war against terrorism" in an interview with Dennis Bernstein broadcast on Flashpoints on 3/25/02 -- www.flashpoints.net [audio at:] <http://www.flashpoints.net/realaudio/fp20020325.ram> [go to minute 30:00].

DB: Congresswoman Cynthia Mckinney, it is great to have you with us on Flashpoints. I wanted to follow up on that very powerful commentary with just a few questions that come off speeches you have made from the House floor on related information. First of all, why do you oppose the Rumsfeld 48.1 billion dollar increase in the military budget? What is most troubling about this for you?

CM: It was incredible sitting in the room on the day that secretary Rumsfeld gave his presentation to members of the Armed Services Committee. Of course I serve on the House Armed Services Committee, and every year the Secretary of Defense comes before that Committee with a statement on the budget.

Now, the 48.1 billion dollar increase that Secretary Rumsfeld requested was interesting because basically what he said was we can afford it. Notwithstanding the fact that the Pentagon has lost 2.3 *trillion* dollars that we very well *cannot* afford to have lost --

DB: Lost it? Where did they lose it?

CM: That's a darn good question. You would think that Arthur Anderson is their accountant over there. They have lost 2.3 trillion dollars, and they don't know where to find that money. And of course the Secretary acknowledged the fact 2.3 trillion dollars remain unaccounted for, but in his testimony to the House Armed Services Committee, the Secretary said that the United States can afford it.

He also said that we have a responsibility in this brave new post September 11 world, to make sure that we can adequately defend ourselves. And what he used as a justification for this unprecedented hike -- the biggest hike in a generation -- was the fact of the events around September 11. But as you know, and I know, it wasn't the military that failed. It was a failure of people who had information to act.

We know that there were *several* warnings that were given prior to the events of September 11. From people in Germany to people in the Cayman Islands to people even, now we learn about the owners of the pilot school. People were calling in to the CIA and FBI CIA and they were giving information that was critical.

Even prior to these warnings we had the trial itself from the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. And we had the trial from the American embassy bombing. So we know that the World Trade Center bombing trial gave us a lead on the fact that U.S. embassies were being targeted. And now the US government is being sued by survivors of the embassy bombings, because it is clear that America *had* warnings and did nothing. Did nothing to protect the lives of the people who serve in our foreign service and who serve us in other ways in our embassies around the world. Now the US government is being sued, and we're going to have to pay for that, as those families are now paying every day with the loss of their loved ones.

There was adequate warning. There were people who failed to act on the warning. And that's what ought to be investigated. But instead of requesting that Congress investigate what went wrong and why, we had President Bush (painful for me to say that, but), we had President Bush placing a call to Majority Leader Senator Tom Daschle asking him *not* to investigate the events of September 11, And then, hot on the heels of the president's phone call was another phone call from the vice president asking that Tom Daschle also *not* investigate the events that lead to September 11.

My question is: What do they have to hide? And why is it that the American people are being asked to make tremendous sacrifices now in our civil liberties? And the fact that we got this request for an unprecedented hike [in military spending] -- the hike alone of 48.1 billion dollars is more than any one of our allies spend *total* on their defense.

Then the other issue that saddens me is the fact that the former President, president Bush's daddy, sits on the board of the Carlyle Group. And so we get this presidency, of questionable legitimacy, requesting a nearly unprecedented amount of money to go into a defense budget for defense spending that will directly benefit his father.

Where are the brakes on transparency and corruption that I see happening as a result of the fact that the president's father stands to make money off of the very requests that the president has made, on what I would call a specious argument saying that we need to increase defense spending because of Sept 11, when we now know that there was enough

warning that we didn't have to even experience September 11 at all. At least that is now the way it is beginning to appear.

DB: How would the father make money on the son's budget?

CM: The father sits on the board of an organization called the Carlyle Group. Now when we had Frank Carlucci come to testify at the House International Relations Committee (shortly after George W was sworn in)

DB: former Defense Secretary

CM: former Defense Secretary -- we have a requirement that organizations that come before our committee, the House International Relations Committee, have to disclose Federal contracts. And so I requested of our chairman, Chairman Hyde, whether or not the Carlyle Group would be subjected to that requirement, since everyone else has to do it. And of course the Carlyle Group was *not* required to make any disclosure as to the Federal contracts that it had. That in itself means that they are skirting the rules of the House.

Notwithstanding that, the fact that the father sits on the board of the Carlyle Group, which is one of the highest level defense contractors in the country -- I think they're number 11 or 12 in defense contracts -- and they have at least one program, the Crusader, which doesn't work, it's a weapons system that doesn't work -- it has tremendous cost overruns, and yet it continues to be funded. And we can only think that it's the heavy hand of very well-placed lobbyists that make sure that weapons systems that have a connection with the Carlyle Group get funded.

And even building contracts: bases abroad, all of the bases that we are now looking at -- new bases going into Uzbekistan, the positioning of troops in former Soviet Georgia -- those troops are going to have to be housed, fed, and the weapons systems are going to have to be contained, and all of that is money. And sadly, the Carlyle Group will benefit from this increase in funding that has been requested by the president.

Interestingly also, and probably the scariest of all, was the new mission, as identified by the Secretary, for our Armed Services. And that is that a major role now for the US military will be to occupy an opponent's capitol and displace its regime.

Now, if that's the mission -- and we've been told that there are as many as 60 countries around the world that host terror cells that we need to go in and flush out -- then basically what we're talking about is expanding US military presence all over the planet. And that is a frightening experience and a frightening thought for me because I know that if we provide weapons they get used. And if our troops are there, they are going to use those weapons and those weapons that we provide might even be used against our own troops. We have to be very careful about that.

But interestingly, the Secretary said that they intended to "drain the swamp", and it's interesting to me that it appears that this new mission of our military, to go into a capitol and take it over, was started in Washington, DC.

DB: Final question, Congresswoman McKinney. These are mighty powerful thoughts you are expressing here. I'm wondering how much support you have in Congress, and perhaps you may have heard from people who are quite unhappy with your voicing these kinds of very strong, controversial thoughts.

CM: It's always good to hear from people who think like you. I definitely hear from people who don't think like you. And that tells us it's a part of the American process. But just as it's healthy for me to hear from people who don't think like me, it's also very healthy for people who think like me to have a voice and to be willing to speak. And it's totally inappropriate, I believe, for my patriotism to be questioned, my feelings of attachment and loyalty for America to be questioned.

DB: Has it been questioned?

CM: You would be surprised at the hate mail that I get in the Congressional office.

DB: What do people say to you?

CM: I wish I had a piece right here and I'd read it to you. We got one piece that told me I needed to go back to Africa and take Jesse with me. It seems that the people who write in find it impossible to omit the fact that I'm black. And so the racial aspect of the hatred also comes out. I can accept people who disagree. But I don't know that we need thought police in our universities, because our universities are supposed to teach freedom of thought. And I don't know that we need thought police and speech police inside the US Congress, because the Congress is supposed to represent Americans of all stripes and all ideologies. And I know that there is a very powerful peace movement in this country. I hear from them. I know they're out there. I'd love to hear a little bit more from them.

DB: Well, we have very much appreciated hearing from you today. Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, reading her essay "Thoughts on our war against terrorism", and then speaking with us on Flashpoints here on Pacifica radio. We thank you so much for your time and your good information and commentary.

CM: Thank you very much. I look forward to talking with you again.

<http://www.house.gov/mckinney/>

I suggest sending colorful, happy cards (postcards?) that can be displayed at her office:

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<http://www.ratical.org/ratville/CAH/CAM041302.html>