



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on March 10, 2014

Is CIA Spying on Senate Intelligence Committee?

Colorado Senator Mark Udall charged in a March 4 [letter](#) to President Obama that the CIA has engaged in “unprecedented action against” the Senate Select Intelligence Committee, actions which the Colorado Democrat found “to be incredibly troubling for the Committee’s oversight responsibilities and for our democracy.”

Among the CIA’s actions against the American Republic, Udall implies that the CIA had been “posing impediments and obstacles” to the oversight responsibilities of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, particularly regarding the CIA’s secret torture prisons used primarily during the Bush era.

In the letter, Udall did not specify what “unprecedented action” the CIA had undertaken, or what “impediments and obstacles” the agency had placed to stifle congressional oversight. But [according to the McClatchy](#) wire service, this may include the CIA spying on the Senate Select Intelligence Committee. McClatchy reported on March 4 that the CIA’s general counsel has opened up an investigation on the matter.

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Publicly, the CIA has kept up a vaguely uncooperative front that has claimed no wrongdoing. CIA director John Brennan wrote a [one-paragraph reply](#) to Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) back on February 3 in response to Wyden’s inquiry into whether the federal criminal statute prohibiting wiretapping applied to the CIA. It does, Brennan wrote, but “The Act, however, expressly, ‘does not prohibit any lawfully authorized investigative, protective, or intelligence activity ... of an intelligence agency of the United States.’”

Udall’s letter to President Obama was primarily a plea to declassify information in the Senate study. “It is my belief that the declassification of the Committee Study is of paramount importance and that decisions about what should or should not be declassified regarding this issue should not be delegated to the CIA, but directly handled by the White House.”

Udall charged the CIA with misleading the American public with respect to the abuses: “The significant amount of information on the CIA’s detention and interrogation program that has been declassified and released to the American public is misleading and inaccurate.... These inaccuracies are detailed in the 6,300-page Committee Study — and corroborated in part by the CIA’s own internal review of the CIA’s program.” Udall cited “troubling discrepancies” between the CIA’s public pronouncements on the secret torture prisons, its representations to the Senate Intelligence Committee, and the CIA’s own internal review of the program. “The CIA has recently taken unprecedented action against the Committee in relation to the internal CIA review, and I find these actions to be incredibly troubling for the Committee’s oversight responsibilities and for our democracy.”





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According to the *New York Times* for March 4, the still-classified Senate report on CIA prisons prepared nearly a year and a half ago is damning of CIA management. “People who have read the study said it is a withering indictment of the program and details many instances when C.I.A. officials misled Congress, the White House and the public about the value of the agency’s brutal interrogation methods, including waterboarding.”

Udall’s charge about “unprecedented activity” on the part of the CIA is particularly severe, since the CIA has committed a wide range of abuses against human rights and the Constitution since its creation in 1947. Indeed, the CIA was part of the 1971 “Huston Plan” to initiate wide-ranging surveillance of American citizens. And by 1971 it had already done so for more than a decade under the agency’s Operation Chaos.

Ironically, the surveillance of American citizens under Operation Chaos was managed by then-Director of Counterintelligence James J. Angleton, who also cheered one of the CIA’s first applications of torture in the case of Soviet defector Yuri Nosenko. Nosenko underwent [five years of torture \(including a near-death application of LSD\)](#) after his 1964 defection because Angleton had wrongly fingered him as a double agent.

The hyper-secrecy of America’s intelligence agencies in their attempt to cover up their abused and attacks against the U.S. Constitution — and the slavish loyalty of presidents to these agencies’ coverups — are nothing new. The Ford administration did everything it could to keep secret the abuses by the CIA, NSA, and FBI. Then-Senator Walter Mondale (D-Minn.) [noted in the testimony](#) on declassifying the NSA’s Operation SHAMROCK during the Church Committee hearings back in the 1970s: “Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to comment briefly on what I thought I heard to be the argument, that somehow the classification and determination of the executive department should govern how this committee decides to release or not to release information to the public. I do not think we can accept that definition for a moment. If we do, I think we are no longer a coequal branch of Government.”

Mondale, who went on to become Jimmy Carter’s vice president, had echoed sentiments in line with the views of America’s Founding Fathers. Edward Livingston [observed](#) in his 1823 report on the Louisiana criminal code: “No nation ever yet found any inconvenience from too close an inspection into the conduct of its officers, but many have been brought to ruin and reduced to slavery by suffering gradual impositions and abuses which were imperceptible, only because the means to publicity had not been secured.”



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