

Not Wikileaks, Not Snowden... White House Outlets CIA Station Chief

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– Sarah Lazare, staff writer

The White House accidentally revealed the identity of the top CIA officer in Afghanistan on Sunday, the *Washington Post* [revealed](#).

The error was made when the name of the "Chief of Station" in Kabul was included on a list, sent to the media, of U.S. officials present at Obama's visit to Afghanistan. Once the White House realized its error, it sent a subsequent revised list with the CIA official's name redacted, the *Post* reports.

The *Post* withheld the name of the CIA official at the request of the White House.

Sunday's error attracted commentary on Twitter.

Eagerly awaiting the indictment of the White House official who outed the CIA Station Chief in Afghanistan

– *jeremy scahill (@jeremyscahill)* [May 26, 2014](#)

*Can't *believe* the Guardian & [@ggreenwald](#) revealed the CIA's Kabul station chi— oh, wait, that was the White House.*
<http://t.co/pyeubdx7Kq>

– *Spencer Ackerman (@attackerman)* [May 26, 2014](#)

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Obama Administration Helped Kill Transparency Push on Military Aid

by Cora Currier ProPublica, Sep. 17, 2013, 2:22 p.m.



Afghan National Police cadets steady rifles as they learn to assemble and de-assemble them at the Kabul Police Academy on Nov. 14, 2012, in Kabul, Afghanistan. (Daniel Berehulak/Getty Images)

The U.S. spent [roughly \\$25 billion](#) last year on what's loosely known as security assistance2014a term that can cover everything from [training Afghan security forces](#) to [sending Egypt F-16 fighter jets](#) to [equipping Mexican port police with radiation scanners](#).

The spending, which has soared in the past decade, can be hard to trace, [funneled through dozens](#) of [sometimes overlapping](#) programs across multiple agencies. There's also evidence it's not always wisely spent. In Afghanistan, for instance, the military bought [\\$771 million worth of aircraft](#) this year for Afghan pilots, most of whom still don't know how to fly them.

Last year, legislators in the House drafted a bill that would require more transparency and evaluation of security and all foreign aid programs. The bill was championed by an unlikely coalition of Tea Party budget hawks and [giant aid groups](#) such as Oxfam America.

But the Obama administration successfully pushed to have security assistance exempted from the bill's requirements, according to a letter obtained by ProPublica and interviews with Congressional staffers.

The Pentagon [wrote](#) that it "strongly" opposed last year's bill in a statement to Congressional staff laying out its "informal view" last December. "The extensive public reporting requirements raise concerns," the letter said. "Country A could2026potentially learn what Country B has received in military assistance." Foreign governments would also "likely be resistant" to monitoring and evaluation from the U.S. Staffers say the State Department had also resisted the bill's increased oversight of security assistance. (The State Department declined our requests to discuss that.)

Two weeks later, the House [passed](#) a version that covered only "development assistance." The bill never made it to a vote in the Senate.

The State and Defense Departments, which handle most security assistance, "really are scared," said a House staffer who worked on last year's bill. "They're afraid of transparency about what the money is funding, where the weapons are going, who is getting training."

As it is now, the staffer said, "some reports come two or three years after the fact, and the data is not easily manipulable."

Increased oversight of security assistance is needed, said Walter Slocombe, former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, who recently led a government-sponsored [study](#) on the issue.

The problem is that "a lot of these programs have been developed ad hoc," he said. "There's not much coordination among agencies, though often they are trying to do more or less the same thing."

New versions of the bill have been reintroduced in the [House](#)

and [Senate](#). This time, the administration's stance isn't clear. A spokesman for the National Security Council declined to comment, as did the Pentagon.

This year's bill has a loophole for security spending: a waiver allowing the Secretary of State to exempt such programs if he deems it in the "national interest."

Still, including security programs in the bill at all is "going to be a bit more difficult," said an aide to one of the House bill's co-sponsors, Gerry Connolly, D-Va. The exemption requires the State Department to tell Congress which programs it isn't including, and why.

Lauren Frese, a State Department foreign assistance official said, "We support Congress' objectives with the bill. It's more a matter of making sure we're not legislating something that isn't aligned with what we've already got going on." As the White House points out, it has already required agencies to be more transparent about spending on foreign aid.

Agencies must upload budget data to a central public dashboard, foreignassistance.gov, though the site's data is currently incomplete and information from the Defense Department is available only in [generic categories](#). The bill would turn such directives into law.

The legislation also goes further. It would require the State Department to develop guidelines for monitoring and evaluating aid's effectiveness across agencies.

In a [hearing](#) in April, the House bill's co-sponsor, Ted Poe, R-Texas, said that "Americans want to see [whether] the money that we're sending to NGOs, the governments, et cetera is working or not working."

Representative Connolly hopes the bill will help the public "better understand the rationale for aid, and the context: what a small, small part of the government's budget it represents," he told ProPublica. Indeed, foreign aid makes up

only [about 1 percent](#) of the federal budget.

Supporters of the bill say excluding security assistance would leave a huge gap.

In January, an independent advisory board to the State Department [recommended](#) comprehensive reform of the whole concept of security assistance, calling for concrete objectives, better long-term monitoring, and a greater emphasis on non-military programs, such as programs to strengthen justice systems. (A few months later, the White House issued a policy directive that [pledged](#) to take on many of the same issues.)

“Nobody looks at it systematically,” said [Gordon Adams](#), who worked on national security and international affairs for the Office of Management and Budget in the 1990s and has [argued](#) for a reduced military role in security assistance. That’s in part a reflection of how the landscape of programs has grown and fragmented in recent d

ecades. Security assistance grew 227 percent between fiscal years 2002 and 2012, to a peak of \$26.8 billion, according to data collected by the Stimson Center, where Adams is a fellow.

That growth comes largely from programs in Iraq and Afghanistan, which are beginning to be scaled back. This year’s budget still allocated more than \$20 billion across State and Defense.

State [officially](#) oversees all foreign aid, including many programs traditionally thought of as “military,” like weapons sales, but the Pentagon expanded its portfolio of “[military operations other than war](#)” and special operations in the 1990s. After 9/11, Congress also legislated new programs related to the “war on terror,” such as the [Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program](#) and the [Coalition Support Fund](#). With its Afghan programs, the Pentagon accounts for more than half of all security spending 2013 not counting [covert](#) operations.

Last year, then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta [promoted](#) training and aid to partners as “low cost and small-footprint approaches” to military objectives.

The Pentagon’s increased role in foreign aid highlights a long-standing tension between the State Department and the military, which always has more cash on hand. “If you’ve got a \$600 billion budget it’s easier to squeeze in a few million dollars here and there,” said Slocombe, who chaired the study for the State Department.

Countless examples from Afghanistan illustrate the problem of lack of both long-term planning and cooperation between agencies. In 2010, ProPublica and Newsweek [documented](#) the failures of the police training program, which had by then cost \$6 billion. Responsibility shifted between agencies and contractors, and State and Defense squabbled “over whether the training should emphasize police work or counterinsurgency.” Last year, in one police facility built by the Army Corps of Engineers, the inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction found a well building being used [as a chicken coop](#). Another encampment, designed for 175 police, was occupied by just 12. The men [didn’t even have keys](#) for many of the buildings.

Other reports found the military [paid \\$6 million for vehicles](#) that were destroyed or hadn’t been seen in years, and that [\\$12.8 million in electrical equipment was sitting unused](#), as Defense and USAID each expected the other to install it.

Afghanistan is an exceptional case, given the scale of the spending and wartime conditions. But it also has the scrutiny of a special inspector general and a large U.S. presence. Security assistance to other countries has far fewer eyes on it 2013 or a clear idea of what the objectives for the aid are. Empowering local police and armies can have more severe political and human rights repercussions than digging wells. “It engages us with a bunch of countries where our interests

are at best opaque,” said Adams.

Some programs [are designed](#) for political and diplomatic reasons (as was long the case with [arm sales to Egypt](#)), while others are meant to build up a country’s ability to help the U.S. in its aims, such as countering terrorism or drug-dealing. In other words, giving a country what it wants, versus what the U.S. thinks it needs. (In fact, the Government Accountability Office found that branches [of the military differ](#) on which programs are supposed to do what.)

In a February [testimony](#), the GAO said that few of the military’s training programs had looked carefully at long-term impacts. “Reporting on progress and effectiveness,” had in some cases “been limited to anecdotal information.” For example, while Yemen [has received over \\$360 million](#) from two of the military’s new counterterrorism programs, due to security concerns the Pentagon has yet to evaluate whether that money’s had any effect.

The House bill’s sponsors believe it could help with these problems of planning and communication. The bill “is not designed to be hostile or adversarial for the Pentagon and State Department,” said Representative Connolly. “It’s designed to provide them with a more cogent rationale for these programs.”

US scraps tons of gear as it leaves Afghanistan

✘ [US scraps tons of gear as it leaves Afghanistan](#) (via [AFP](#))
The US military has destroyed more than 77,000 metric tons of military equipment – including mine-resistant troop transport

vehicles – as it prepares to withdraw from Afghanistan in late 2014, the Washington Post reported Thursday. More than \$7 billion worth of military equipment is no longer needed...

Maher: U.S. needs to give up war addiction and define 'peace as strength'

✘ [Maher: U.S. needs to give up war addiction and define 'peace as strength'](#) (via [Raw Story](#))

On this week's edition of "Real Time with Bill Maher," host Bill Maher told Americans who are so eager to go to war with North Korea that the U.S. has been addicted to war for too long and needs to start defining "peace as strength." In the last part of his weekly "New Rules" segment,...

NATO strike kills 10 children in Afghanistan, say officials

✘ [NATO strike kills 10 children in Afghanistan, say officials](#) (via [AFP](#))

A NATO air attack in eastern Afghanistan has killed at least 10 children, officials said Sunday. The children were killed during a joint Afghan-NATO operation in the Shigal district of restive Kunar province bordering Pakistan late on Saturday. "Ten children and eight militants were killed in the strike..."

US Military should leave Afghanistan and stop drone strikes

There is perhaps no time in American history when our leaders have fought a war with so little support. More than 60 percent of Americans want out of Afghanistan. Even at the peak of the anti-Vietnam-war movement, after a majority had turned against the war, there were still a large number of citizens who believed in the war and its official justifications. Today, as my colleague Robert Naiman of Just Foreign Policy notes, "Western leaders have largely given up trying to explain or justify why Western troops are still in Afghanistan and why they are still killing and being killed."

Yet the war goes on, and even the White House plans for too slowly reducing the U.S. troop presence meet resistance from the Pentagon. In a replay of the internal fight over U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, U.S. commander General George Allen was pushing just a few months ago to keep the current level of troops for another year. The military would also like to maintain a permanent presence of some 6,000 to 15,000 troops.

That is not going to happen, as the Afghan people don't want foreign troops in their country any more than we would want

armed fighters from Al Qaeda here in the U.S. But the attempts to establish a permanent base of operations will make it more difficult to negotiate an end to war.

And yes, ironically, the U.S. will most likely end up negotiating with the Taliban to end this war, something our government refused to do after 9-11 when it launched the invasion instead. So, 11 years of war, more than 2,000 U.S. troops dead and tens of thousands wounded will have all been for nothing, to arrive at the same opportunity that was available without America's longest war. Thousands of Afghans have been killed, and the population has suffered enormously.

The invasion of Iraq was disaster on an even larger scale, with more than a million estimated dead, including more than 4,400 U.S. troops. Hundreds of thousands came home wounded or with brain or psychological trauma and bleak job prospects.

Beside the fact that the war was launched on the basis of lies, it is hard to see how anyone could excuse this crime even in retrospect. As the revolution in Egypt showed, people can get rid of their own dictators – foreign intervention is much more likely to create or vastly expand a bloody civil war.

Meanwhile, U.S. drone strikes carried out “secretly” by the C.I.A. are becoming institutionalized, widening the so-called “war on terror” to more countries, in addition to the hundreds of strikes already carried out in Pakistan. These attacks, which have killed hundreds of civilians and have even targeted rescue workers, are each day making more people want to kill Americans.

Our country and our media have too much reverence for the U.S. military and the CIA, which are not making us safer but rather helping to create new threats. As the Washington Post reports, some of our generals have an “array of perquisites befitting a billionaire, including executive jets, palatial homes, drivers, security guards.” Even worse, many officers later

join the boards and executive suites of military contractors, where they rake in millions making corporations such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics, Raytheon, and Northrop Grumman richer at taxpayer expense, and sometimes promoting war itself on the network news. Our military-industrial complex is as corrupt and rotten as any institution of America's broken democracy, and more deadly than most in its consequences.

We need to end this war in Afghanistan and the other operations that are making Americans less secure and recruiting new enemies daily. Then we can focus on fixing our broken economy at home.

Mark Weisbrot is co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, in Washington, D.C. He is also president of Just Foreign Policy.

Colbert – Pinheads & Patriots makes burn barrel fuel in Afghanistan

“Bill O'Reilly supports America's troops by sending them what they need most on the battlefield: his book.” A forward operating base grunt finds good use for them

The first casualty of war is the truth, media coverage of 9/11

Al Jazeera's Listening Post [covers the media coverage of 9/11 from its inception](#) to today.

This week on the Listening Post: A special look at the media in the post-9/11 world.

Few would forget where they were on September 11, 2001 but most knew the world would never be the same again.

When the two hijacked planes crashed into the World Trade Centre that day, the impact was registered by those who perished that day – and the countless others who have perished in the wars fought ever since.

But the force of the impact was also felt on the media landscape itself and its complicity in the construction of the global war on terror that rearranged and justified the political events in the ten years that have passed.

In a series of interviews with journalists and media commentators, we look back at a decade of lies, misrepresentation, manipulation, flawed or fake intelligence, and how many in the western media bought into that narrative and colluded in its construction.

The Daily Show – A Fewer Good Men

It is time to bring our troops home. We need them here helping to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure and defending us against the rampant pillaging of our treasury on Wall Street. We want them out of harm's way.

Rolling Stone-The Kill Team How U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan murdered innocent civilians

Lt Col Dave Grossman wrote in his book [On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society](#) wrote

The good news is that the vast majority of soldiers are loath to kill in battle. Unfortunately, modern armies, using Pavlovian and operant conditioning, have developed sophisticated ways of overcoming this instinctive aversion. The psychological cost for soldiers, as witnessed by the increase in post-traumatic stress, is devastating. The psychological cost for the rest of us is even more so...

Mark Boal, screenwriter for *The Hurt Locker* has written a painful piece in [Rolling Stone](#) *The Kill Team How U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan murdered innocent civilians and mutilated their corpses – and how their officers failed to*

stop them. Plus: An exclusive look at the war crime photos censored by the Pentagon the story of Army Spc Jeremy Morlock, [sentenced to 24 years](#) for killing unarmed Afghan civilians for sport and the rest of the 'kill team' who joined him.

Specialist Jeremy N. Morlock, one of five soldiers from an Army Stryker brigade based here who are accused of staging combat situations to kill three civilians in Afghanistan last year, told the military judge presiding over the case, Lt. Col. Kwasi L. Hawks, that the deaths were neither justified nor accidental.

"The plan was to kill people, sir," Specialist Morlock told the judge at the start of a court-martial.

The sentence, plea and agreement to testify followed a deal Specialist Morlock and his lawyers negotiated with prosecutors in January. The military sentencing guidelines for the charges to which he pleaded guilty – including three counts of premeditated murder, conspiracy to commit murder and assault – recommend life in prison, with or without the possibility of parole. His lawyers say he could be eligible for parole in about seven years.

Specialist Morlock, 22, of Wasilla, Alaska, is the first of the five to face a court-martial.

Between them they took over 4,000 trophy photos most banned by the Pentagon but [some are published in the RS piece](#) (warning! very graphic). The military, without a draft are now willing to accept enlistees with violent histories, as is the case of Morlock who hails from Sarah Palin's Wasilla, Alaska. One photo shows Morlock holding the head of one of his victims, a mere boy, up by the hair and smiling with the same expression Palin had posing with her dead caribou.

These men are by no means representative of the US military and their actions seriously endanger the lives of their fellow

soldiers. At the same time I cannot help but harken back to a mother's lament... "I gave the military a good boy and they made him a murderer".