



## Inside Track

### Government Secrecy at Historic Levels

President Barack Obama's administration has clamped down on information about the workings of its various agencies so tightly that they function in almost absolute secrecy.

This is the claim of Justin Elliott, a reporter for ProPublica who penned a March 11 op-ed for the *Washington Post* revealing his recent attempt to force, via a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, the federal government to release information about FEMA's handling of the Hurricane Sandy relief effort. According to Elliott:

Two years ago last month, I filed a public-records request to the Federal Emergency Management Agency as part of my reporting into the flawed response to Hurricane Sandy. Then, I waited. The Freedom of Information Act requires a response within 20 business days, but agencies routinely blow that deadline. Eight months later, ProPublica and NPR published our investigation into the Sandy response, but it did not include any documents from FEMA. The agency had simply never gotten back to me. Finally, this Feb. 10 — 492 business days past the law's 20-day deadline — I got a curious phone call from FEMA. The agency was starting a "clean search" for the documents I asked for, because the original search "was not done properly."

When elected, President Obama spoke passionately on the need for official openness. However, Elliott reports, "The Associated Press found last year that the administration had set a record for censoring or denying access to information requested under FOIA, and that the backlog of unanswered requests across the government had risen by 55 percent, to more than 200,000."

As former Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis said in an earlier case on official attempts to shroud government actions behind an impenetrable veil of secrecy, "Sunshine is the greatest disinfectant." Apparently, the Obama administration is in need of sunshine, along with some serious scrubbing with undiluted, industrial-strength cleaner.

### Pentagon Has Used Drones for Domestic Spying

The U.S. Department of Defense, beginning in 2006 and continuing up through at least 2015, has made multiple uses of unmanned drones to conduct surveillance missions — spying — above the soil of the country.

According to a report entitled "Evaluations of DoD Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) for Support of Civil Authorities," the inspector general of the Defense Department found that while "less than 20" such missions had occurred during that time, they expect there will be many more in the future.

The report, published in March of 2015 but released to the public on March 9 of this year owing to a FOIA request, insists that the missions were conducted within "full compliance" of existing law.

A reading of the inspector general's report reveals that the Pentagon views these missions as good ways to train their pilots. "As the nation winds down" wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the pilots have fewer "opportunities for UAS realistic training." With such fewer opportunities in foreign wars, these spy



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drones can now be used inside the borders of the United States.

In fact, the report said there is an “appetite to use them in the domestic environment.”

The Defense Department policy governing the use of these spy drones presently mandates that the secretary of defense personally sign off on all such use. The policy provides that unless the law allows such surveillance, the drones may not spy on U.S. persons.

Apparently, not all requests for using drones to conduct surveillance were approved. The report cites an unnamed mayor of an unnamed city who actually asked the Marine Corps to use a drone to locate potholes. The Marines declined to do so, remarking it “did not make operational sense.”

While the use of these drones over U.S. soil has been for benign purposes (as far as we know), it is quite clear that the precedent has been set for the expansion of their use. As the report itself states, there is an “appetite” to use these drones increasingly for domestic purposes.

## **Report Claims the Fed Owns the World’s Largest Cache of Gold**

Gold is valuable because it is rare and has properties that make it desirable. And according to a recently published report, it just got a whole lot rarer thanks to a buying spree by the world’s central banks.

In its latest survey of the gold market, published March 11, the World Gold Council reports that central banks bought 336.2 tons of gold in the second half of 2015, up from the 252.1 tons purchased in the first half of last year and the 308.8 tons of gold they bought in the second half of 2014. “Central banks added to their gold reserves with renewed vigor in the second half of 2015, accelerating their purchasing programs as diversification of foreign reserves remained a top priority,” the council explains in its summary of the report.

According to the figures published by the World Gold Council, the United States’ central bank — known as the Federal Reserve — has 8,133.5 tons of gold stored... somewhere. This places the United States at the top for gold reserves. Countries that made up the rest of the “top ten” list are (in descending order): Germany, Italy, France, China, Russia, Switzerland, Japan, Netherlands, and India.

However, there are many who claim that the Federal Reserve doesn’t want a proper audit because the gold is not there, at least not all of it. Some groups believe that as part of its effort to manipulate the economy, the Federal Reserve has sold the gold. “The gold market is being manipulated by the Fed,” says Gold Anti-Trust Action Committee spokesman Chris Powell. “It’s involved in gold swap agreements with foreign banks. Gold is a major determinant of interest rates.” An audit would answer this crucial question. Perhaps it’s time to force open the 22-ton door that stands between our alleged gold reserves and the eyes of our elected representatives.

## **Feds Enlist Schools in War on “Extremist” Children**

The Obama administration is asking schoolteachers to start spying on American students so “extremists” can be reported to the FBI and other law-enforcement agencies. Among others in the federal government’s cross hairs: pro-life activists, anarchists, environmentalists, animal-rights



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activists, Muslims, religious students critical of “Western corruption,” constitutionalists, and even children who simply criticize or question authorities too much.

In an unclassified document from January 2016, about “preventing violent extremism in schools,” the FBI comes across as paranoiacs imagining that there are “extremist” children hiding under every bed. “High school students are ideal targets for recruitment by violent extremists seeking support for their radical ideologies,” claims the agency, which has become increasingly politicized under the Obama administration. “High schools must remain vigilant in educating their students about catalysts that drive violent extremism and the potential consequences of embracing extremist beliefs.” It claims there is a “very fine line” between protected speech and thought crimes.

When students do display views and attitudes the Obama administration dislikes, the FBI calls on schools to create “intervention” plans in conjunction with federal and state agencies. “An intervention cadre should contain professionals from the local community representing multiple disciplines such as mental health, social workers, law enforcement, school resource officers, faith-based organizations, and/or crisis intervention teams,” the document states. Schools should also report children to law enforcement.

The news that the FBI was conscripting teachers in their hunt for “extremist” children made headlines worldwide. In the United States, across media outlets ranging from Alternet on the far-left to alternative liberty-minded sources such as Infowars, commentators slammed the FBI’s scheme as an assault on civil liberties and common sense. Even media outlets backed and controlled by authoritarian-minded governments — Kremlin-run news services, for example, and even media controlled by Iran’s mullahs — seized on the document to paint the U.S. government as increasingly unhinged and totalitarian.

Schools and all Americans should reject the Obama administration’s fear mongering and extremism. Parents and concerned citizens should work to educate others about the dangers of totalitarian government.



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