

# Mass Media Cover-up

Leading Journalists Expose Major Cover-ups by Mass Media

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This is a 10-page summary of revealing accounts by 20 award-winning journalists from the book [Into the Buzzsaw](#), compiled Kristina Borjesson. All of these courageous writers were prevented by corporate mass media ownership from reporting major news stories. Some were even fired or laid off. These journalists have won numerous awards, including several Emmys and a Pulitzer. Join in building a better world. [Spread this news](#) across the land.

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[Jane Akre](#) spent 20 years as a network and local TV reporter for news operations throughout the country. Recently, she and her husband, investigative reporter Steve Wilson, were awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize for their struggle with the story told in this chapter.

By February 1997 our story was ready to air. It attempted to answer some troubling questions: Why had Monsanto sued two small dairies to prevent them from labeling their milk as coming from cows *not* injected with [growth hormone rBGH]? Why had two Canadian health regulators claimed that their jobs were threatened—and then said Monsanto offered them a bribe to give fast-track approval to the drug? Why did Florida supermarkets break their much-publicized promise that milk in the dairy case would *not* come from hormone-treated cows “until it gained widespread acceptance?” And why was the US the only major industrialized nation to approve this controversial genetically engineered hormone? (p. 211)

Station managers were so proud of our work that they saturated virtually every Tampa Bay radio station with thousands of dollars’ worth of ads urging viewers to watch what we’d uncovered about “The Mystery in Your Milk.” But then, our Fox managers’ pride turned to panic. [Monsanto lawyer] John Walsh wrote that some points of the story “clearly contain the elements of defamatory statements which, if repeated in a broadcast, could lead to serious damage to Monsanto and *dire consequences* for Fox News.” (pp. 211-213)

It was not long after our [unsuccessful] struggle to air an honest report had begun that Fox fired both the news director and the general manager. The new general manager, Dave Boylan, explained that if we didn’t agree to changes that Monsanto and Fox lawyers were insisting upon, we’d be fired for insubordination within 48 hours. We pleaded with Dave to look at the facts we’d uncovered, many of which conclusively disproved Monsanto’s claims. We reminded him of the importance of the facts about a basic food most of our viewers consume and feed to their children daily. His reply: “We paid \$3 billion dollars for these TV stations. We’ll tell *you* what the news is. The news is what *we* say it is!” Steve [the author’s husband and coworker] was firm but respectful when he made it clear we would neither lie nor distort any part of the story. (pp. 213-215)

[The Dairy Coalition’s director] took great pride in bragging that the Coalition “snowed the station with paperwork and pressure to have the story killed.” Fox threatened our job every time we resisted the dozens of changes that would sanitize the story and fill it with lies and distortions. [Fox lawyer] Forest finally leveled with us. “You guys don’t get it. It doesn’t matter whether the facts are true. This story isn’t worth a couple of hundred thousand dollars to go up against Monsanto.” (pp. 217, 218)

Fox’s general manager presented us with an agreement that would give us a full year of salaries and benefits worth \$200,000 in no-show “consulting jobs,” but with strings attached: no mention of how Fox covered up the story and no opportunity to ever expose the facts Fox refused to air. We turned down this second hush money offer. We were both finally fired, allegedly for “no cause.” (p. 219)

The controversy over rBGH has traveled recently to Canada and the European Union, both of which decided to reject the drug for use in those countries. (p. 236)

For updates on their lawsuit, see the Ms. Akre and Mr. Wilson’s website at <http://www.foxbghsuit.com>.

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[Dan Rather](#) [was] the anchor and managing editor of CBS Evening News and correspondent for 60 Minutes II. In his more than 30 years at CBS, he received almost every honor in broadcast journalism, including several Emmy Awards, a Peabody Award, and citations from scholarly, professional, and charitable organizations. This is an excerpt from an interview originally aired on BBC Newsnight on May 16, 2002.

Access was extremely limited to the press during the time of September 11th, and ever since then [has been] limited in a way that is unprecedented in American journalism. There was a full understanding of why access was so limited during that time.[However] in the weeks and months that followed September 11th, the federal

government began to take an unprecedented attitude about the access of American journalists to the war. What's particularly troubling is that what's being done is in direct variance with the Pentagon's stated policy [of] maximum access and maximum information consistent with national security. What's going on is a belief that you can manipulate communicable trust between the leadership and the led. The way you do that is you don't let the press in anywhere (p. 36-38).

Access to the [Iraq] war is extremely limited. The fiercer the combat, the more the access is limited, [including] access to information. I would say that overwhelmingly the limiting of access to information has much more to do with the determination to be seen as conducting the war errorlessly than it does with any sense of national security (p. 40).

None of us in journalism have asked questions strongly enough about limiting access and information for reasons other than national security. It's unpatriotic not to ask questions. Anybody in American journalism who tells you that he or she has not felt this pressure [not to ask tough questions] is either kidding themselves or trying to deceive you (p. 39-40)

What we're talking about here is a form of self-censorship. Self-censorship is a real and present danger to journalists at every level and on a lot of different kinds of stories. Before the war, before September 11th, fear ruled every newsroom in the country in some important ways—fear if we don't dumb it down, if we don't tart it up, if we don't go to the trivial at the expense of the important, we're not going to be publishing a newspaper or magazine. We're not going to be on the air. The ratings will eat us up. (p. 41-42).

There was a time in South Africa when people would put flaming tires around people's necks if they dissented. In some ways the fear [now in the U.S.] is that you'll have a flaming tire of lack of patriotism put around your neck. It's that fear that keeps journalists from asking the tough questions. And I am humbled to say, I do not exempt myself from this criticism (p. 42).

For a BBC press release of this May 16, 2002 interview go to:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/05\\_may/16/dan\\_rather.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/05_may/16/dan_rather.shtml)

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**[Kristina Borjesson](#)** *has been an independent producer and writer for almost 20 years. Among her many accomplishments besides editing this volume, she worked at CBS network where she won an Emmy and a Murrow Award for her investigative reporting on “CBS Reports: Legacy of Shame” with Dan Rather and Randall Pinkston.*

You don't choose to have the kind of experience I had while trying to report on the demise of TWA Flight 800. You fall into it. At CBS, I'd recently picked up an Emmy for investigative reporting when I was assigned to investigate the crash. I had no idea that my life would be turned upside down and inside out—that I'd be assigned to walk into what I now call “the buzzsaw.” (p. 284)

The buzzsaw is what can rip through you when you try to investigate or expose anything this country's large institutions—be they corporate or government—want kept under wraps. The system fights back with official lies, disinformation, and stonewalling. Your phone starts acting funny. Strange people call you at strange hours to give you strange information. The FBI calls you. Your car is broken into and the thief takes your computer and your reporter's notebook and leaves everything else behind. You feel like you're being followed everywhere you go. (p. 284)

Pierre Salinger announced to the world on November 8, 1996, that he'd received documents from French intelligence proving that a US Navy missile had accidentally downed [TWA Flight 800]. That same day, FBI's Jim Kallstrom called a press conference to deny Salinger's allegations. [At the press conference,] Kallstrom rattled off a prepared speech, and then it was time for questions. A man raised his hand and asked why the Navy was involved in the recovery and investigation while a possible suspect. Kallstrom's response was immediate; “Remove him!” he yelled. Two men leapt over to the questioner and grabbed him by the arms. There was a momentary chill in the air after the guy had been dragged out of the room. Kallstrom acted as if nothing had happened. (pp. 290, 291)

A few weeks after the FBI's visit to CBS, I received my walking papers. Law enforcement consultant Paul Ragonese eventually got his walking papers, too. Ragonese was replaced by none other than the FBI's TWA 800 task force chief, James Kallstrom. (p. 307)

Ms. Borjesson co-hosts WBAI's Expert Witness Radio Program at <http://www.expertwitnessradio.org>.

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**[Monika Jensen-Stevenson](#)** *is a former Emmy-winning producer for 60 Minutes. The Vietnam Veterans*

Marine Private Robert R. Garwood—fourteen years a prisoner of the communist Vietnamese—was found guilty of collaboration with the enemy in the longest court-martial in United States history. I first heard of Garwood in 1979. Wire reports referred to him as a defector whom the US government was charging with being a traitor. At the end of the court-martial, there seemed no question that Garwood was a monstrous traitor. (pp. 255, 256)

In 1985, Garwood was speaking publicly about something that had never made the news during his court-martial. The *Wall Street Journal* reported he said that he knew firsthand of other American prisoners in Vietnam long after the war was over. He was supported by Vietnam combat veterans whose war records were impeccable. These veterans told a story vastly different from what was made public during the court-martial and one that was intimately tied to another *60 Minutes* story I was working on—“Dead or Alive?” The title referred to Vietnam POW/MIAs. (p. 256)

My sources included outstanding experts like former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency General Eugene Tighe and returned POWs like Captain Red McDaniel, who held the Navy’s top award for bravery, had commanded the aircraft carrier *Lexington*, and was director of liaison on Capitol Hill for the Navy and Marine Corps. With such advocates providing back up, it was hard not to consider the possibility that prisoners (some 3,500) had in fact been kept by the Vietnamese communists as hostages to make sure the US would pay the more than \$3 billion in war reparations that Nixon had promised before his fall from grace. Particularly compelling was the fact that of the 300 prisoners known to be held in Laos, not one was released for homecoming in 1973. (p. 256)

Initially held back to ensure the US would fulfill its secret promise to pay reparation monies, by 1979 American POWs had become worthless pawns. The US had not paid the promised monies and had no intention of paying in the future. (p. 263)

Ms. Jensen-Stevenson’s book on this topic, *Kiss the Boys Goodbye*, is available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

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**[Greg Palast](#)** writes for the *Guardian* and *Observer* newspapers of London and reports for the *BBC’s* *Newsnight*. *Palast abandoned hopes of working in America when mainstream press failed to report on his groundbreaking exposes known for stripping bare abuses.*

In the months leading up to the November [2000] balloting, Florida Governor Jeb Bush and his secretary of state, Katherine Harris, ordered local elections supervisors to purge 58,000 voters from registries on the grounds they were felons, not entitled to vote in Florida. As it turns out, only a handful of these voters were felons. The voters were [about 54%] African Americans, and most of the others were white and Hispanic Democrats. Three weeks after the election, this extraordinary news ran on page one of the country’s leading paper. Unfortunately, it was in the wrong country: Britain. In the USA, it was not covered. It was given big network TV coverage. But again, it was on the wrong continent—on BBC TV, London. (pp. 195, 196)

The office of the governor [also] illegally ordered the removal of felons from the voter rolls—*real felons*—but with the right to vote under Florida law. As a result, 50,000 of these voters could not vote. The fact that 90% of these voters were Democrats should have made it news because this maneuver alone more than accounted for Bush’s victory. (pp. 197-200)

In February 2001, I took my BBC film crew to Florida, having unearthed a page marked “secret” and “confidential” from the company the state had hired to make up the list of names to purge from voter rolls. I took my camera crew into an agreed interview with Jeb Bush’s director of the Department of Elections. When I pulled out the confidential sheet, Bush’s man ripped off the microphone and did the fifty-yard dash, locking himself in his office, all in front of our cameras. It was killer television and wowed the British viewers. We even ran a confession from the company. Newsworthy for the USA? Apparently not. (pp. 202, 203)

A group of well-placed sources told my BBC team that before Sept. 11th the US government had turned away evidence of Saudi billionaires funding bin Laden’s network. We got our hands on documents that backed up the story that FBI and CIA investigations had been slowed by the Clinton administration, then killed by Bush Jr.’s. The story made top of the news—in Britain. In the US, one TV reporter picked up the report. He was called, he says, by network chiefs, and told to go no further. He didn’t. (p. 205)

For Mr. Palast’s website, see <http://www.gregpalast.com>.

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**[Michael Levine](#)** is a 25-year veteran of the DEA turned best-selling author and journalist. His articles and

interviews on the drug war have been published in numerous national newspapers and magazines, including the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, USA Today, and Esquire.

When President Nixon first declared war on drugs in 1971, there were fewer than 500,000 hard-core addicts in the entire nation, most of whom were addicted to heroin. Three decades later, despite the expenditure of \$1 trillion in tax dollars, the number of hard-core addicts is shortly expected to exceed five million. Our nation has become the supermarket of the drug world, with a wider variety and bigger supply of drugs at cheaper prices than ever before. The problem now not only affects every town and hamlet on the map, but it is difficult to find a family anywhere that is not somehow affected. (pp. 158, 159)

The Chang Mai factory the CIA prevented me from destroying was the source of massive amounts of heroin being smuggled into the US in the bodies and body bags of GIs killed in Vietnam. (p. 165)

My unit, the Hard Narcotics Smuggling Squad, was charged with investigating all heroin and cocaine smuggling through the Port of New York. My unit became involved in investigating every major smuggling operation known to law enforcement. We could not avoid witnessing the CIA protecting major drug dealers. Not a single important source in Southeast Asia was ever indicted by US law enforcement. This was no accident. Case after case was killed by CIA and State Department intervention and there wasn't a damned thing we could do about it. CIA-owned airlines like Air America were being used to ferry drugs throughout Southeast Asia, allegedly to support our "allies." CIA banking operations were used to launder drug money. (pp. 165, 166)

In 1972, I was assigned to assist in a major international drug case involving top Panamanian government officials who were using diplomatic passports to smuggle large quantities of heroin and other drugs into the US. The name Manuel Noriega surfaced prominently in the investigation. Surfacing right behind Noriega was the CIA to protect him from US law enforcement. As head of the CIA, Bush authorized a salary for Manuel Noriega as a CIA asset, while the dictator was listed in as many as 40 DEA computer files as a drug dealer. (pp. 166, 167)

The CIA and the Department of State were protecting more and more politically powerful drug traffickers around the world: the Mujihadeen in Afghanistan, the Bolivian cocaine cartels, the top levels of Mexican government, Nicaraguan Contras, Colombian drug dealers and politicians, and others. Media's duties, as I experienced firsthand, were twofold: first, to keep quiet about the gush of drugs that was allowed to flow unimpeded into the US; second, to divert the public's attention by shilling them into believing the drug war was legitimate by falsely presenting the few trickles we were permitted to indict as though they were major "victories," when in fact we were doing nothing more than getting rid of the inefficient competitors of CIA assets. (pp. 166, 167)

On July 17, 1980, drug traffickers actually took control of a nation. Bolivia at the time [was] the source of virtually 100% of the cocaine entering the US. CIA-recruited mercenaries and drug traffickers unseated Bolivia's democratically elected president, a leftist whom the US government didn't want in power. Immediately after the coup, cocaine production increased massively, until it soon outstripped supply. This was the true beginning of the cocaine and crack "plague." (pp. 167, 168)

The CIA along with the State and Justice Departments had to combine forces to protect their drug-dealing assets by destroying a DEA investigation. How do I know? I was the inside source. I sat down at my desk in the American embassy and wrote the kind of letter that I never myself imagined ever writing. I detailed three pages typewritten on official US embassy stationery—enough evidence of my charges to feed a wolf pack of investigative journalists. I also expressed my willingness to be a quotable source. I addressed it directly to Strasser and Rohter, care of *Newsweek*. Two sleepless weeks later, I was still sitting in my embassy office staring at the phone. Three weeks later, it rang. It was DEA's internal security. They were calling me to notify me that I was under investigation. I had been falsely accused of everything from black-marketing to having sex with a married female DEA agent. The investigation would wreak havoc with my life for the next four years. (pp. 168-171)

In one glaring case, an associate of mine was sent into Honduras to open a DEA office in Tegucigalpa. Within months he had documented as much as 50 tons of cocaine being smuggled into the US by Honduran military people who were supporting the Contras. This was enough cocaine to fill a third of US demand. What was the DEA response? They closed the office. (p. 175)

Sometime in 1990, US Customs intercepted a ton of cocaine being smuggled through Miami International Airport. A Customs and DEA investigation quickly revealed that the smugglers were the Venezuelan National Guard headed by General Guillen, a CIA "asset" who claimed that he had been operating under CIA orders and protection. The CIA soon admitted that this was true. If the CIA is good at anything, it is the complete control of American mass media. So secure are they in their ability to manipulate the mass media that they even brag about it in their own in-house memos. The *New York Times* had the story almost immediately in 1990 and did not print it until 1993. It finally became news that was "fit to print" when the *Times* learned that

60 Minutes also had the story and was actually going to run it. The highlight of the *60 Minutes* piece is when the administrator of the DEA, Federal Judge Robert Bonner, tells Mike Wallace, “There is no other way to put it, Mike, [what the CIA did] is *drug smuggling*. It’s *illegal* [author’s emphasis].” (pp. 188, 189)

The fact is—and you can read it yourself in the federal court records—that seven months *before* the attempt to blow up the World Trade Center in 1993, the FBI had a paid informant, Emad Salem, who had infiltrated the bombers and had told the FBI of their plans to blow up the twin towers. Without notifying the NYPD or anyone else, an FBI supervisor “fired” Salem, who was making \$500 a week for his work. After the bomb went off, the FBI hired Salem back and paid him \$1.5 million to help them track down the bombers. But that’s not all the FBI missed. When they finally did catch the actual bomber, Ramzi Yousef (a man trained with CIA funds during the Russia-Afghanistan war), the FBI found information on his personal computer about plans to use hijacked American jetliners as fuel-laden missiles. The FBI ignored this information, too. (p. 191)

Learn about Mr. Levine’s books and radio show at <http://www.expertwitnessradio.org>.

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**Gary Webb** was an investigative reporter for 19 years. He won a 1990 Pulitzer Prize, received the 1997 Media Hero award, and in 1996 was named Journalist of the Year by the Bay Area Society of Professional Journalists. He worked on several newspapers until being forced out of his job after the San Jose Mercury News retracted their support for the Dark Alliance story discussed below.

In 1996, I wrote a series of stories, entitled *Dark Alliance*, that began this way: For the better part of a decade, a Bay Area drug ring sold tons of cocaine to the Crips and Bloods street gangs of LA and funneled millions in drug profits to a Latin American guerilla army run by the CIA. The cocaine that flooded in helped spark a crack explosion in urban America. It is one of the most bizarre alliances in modern history—the union of a US-backed army attempting to overthrow a socialist government and the Uzi-toting “gangstas” of Los Angeles. (p. 143)

In December 1995, I wrote a lengthy memo to my editors, advising them of what my Nicaraguan colleague and I had found: With the help of recently declassified documents, FBI reports, DEA undercover tapes, as well as interviews with some of the key participants, we will show how a CIA-linked drug and stolen car network provided weapons and tons of high-grade, dirt cheap cocaine to the very person who spread crack through LA and from there into the hinterlands. A bizarre bond between an elusive CIA operative and a brilliant car thief from LA’s ghettos touched off a social phenomenon—crack and gang-power—that changed our lives. The day these two men met was literally ground zero for California’s crack explosion. This is also the story of how an ill-planned foreign policy adventure—the CIA’s “secret” war in Nicaragua—boomeranged back to the streets of America, in the long run doing more damage to us than to our “enemies” in Central America. We have compelling evidence that the kingpins of this cocaine ring enjoyed a unique relationship with the US government that has continued to this day. (pp. 145-146)

The story was developing a political momentum all of its own, and it was happening despite a virtual news blackout from the mass media. Ultimately, it was public pressure that forced the national newspapers into the fray. In Washington, black media outlets were ridiculing the *Post* for its silence. Between October and November, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and the *Los Angeles Times* published lengthy stories about the CIA drug issue, but spent precious little time exploring the CIA’s activities. Instead, my reporting and I became the focus of their scrutiny. The official conclusion reached by all three papers: Much ado about nothing. No story here. Nothing worth pursuing. The series was “flawed.” It was remarkable [*Mercury News* editor] Ceppos, wrote, that the four *Post* reporters assigned to debunk the series “could not find a single significant factual error.” (pp. 149-152)

At my editor’s request, I wrote another series following up on the first three parts: a package of four stories to run over two days. They never began to edit them. Instead, I found myself involved in hours-long conversations with editors that bordered on surreal. A few months later, the *Mercury News* officially backed away from *Dark Alliance*, publishing a long column by Jerry Ceppos apologizing for “shortcomings” in the series. The *New York Times* hailed Ceppos for setting a brave new standard for dealing with “egregious errors” and splashed his apology on their front page, the first time the series had ever been mentioned there. I quit the *Mercury News* after that. (p. 153)

The CIA’s knowledge and involvement had been far greater than I’d ever imagined. Agents and officials of the DEA had protected the traffickers from arrest, something I’d not been allowed to print. At the start of the Contra war, the CIA and Justice Department had worked out an unusual agreement that permitted the CIA not to have to report allegations of drug trafficking by its agents to the Justice Department. It was a curious loophole in the law, to say the least. (p. 154)

The *Mercury News* had broken the rules and used the Internet to get in by the back door, leaving the big papers momentarily embarrassed. It forced them to readdress an issue they’d much rather have forgotten. By

turning on the *Mercury News*, the big boys were reminding the rest of the flock who really runs the newspaper business, Internet or no Internet, and the extent to which they will go to protect that power, even if it meant rearranging reality to suit them. (p. 155)

Do we have a free press today? Sure we do. It's free to report all the sex scandals it wants, all the stock market news we can handle, every new health fad that comes down the pike, and every celebrity marriage or divorce that happens. But when it comes to the real down and dirty stuff—stories like Tailwind, the October Surprise, the El Mozote massacre, corporate corruption, or CIA involvement in drug trafficking—that's where we begin to see the limits of our freedoms. In today's mass media environment, sadly, such stories are not even open for discussion. Back in 1938, when fascism was sweeping Europe, legendary investigative reporter George Seldes observed that "it is possible to fool all the people all the time—when government and press cooperate." Unfortunately, we have reached that point. (p. 156)

See Mr. Webb's riveting book *Dark Alliance* on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

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**John Kelly** is first author with Phillip Wearne of *Tainting Evidence: Inside the Scandals at the FBI Crime Lab, which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. It is the first, and to date, the only, contemporaneous critical account of the FBI to be published by a mainstream publisher. He is also an independent investigative producer. He is the former editor and senior writer for the National Reporter, a publication specializing in reporting on the CIA.*

According to the Central Intelligence Agency itself, as reported by the House Intelligence Committee, "The Clandestine Service of the CIA is the only part of the Intelligence Community, indeed of government, where hundreds of employees on a daily basis are directed to break extremely serious laws in countries around the world. A safe estimate is that several hundred times every day (easily 100,000 times a year), officers engage in highly illegal activities." (pp. 115, 116)

The national security of the United States requires that more than 100,000 extremely serious crimes be committed every year. The [House Intelligence] Committee expressed no legal or ethical concerns about these crimes. The committee indicated that it did not matter that laws were broken because they were laws of other countries. The CIA [is] committing crimes against humanity with *de facto* impunity and Congressional sanctioning. (pp. 116, 117)

Government documents, including CIA reports, show that the CIA's crimes include terrorism, assassination, torture, and systematic violations of human rights. The documents show that these crimes are part and parcel of deliberate CIA policy. The report notes that CIA personnel are "directed" to commit crimes. (p. 117)

CIA documents show that the CIA created, trained, and armed death squads in Guatemala as part of its coup and destabilization of the democratically elected government in 1954. In Honduras, the CIA's own inspector general reported that paid CIA assets at the highest level created and ran a death squad which, according to the Honduran government, murdered at least 184 people. The House Intelligence Committee's only concern regarding these brutal CIA informants and other CIA offenders was that they might be arrested and prosecuted. The committee did not advise the CIA to cease or limit its lawlessness. The Senate Intelligence Committee proposed a bill that would immunize CIA offenders who violate treaties and international agreements while following orders. The bill passed both houses of Congress and was signed into law by President Bill Clinton on December 27, 2000. (pp. 117-118)

[This law] means that the Constitution does not apply to the CIA or any US intelligence personnel. Why? Because the constitution provides that all treaties are the *supreme law of the land*. Not just law, but the *supreme law*—and no exceptions. There was not a peep from the mass media about any of this even though such a story would not have affected corporate sponsorship or profits. (pp. 119, 120)

The intelligence committees recommended that the "aggressive recruitment" of "terrorist informants who have human rights violations in their background" be "one of the highest priorities." Within months of instituting the guidelines, incoming CIA director George Tenet assured Congress that not a single unsavory applicant had been rejected. (pp. 120, 121)

Former ambassador Robert White wrote that Manuel Noriega of Panama, Colonel Julio Alpirez of Guatemala, General Gustavo Alvarez Martinez of Honduras, Colonel Nicolas Carranza of El Salvador, and Emmanuel Constant of Haiti, all major human rights abusers, were CIA informants who "enjoyed profitable contractual arrangements with the CIA not because they were particularly important sources of information, but because they served as paid agents of influence who promoted actions or policies favored by the CIA in that country." (p. 122)

Former CIA General Counsel Sporkin revealed that the CIA, not the president, creates findings to fit

preordained covert operations and sends the findings to the president for his signature. (p. 126, 127)

There is next to no meaningful coverage ever of the CIA in the mainstream media, let alone analysis. The few exceptions prove the rule. In 1984, I was involved in one such exception. ABC hired me to help produce a story about an investment firm in Hawaii that was heavily involved with the CIA. I had earlier provided the same story to BBC's *Newsnight*, which aired it. The story was fully documented, and nobody, including the CIA, was able to disprove the charges. Part of the report charged that the CIA had plotted to assassinate an American, Ron Rewald, the president of [the investment firm]. The ABC report provoked a brutal response from the CIA. The CIA demanded a full retraction without providing any counterproof other than their denial. (pp. 130, 131)

At the center of the uproar was Scott Barnes who said on camera that the CIA had asked him to kill Rewald. After the show aired, CIA officials met with *ABC News* executive David Burke. They presented no evidence to counter the charges made in the program. Nonetheless, Burke was sufficiently impressed "by the vigor with which they made their case" to order an on-air "clarification" in which Peter Jennings acknowledged the CIA's position but stood by the story. But that was not good enough. [CIA Director William] Casey called ABC Chairman Leonard H. Goldenson. The call led to three meetings between ABC officials and Stanley Sporkin, CIA general counsel. On November 21, 1984, despite all the documented evidence presented in the program, Peter Jennings reported that ABC could no longer substantiate the charges, and that "We have no reason to doubt the CIA's denial." He presented no evidence supporting the CIA's position. (pp. 131, 132)

That same day, the CIA filed a formal complaint with the FCC, written by Sporkin and signed by [CIA Director] Casey, charging that ABC had "deliberately distorted" the news. Casey asked that ABC be stripped of its TV and radio licenses. This was the first time in the history of the country that a government agency had formally attacked the press. Yet, there was no uproar. (p. 132)

During this time, Capital Cities Communications was maneuvering to buy ABC. [CIA Director] Casey was one of the founders of Cap Cities. Cap Cities bought ABC for \$3.5 billion, which was called a "bargain rate" by the trade media. Besides Casey, two other founders of Cap Cities had extensive ties to the intelligence community. Within months, the entire investigative unit [of ABC] was dispersed, and the commentator on the Rewald program was assigned to covering beauty pageants. Needless to say, my contract was not renewed. (pp. 132, 122)

For Mr. Kelly's book *Tainting Evidence: Inside the Scandals at the FBI Crime Lab*, see [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

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**[Carl Jensen, Ph.D.](#)**, founder and director emeritus of Project Censored, America's longest running research project on mass media censorship, has been involved with the media for more than 50 years as a daily newspaper reporter, weekly newspaper publisher, public relations practitioner, advertising executive, educator, and author. Jensen is author of the 1990-1996 annual Project Censored yearbooks, *Censored: The News That Didn't Make the News...and Why*. He has won numerous awards for his work.

There were 50 major media corporations in 1993, and now there are only about half a dozen. Corporate socialization has been exacerbated by the multibillion-dollar mergers that created international giants such as AOL Time Warner, Disney, General Electric, News Corporation, and Viacom. (pp. 425-428)

Shortly after the outbreak of the First Terrorist War of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, I was reminded of what US Senator Hiram Johnson said during World War I: "The first casualty when war comes, is truth." Post-September 11, 2001, the free flow of information in America is slowing to a carefully monitored trickle. The president of the US says he can only trust eight members of Congress. The attorney general admonishes Congress to pass the controversial Anti-Terrorism Act without debate. The national security adviser cautions TV networks not to broadcast press conferences with Taliban leaders because they may contain hidden messages. The military tells the press this is a "different war" and thus it can't observe the 1992 agreement allowing the media more access to information. The president's press secretary warns the media and all Americans to watch what they say and watch what they do. These are ominous signs for democracy. (pp. 432, 433)

In the same way that we survived Pearl Harbor, we will survive the Sept. 11 terrorist attack. In the meantime, let us not be terrorized into giving up any of our constitutionally guaranteed rights. (p. 434)

See the excellent mass media censorship website Prof. Jensen founded: <http://www.projectcensored.org>.

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**[Robert McChesney](#)** has written or edited seven books and is currently research professor at the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois. He has made more than 500 radio and TV appearances and has been the subject of nearly 50 published interviews.

Professional journalism had three distinct biases built into it, biases that remain to this day. First, it regarded anything done by official sources, for example, government officials and prominent public figures, as the basis for legitimate news. Second, professional journalism posited that there had to be a news hook or a news peg to justify a news story. [This] helped to stimulate the birth and rapid rise of the public relations (PR) industry. Surveys show that PR accounts for anywhere from 40 to 70 percent of what appears as news. The third bias is that [professional journalism] smuggles in values conducive to the commercial aims of the owners and advertisers as well as the political aims of the owning class. The affairs of government are subjected to much closer scrutiny than the affairs of big business. The genius of professionalism in journalism is that it tends to make journalists oblivious to the compromises with authority they routinely make. (pp. 440, 441)

Professional news media invariably take it as a given that the US has a right to invade any country it wishes for whatever reason it may have. Professional journalism equates the spread of “free markets” with the spread of democracy. To the US elite, however, democracy tends to be defined by their ability to maximize profit in a nation, and that is, in effect, the standard of professional journalism. (p. 442)

[There] is the striking consolidation of the mass media from hundreds of significant firms to an integrated industry dominated by less than ten enormous transnational conglomerates and rounded out by no more than another fifteen very large firms. The first tier giants include AOL Time Warner, Disney, Viacom, News Corporation, Bertelsmann, Vivendi Universal, Sony, AT&T, and General Electric. The nine or ten largest media conglomerates now almost all rank among the 300 largest firms in the world; in 1965, there were barely any media firms among the five hundred largest companies in the world. (p. 444)

The largest ten media firms own all the US TV networks, most of the TV stations in the largest markets, all major film studios, all major music companies, nearly all of the cable TV channels, much of the book and magazine publishing [industry], and much, much more. The logic of mass media industries is that a firm can no longer compete if it is not part of a larger conglomerate. General Electric’s NBC is the only commercial TV network that does not own a major Hollywood film studio. (pp. 444, 445)

Expensive investigative journalism—especially that which goes after powerful corporate or national security interests—is discouraged. Idiotic or largely irrelevant human interest/tragedy stories get the green light for extensive coverage. These are cheap, easy to cover, and they never antagonize those in power. The mass media companies claim they are responding to demand. (p. 445)

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, real income declined or was stagnant for the lower 60 percent, while wealth and income for the rich skyrocketed. By 1998, discounting home ownership, the top 10 percent of the population claimed 76 percent of the nation’s net worth. More than half of this is accounted for by the richest 1 percent. The *Washington Post* has gone so far as to describe ours as a nearly “perfect economy,” which [reveals] the vantage point of the corporate news media. And it does appear more and more perfect the higher one goes up the socioeconomic ladder. (pp. 447, 448)

The rate of incarceration has more than doubled since the late 1980s. The US now has five times more prisoners per capita than Canada and seven times more than the whole of Western Europe. The US has 5 percent of the world’s population and 25 percent of the world’s prisoners. Nearly 90 percent of prisoners are jailed for nonviolent offenses, often casualties of the so-called drug war. It is a debate among Democrats and Republicans over who can be “tougher” on crime, hire more police, and build more prisons. Almost overnight, the prison-industrial complex has become a big business and a powerful lobby for public funds. (p. 448)

In the year 2000, a Texas man received 16 years in prison for stealing a Snickers candy bar, while four executives at Hoffman-LaRoche were found guilty of conspiring to suppress and eliminate competition in the vitamin industry in what the Justice Department called perhaps the largest criminal antitrust conspiracy in history. The four executives were fined anywhere from \$75,000 to \$350,000. They received prison terms ranging from three all the way up to four months. (p. 449)

The propagandistic nature of the war coverage was made crystal clear by AOL Time Warner’s CNN a few weeks after the war began in Afghanistan. CNN president Walter Isaacson authorized CNN to provide two different versions of the war: a more critical one for the global audience and a sugarcoated one for Americans. Isaacson instructed the domestic CNN to be certain that any story that might undermine support for the US war be balanced with a reminder that the war on terrorism is a response to the heinous attacks of September 11. (p. 452)

We need to press for the overhaul of the media system, so that it serves democratic values rather than the interests of capital. The US media system has nothing to do with the wishes of the Founding Fathers and even less to do with the workings of some alleged free market. To the contrary, the media system is the result of laws, government subsidies, and regulations made in the public’s name, but made corruptly behind closed doors without the public’s informed consent. The largest media firms are all built on top of the profits generated by government gifts of monopoly rights. It is impossible to conceive of a better world with a media

system that remains under the thumb of Wall Street and Madison Avenue, under the thumb of the owning class. It is nearly impossible to conceive of a better world without some changes in the media status quo. We have no time to waste. (p. 453)

For the seven books Prof. McChesney has written or edited, see [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

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Mass Media