

## **“Active Measures”; or, How a KGB Spymaster Made Good in Post-9/11 America**

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In August of 2003, a rather extraordinary event went largely unnoticed by an American news media transfixed by escalating violence in postwar Iraq and the domestic terrorist warnings issued by the new Department of Homeland Security. Oleg Kalugin, the former head of KGB operations in the United States, an acknowledged handler of Cold War spies, and a key player in the four-decades-long covert war between the CIA and KGB, was granted U.S. citizenship.<sup>1</sup> Unlike most immigrants to the United States, Kalugin’s newly professed “love of America” thus comes at the end of a career explicitly devoted to overthrowing the government. His 1994 autobiography details an energetic career of recruiting U.S. spies, directing espionage activities against the United States, managing anti-American propaganda campaigns around the world, and participating in at least one political assassination involving a poison-tipped umbrella.<sup>2</sup> Given the number of recent high-profile cases in which merely the appearance of espionage has accelerated the classification of government information and the lockdown of U.S. facilities, Kalugin’s new legal status makes for a provocative post-Cold War development.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the lack of widespread media coverage of his story seems remarkable in a country fascinated with espionage that is also at war.

What intrigues me most about Citizen Kalugin’s recent career, however, is what it reveals about the ongoing transformation of the United States from a coun-



**Figure 1. Oleg Kalugin giving a tour of KGB espionage sites in Washington, DC.**

**Photograph by the author**

tercommunist to a counterterrorist state. Kalugin's shift from anti-American KGB agent to pro-American celebrity spy participant, I believe, in a larger domestic project to recalibrate historical memory of the Cold War in order to enable a specific vision of American power in the twenty-first century. Specifically, the Cold War no longer constitutes an episode in U.S. history from which we all narrowly escaped, but rather provides the structural model for how to wage an unending global war founded in secrecy and covert action.

### **From Russia, with Love**

I first encountered Oleg Kalugin on a bus tour of Washington, DC, in July 2003 (fig. 1). Teamed with Connie Allen, a former U.S. Army counterintelligence special agent, Kalugin was on board to provide tourists, ex-military personnel, former members of the security state, and at least one anthropologist with a tour of the U.S. capital. The presence of retired (counter)intelligence agents from both the United States and the former USSR promised a firsthand look at the covert terms of the Cold War as fought in the nation's capital.

The Centre for Counterintelligence and Security Studies (CI Centre), founded in 1997 by two former FBI counterintelligence agents, was responsible for organizing the tour. The CI Centre is part of an evolving set of private institutions created by former Cold Warriors to capitalize on their expertise, tell their story, and advocate a specific role for spies and counterintelligence in the post-Cold War, post-9/11 world. Allen and Kalugin are both listed as professors at the CI Centre,

which has amassed an impressive array of security experts drawn from the CIA, FBI, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy, the Canadian RCMP, and the KGB. The CI Centre provides training to government agencies and corporations about counterintelligence techniques and offers a variety of espionage-themed travel excursions, including SpyDrives of Washington, DC, and Moscow, a luxury SpyCruise, and a four-star SpyRetreat.

Part autobiography, part historical analysis, part propaganda, the bus tour was designed not only to entertain and educate but, more importantly, to expose a field of invisible yet constant threat and subversion. Kalugin, for instance, who was presented as the proverbial man behind the curtain in advertisements for the tour, was on the bus to share with us some of the covert methods and practices used by Soviet intelligence operations in the United States during the Cold War. Allen, by contrast, offered a historical counternarrative that focused on how domestic intelligence agents had caught spies in America, detailing the damage done by, as she put it, the "traitor bastards" (e.g., John Walker, Aldrich Ames, and Robert Hanssen) who helped the Soviets. Taken together, Allen and Kalugin presented an image of a nation-state under unending assault from spies, saboteurs, and enemy agents. Moreover, their respective narratives highlighted that it has always been, and always will be, this way. The Cold War does not emerge as an exception—a mutation in global affairs caused in large part by the development of thermonuclear weapons—but rather seems part of a seamless history of intelligence gathering, espionage, and the counterpursuit of traitors and spies. The specificity of the Cold War in fact dissolves under the weight of Allen and Kalugin's narrative, becoming simply a distinct configuration of an ongoing battle against the combined assault of subversive agents, foreign and domestic. Counterintelligence and espionage are, for these professionals, a forever project.

The bus tour begins in downtown Washington, DC, where we drive by the offices of the FBI and the State Department while hearing tantalizing tales about compromises and listening devices, packet exchanges and recruitments. Allen points out the Mayflower Hotel where Aldrich Ames received his first payment for spying. Kalugin then shows us his old spy haunts: the Occidental Club on Pennsylvania Avenue, and the National Press Building at the corner of Fourteenth and F Streets. He tells us a story about electronically intercepting a phone call between then secretary of state Henry Kissinger and his wife in which Kissinger repeatedly asks his wife for reassurance about how good he looks on television. Kalugin tells us that the information, though strategically useless, was nonetheless sent right to the top of the KGB to demonstrate the degree to which Soviet spies had penetrated U.S. institutions. The intimacy of the Cold War struggle becomes revealed here in the everyday details of surveillance, recruitments, and counterespionage.

Moving into Georgetown, we stop in front of seemingly innocent restaurants, homes, and side streets. We hear about covert meetings between "handlers" (man-

**Figure 2.** Site of the U.S. Postal Service mailbox in Georgetown used by Aldrich Ames to send signals to his Soviet handlers. Photograph by the author



agers) and their “assets” (spies) while looking for “dead drops” (information drops) and “signal sites” (covert messages). At Chadwick’s pub on K Street, where I like the burgers, we learn that Aldrich Ames sold the names of scores of CIA and FBI assets over a meal (leading to the prompt execution of several individuals within the USSR). We stop in front of Au Pied de Cochon, the French bistro where KGB defector Vitaly Yurchenko gave his CIA handlers the slip in 1985. We drive by Alger Hiss’s house, and then stop at Thirty-seventh and R Street in front of a blue U.S. Postal Service mailbox (fig. 2) used by Aldrich Ames as a signal site for communication with his Soviet handler. We learn that the mailbox is a new one, the original now housed in the International Spy Museum, a hugely popular institution that opened in downtown DC in 2002 with Kalugin sitting on the board of directors.

Despite its appeals to contemporary cloak-and-dagger intrigue, much of the tour focuses on the trade in secrets during World War II, a time when the United States and Soviet Union actually collaborated as allies. This is because it is the most publicly documented era of spying, thanks in part to the declassification of the Venona transcripts in 1995.<sup>4</sup> This means that much of the content of our tour took place decades before our tour guides entered into the (counter)intelligence game. The slippages that begin to emerge in their presentation over expertise, historical context, and firsthand knowledge are, however, irrelevant to the larger mission of the tour—that of documenting threat and vulnerability on an invisible but totalizing scale. Given this ideological project, much of the tour appears, nonetheless, anticlimactic: after all, the stuff of spying is not rooted in architecture but information, and the act of spying is ultimately not something you can document for a



tourist audience from the comfort of an air-conditioned bus. We stop, for example, in front of public parks in DC and are informed about the various covert conversations, exchanges, and recruitments that took place in their open spaces. The empty park bench (fig. 3), in fact, becomes a prime site of espionage in the tour, making the claims that spying can take place anywhere, while proliferating the point to near absurdity.

Allen and Kalugin’s narrative of constant vulnerability and threat falters most when we arrive at the Soviet (now Russian) embassy (fig. 4). Built in the 1980s on one of the highest peaks in the District, we learn that the embassy offered a perfect site for Soviet electronic surveillance of the nation’s capital. The U.S. embassy in Moscow, built at the same time, was famously compromised by KGB electronic devices; as Kalugin put it, “the entire building was a transmitter,” leading to one of the most contentious international incidents of the late Cold War. We learn, however, that the United States was not so naive. Allen informs us that superspy Robert Hanssen told the Russians about one of the most secretive projects of the Cold War: the construction of a tunnel underneath the Soviet embassy in Washington, DC, allowing U.S. agents to place taps on the phone lines and install other information-gathering technologies. Within the intelligence community, rumor has it that privileged members of Congress would get tours of this several-hundred-million-dollar operation to eavesdrop on Soviet conversations and witness America’s Cold War tax dollars at work.

For the first time on the tour, the United States is presented not as a victim of espionage but as one of its many practitioners. But it is also the last. No one mentions again the role of espionage, misinformation, and spying in U.S. foreign



**Figure 3.** Park bench in Washington, DC; possible espionage site. Photograph by the author



**Figure 4. The former Soviet (now Russian) embassy in Washington, DC.**

**Photograph by the author**

and domestic policy on the SpyDrive. The covert U.S. actions in Iran, Afghanistan, Guatemala, and Chile, for example, go unmentioned. Similarly, there is no mention of the revelations in the Church and Pike Committee hearings of the mid-1970s, which led to new laws regulating the domestic power of the CIA and FBI.<sup>5</sup> We hear nothing about the scale of U.S. intelligence gathering on U.S. citizens, the secret program to read citizens' mail, the FBI harassment of civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., or the infiltration of activist groups like the Black Panthers and the American Indian Movement by covert U.S. agents.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the McCarthy era is not mentioned until the end of the bus ride, when I have the following exchange with Allen and Kalugin. "I have to ask," I say, "how do you both now see the McCarthy period—looking at it from a contemporary perspective with the end of the Cold War?" Allen responds:

We always say that McCarthy was right for the wrong reasons. We certainly had the penetration [by a foreign intelligence service]. He just didn't know why we had the penetration. It was an unfortunate time, where people got wrapped up in something that was sometimes beyond their control. There were a lot of allegations made that were never proven, and a lot of people suffered. But at the same time, there were people denounced as communists who were communists and were also spies, and got away with it as well. It was just a very difficult period of time for us. We hope we have learned as a society, at many levels, about that kind of thing. Oleg would you like to respond?

Kalugin then offers the following perspective:

It is not an easy question to answer. From the standpoint of America's democracy it was an anomaly. It was a distortion of American values. That's what McCarthy means to me, absolutely nothing other than a distortion. On the other hand, it alerted the United States, and particularly the government of the United States, to some of the dangers that they either ignored or did not understand. So there was a value: as a result of McCarthy's attacks on America's democracy, the U.S. had to take measures to purge its institutions from potential risks. And in that sense, well, there was some progress made. So it was not just one line—either very good or very bad. It was both. Well, the Cold War is over, and hopefully we will never experience McCarthy or anything of that kind again in our lives.

In her account, Allen presents the McCarthy period as ultimately a problem of professional expertise. The senator had identified the problem correctly but simply did not know the counterintelligence trade. The unresolved aspect of her narrative is drawn not only from the damage done to innocents but also to the spies that got away with it. But the lack of commentary here on abuses of power within the U.S. (counter)intelligence community is telling, especially in our contemporary moment in which the USA PATRIOT Act revisits most of the concerns of the McCarthy period about civil rights within a national security state. The call by these counterintelligence experts to learn from the past is, thus, made impossible by their strategic avoidance of it. But then again, to acknowledge the U.S. security scandals of the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, or 1990s would be also to invite questions about the status of intelligence operations under the so-called war on terror, which might undermine the value of the renewed counterintelligence project stressed so explicitly at each step in the tour.

Kalugin's narrative is even more surprising in that he does not gloat over the fear of the communists in 1950s America, or tell stories about how McCarthy's theatrics played in the Kremlin—no, he speaks as an American. This might be simply amusing if Kalugin's role in contemporary American political culture were more neutral. But Kalugin's immediate value in the United States rests on his ability to leverage his résumé as a KGB spymaster in order to validate a specific narrative of the Cold War for an American security audience. His version of the Cold War confirms, rather than complicates, American perceptions of the Soviet Union, thus enabling a purification of history in the midst of the call for a resurgent U.S. counterintelligence mission in the twenty-first century. The SpyDrive tour, while entertaining and led by highly charming and polished professionals, is in this regard not history at all; it is public relations. More precisely, it is what Kalugin calls "active measures."

**KGB 101**

My second encounter with Oleg Kalugin came a week later at the International Spy Museum, which opened in July 2002 just a few blocks from the Mall. The museum has become one of the most popular tourist venues in Washington, smashing all box-office expectations during its first year of operation. Founded by former members of the intelligence community, the International Spy Museum offers an innovative answer to the problem of commemorating a covert war. Unlike previous generations of soldiers, who could expect national recognition on Veterans Day, as well as monuments to their bravery installed in public spaces across the country, Cold Warriors were left in the dark in the 1990s. Deprived of a victory parade—a moment of national celebration and recognition for “winning” the longest war in U.S. history—Cold Warriors are also not likely to receive a memorial on the Mall in Washington commemorating their service and sacrifice to the nation. Indeed, because the vast Cold War security apparatus remains intact and still grounded in secrecy, the contribution of America’s spymasters is likely never to be officially acknowledged or publicly remembered. At the International Spy Museum, the intelligence community gets its space near the Mall, but it does so on completely privatized terms. The purpose of the museum is simple: to communicate the huge contributions that spooks have made to the United States. In doing so, the International Spy Museum capitalizes on the popular fascination with spies both for profit and for the good of the security state. It is a history museum, war memorial, and recruiting center all in one; it is both an effort to tell the covert story of the nation and an explicit attempt to reproduce a new generation of intelligence specialists (see fig. 5).

On entering the exhibit space, for example, one is asked immediately to select a new identity and “cover story,” allowing visitors to enter the exhibits literally as undercover agents. A melodramatic film presentation then lays out the risks of spying and asks each audience member directly, “Do you have what it takes to be a spy?” The subsequent exhibits present the history of spy culture through a complex blurring of historical fact and popular fantasy—James Bond’s Aston-Martin (complete with machine-gun headlights) is on display, as are images of television spies like Mrs. Peel from *The Avengers* and Maxwell Smart from *Get Smart*. These fictional icons are blended with artifacts and stories from World War II and the Cold War espionage trade: visitors can inspect listening devices used by both the CIA and KGB, Minox spy cameras, and weapons disguised as ordinary household items (a lipstick gun!), as well as view exhibits on covert communications, code breaking, and surveillance techniques (fig. 6). The museum is designed like a maze, forcing visitors through a historical survey of spying dating back to biblical times before providing access to exhibits on the Cold War. A small exhibit on the McCarthy period acknowledges that innocent people were accused of being spies, but the intelligence reforms of the 1970s, and the decision-making processes behind these reforms, are not mentioned in any of the museum’s exhibit texts. The final exhibit spaces then



become deadly serious, detailing the crimes and captures of Aldrich Ames and Robert Hanssen, before ending with a chilling film that argues that future terrorist attacks, like those on September 11, 2001, can only be prevented with a rejuvenated and globally aggressive covert intelligence campaign. The museum that begins with spying presented as a game, supported by nostalgic images from Cold War popular culture, ends with a ruthless contemporary pitch for expanding intelligence budgets to meet an expanding global mission. When the lights come up, visitors are then delivered directly into a large, and extremely well-stocked, espionage-themed gift shop.

On this particular July night in 2003, however, I visit the International Spy Museum not to see the exhibits but to hear a two-part lecture by Kalugin on the Soviet security state titled, simply, “KGB 101.” Speaking to a packed house, Kalugin is introduced by the director of the museum (a thirty-five-year CIA veteran) as well as by the president of the CI Centre (a twenty-five-year FBI counterintelligence man), which cosponsored the talk. Kalugin’s impressive résumé is the immediate focus of the presentation. We learn via a PowerPoint presentation, choreographed to Stalin’s national anthem, that Kalugin was the youngest officer in KGB history to attain the rank of general. His successful career of espionage in the United States



Figure 5. *School for Spies* exhibit. Photograph courtesy of International Spy Museum

**Figure 6.** Lipstick gun.  
 Photograph courtesy of  
 International Spy Museum



included recruiting John Walker, the U.S. Navy intelligence officer alleged to have given the Soviets the codes for all Pacific communications, including the nuclear launch commands for U.S. submarines. We learn that Kalugin first arrived in the United States in 1959 as a twenty-four-year-old KGB officer and Fulbright exchange student. His success in recruiting spies, as well as his skill in spreading Soviet misinformation and propaganda, took him from undercover journalist to acting chief of the Soviet embassy in Washington, DC, and eventually back to the Soviet Union in the 1970s to head the KGB's foreign counterintelligence operation. In his autobiography *The First Directorate* (1994), Kalugin identifies his return to the Soviet Union as politically transformative. Having spent much of his adult life in the United States, Kalugin describes really seeing the Soviet system for the first time as the head of the KGB counterintelligence project, and being shocked by its corruption, cruelty, and inefficiency. By 1990, he had denounced the KGB leadership and was officially stripped of his rank. He was then elected to the Soviet parliament before watching the USSR come apart, and immigrated to the United States in 1995. In 2002, Russian president Vladimir Putin ("my former KGB subordinate," as Kalugin reminds us) convicted Kalugin of treason in absentia, citing evidence from Kalugin's 1994 autobiography. If Kalugin were ever to return to Russia, he would face immediate arrest and quite likely a long prison sentence.

Kalugin begins his KGB 101 lecture by describing himself as a true believer in the Soviet system, a person who genuinely believed that communism would

deliver "paradise on earth in our lifetime." He underscores that he has never been a defector, presenting himself more as a disillusioned believer living on the other side of history. Indeed, his narrative of professional accomplishment and moral conviction within the KGB, followed by resistance to the Soviet system, makes for an impeccable résumé for a person wishing to be embraced by the U.S. intelligence community. At each step, Kalugin counterbalances historical evidence of his professional duplicity with overtures to his authentic patriotism and personal character. His charm lies in precisely the ability to be pitch perfect in his delivery, with just the right touches of humor and gravitas to deflect attention away from the sordid business of professional lying and espionage.

The most interesting aspect of Kalugin's talk is his discussion of the KGB's training program for its intelligence agents. Years of language training in local dialects, as well as a focus on the philosophy and literature of target countries, formed the center of the program. It was training designed to enable small talk, allowing the recruitment of potential assets to be on casual and local terms. The United States, in this regard, was not just Kalugin's assignment; it was always a serious object of study, one that he embraced with obvious enthusiasm. He notes that as a young KGB trainee, he had access to the world's news media and literature, texts denied to citizens of the USSR. It is here that one can sense the slow seduction the United States held for Kalugin. In his autobiography, he describes arriving in Manhattan and being shocked both by the size and texture of the city (its architecture, arts, and the freedom of movement of its citizens), as well as by the extreme poverty that seemed unaddressed by the state.

Kalugin follows these personal epiphanies with a detailed description of the organization of the Soviet security state, emphasizing the infiltration of the KGB into every institution of Soviet society. He states that at the height of the Cold War there were nearly five hundred thousand KGB agents in Russia, in stark contrast to the tens of thousands of FBI and CIA agents in the United States. A discussion of the purges within Soviet society, the mass murders, leads into a discussion of KGB techniques for dealing with internal dissent. Kalugin describes several episodes in which the KGB detonated a bomb in the name of a dissent group to enable violent regional reprisals by the state. He describes the eighty-six fake CIA groups the KGB formed in Afghanistan in the 1980s to draw out the Mujahideen fighters for execution. The foreign and domestic duplicity of the KGB within Soviet society was matched by KGB propaganda efforts against the United States. Kalugin describes organizing mass protests of U.S. policies overseas—stating that for a mere five thousand dollars one could manufacture tens of thousands of protestors in front of the U.S. embassy in India, for example—demonstrating how easily one could create an international anti-American incident during the Cold War. Here, Kalugin describes the active measures taken to defeat the West:

At the heart and soul of Soviet intelligence operations were active measures aimed at, well, the eventual destruction of the Western societies—through disinformation, through subversive actions, through guerilla warfare, through terrorism, through civil war, whatever. That was part of the program. Let me give us some innocuous figures from the Russian KGB top-secret report for 1981. In that year alone, the KGB reported to the Party Central Committee, to Mr. Brezhnev, that it financed, produced, or in one way or another, was involved in the publication of 70 books and brochures worldwide, 66 documentary and feature films worldwide, 4,800 articles published in various newspapers worldwide, 3,000 conferences and exhibitions worldwide, 1,500 radio and television programs, and finally, 170,000 lectures—like the one I am delivering tonight—across the county, across the world. That was the total of KGB active measures that year.

A week earlier, on the SpyDrive, Kalugin had made a similar point directed specifically at the United States:

We launched a major liberal magazine in New York City. Two Nobel laureates were on our editorial board—Linus Pauling and Bertrand Russell. None of them knew that the magazine was funded by the KGB, that the editor was a KGB guy. And then one day you open the *New York Times* and find an advertisement saying, “Down with the United States’ involvement in Vietnam. It is high time to withdraw U.S. troops—it is a shame and a disgrace,” signed by hundreds of luminaries in science and the arts. They did not know that I paid \$10,000 for that advertisement, and that they were dupes in a sense.

As tantalizing as these personal stories are, they come mixed with wild pronouncements unsupported by any firsthand evidence. Kalugin tells us, for example, that J. Robert Oppenheimer and Enrico Fermi were Soviet agents and that they provided secrets to the USSR about how to build an atomic bomb. We hear that it was the KGB that started the rumors that the CIA was involved in the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and it was the KGB that was responsible for spreading the idea that J. Edgar Hoover was a closeted transvestite. We are told that, indeed, it was Ronald Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative that broke the will of the Soviet state and precipitated the end of the Cold War. In short, we learn from Kalugin that the KGB was precisely as monstrous as the United States always said it was, that the domestic critique of the U.S. intelligence service during the Cold War was largely the product of the KGB’s active measures, and that it was only the confrontational toughness of the U.S. military state that defeated the Soviet Union.

Thus Kalugin confirms exactly—without deviation—the narrative U.S. Cold Warriors produced about the Soviet Union during the Cold War. He does not challenge their assumptions; instead, he reinforces them. And in so doing, he provides

the rationale for dismissing all (post-)Cold War critique in the United States as simply a product of KGB machinations. We hear nothing, for example, about how U.S. espionage campaigns were interpreted by the KGB, or about the errors made by the CIA in its estimates of Soviet capabilities, from the famous bomber and missile gaps of the early Cold War to the agency's inability to even imagine the end of the USSR in the 1980s. Indeed, the heroes of the story are implicitly the U.S. intelligence officers who, outnumbered and outmanned, were able to beat the KGB at its own game. Kalugin concludes by stating that if the United States had installed human agents in Saddam Hussein's Iraq, president George W. Bush would not have had to go to war with Iraq, arguing that a single bullet could have prevented the U.S. invasion in 2003. Thus Kalugin ends his talk with an explicit call for U.S. sponsored espionage and assassination. In this way, Kalugin's "KGB 101" lecture primarily offers a narrative useful to past and present U.S. intelligence officers. It purifies the past by documenting the brutality and active measures of the Soviet regime and dismisses many of the internal criticisms of the FBI and CIA as Soviet propaganda. It also argues for the centrality of spooks in the modern world, making members of the intelligence community the true brokers of both history and security. Kalugin's own ideological makeover, therefore, enables a more profound ideological makeover of the U.S. security state as covert agent.

The success of this ideological program was brought home to me later in the year, when I was conducting archival research on the U.S. nuclear program at several government institutions near the West Coast. In Las Vegas, I spoke to a career Nuclear Test Site (NTS) worker who brought up the large-scale antinuclear protests staged at the site through the 1980s. These protests, which involved a vast range of groups from the environmental, peace, antinuclear, and Native American activist communities, formed part of a global effort to confront the terms of the escalating Cold War arms race and to recognize its foreign and domestic costs.<sup>7</sup> Stating baldly that the protests were funded by the Soviets, this NTS worker dismissed the activists' political critique of environmental contamination and militarism within the U.S. nuclear program. He then asked if, by chance, I had ever heard of a KGB spymaster named Oleg Kalugin. Kalugin, the life-long student of America, has identified and understood his audience all too well and delivered precisely the narrative they needed at this historical moment.

The intelligence community has always argued that only its failures become part of the public record: the Iran-Contra affair; Soviet spies Walker, Ames, and Hanssen; or the successful terrorist attacks on Washington, DC, and New York in 2001. However, now that same professional community has some very public, and in some cases very profitable, institutions to spread the good word about U.S. (counter)intelligence. They have their own privately held museum near the Mall (the International Spy Museum); they have a new pedagogical and lobbying institu-



tion (the CI Centre), and they have their man from Moscow in America to confirm their version of history. Untouched by historical review or political critique, Kalugin and the institutions that engage him are now reconfiguring the story of the Cold War in order to reinvent the national security state for the twenty-first century on covert, explicitly antidemocratic, terms.

### **What Is “New” about the New Normal?**

In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, DC, political commentators in the United States eagerly identified 9/11 as the start of a new American epoch, one that replaced the inherited logics about security and global order gained from the forty-plus years of the Cold War with new understandings of American vulnerability and power. But even as policy changes—from the USA PATRIOT Act to the execution of preemptive war in Iraq—seem to support the claim that the United States has made a radical break with its past, the terms and logics of the war on terror remain understandable precisely because they are so familiar. Within weeks of the attacks, Vice President Dick Cheney, for example, declared the new security measures (already codified in the USA PATRIOT Act) as the “new normal,” mobilizing to solidify the terms of the counterterrorist state for the foreseeable future. But what is actually new about the new normal? When were Americans ever presented with a global U.S. military campaign—fought largely on covert terms—that did not merge an apocalyptic notion of everyday domestic threat with an expansive use of government secrecy and a demand for ever-increasing military budgets? The structural logic of total war that defined the Cold War remains the defining principle of American security policy, linking the foreign and the domestic under a highly reproducible logic of imminent threat. From this perspective, the war on terror is a global project that seeks to perfect, rather than replace, the structural logics of the Cold War.

This regeneration of the covert security state was well underway before the attacks of September 11, 2001. Here, we might follow Kalugin’s lead and interrogate the active measures of the U.S. security state. Within weeks of the 9/11 attacks, President Bush sent his advisor Karl Rove out to meet with Hollywood executives and producers to discuss the production of patriotic entertainment, vehicles that would communicate, as well as promote, the risks and dangers of the war on terror for the American public.<sup>8</sup> But the intelligence community was already way ahead of him, having sent representatives out to Hollywood since the mid-1990s to provide technical advice. The results were spectacular: already in production as the 9/11 attacks occurred were three television shows about terrorism and the heroic exploits of the CIA/FBI to combat it: CBS had *The Agency*, ABC had *Alias*, and FOX had *24*. The CI Centre, also an energetic consultant to the entertainment industry, has participated in a British television production called *MI6* and a television miniseries

about the Robert Hanssen case. And this year we will see the network television arrival of *D.H.S.: The Series*—an action drama about homeland security that has the formal backing of the Department of Homeland Security. On the series Web site ([www.dhs.tv](http://www.dhs.tv)) one finds a sepia-toned image of President George W. Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, heads bowed in prayer, with the words “How do we know that we are truly safe?” superimposed over their image. Cabinet members and homeland security personnel have been promised cameos in the television series, yet again blurring the distinction between fiction and reality also evidenced at the International Spy Museum. What links these productions is not only their constant recitation of vulnerability and threat but also the assumption that the only way of producing security in such a climate comes through state-sponsored covert action.

What we are seeing in the United States right now is not only a regeneration of a security state founded in secrecy and covert action but also a rescripting of history to enable that mission. The newness of the war on terror is primarily an invention, a means of separating it ideologically from the past in order to force the dialogue away from the known costs and consequences of total war. The goal of this strategy is twofold: First, to enable a national regeneration through violence, allowing the war on terror to become an ideological construct based on, but publicly disconnected from, past U.S. policy; and second, to make it all but impossible for citizens to argue for less militarism or to demand from officials a basic definition for the concept of security that they so pervasively evoke. Linked to this rejuvenation of the covert security state is, thus, an implicit argument that democratic process and security are ultimately incompatible. This is an old Cold War line, used for generations to validate both an expansion of the military state and an increasing manipulation of public media to produce consent.<sup>9</sup> One way to resist the curtailing of civil liberties, the aggressive global military campaign, and the ever-expanding use of state secrecy to prevent debate and avoid international law is to historicize these very logics as long-standing American Cold War strategies. In order to understand the new normal, it may well be that we need to shed more light on the terms, costs, successes, and failures of the Cold War security state. Actively engaging the historical archive may well be the best tool today for showing the consequences of unrestrained American power and for demonstrating the foreign and domestic costs of allowing officials to define the United States as a counterterrorist state.

## Notes

1. See David Stout, “Former Top Russian Spy Pledges New Allegiance,” *New York Times*, August 24, 2003.
2. Oleg Kalugin with Fen Montaigne, *The First Directorate: My Thirty-Two Years of Intelligence and Espionage against the West* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1994).

3. See, for example, Joseph Masco, "Lie Detectors: On Secrets and Hypersecurity in Los Alamos," *Public Culture* 14 (2002): 441–67.
4. John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale Notebene, 1999).
5. The fourteen volumes of the Church Committee's 1970s investigation into the CIA and FBI are available at the Assassination Archives and Research Center, [www.aarclibrary.org/publib/church/reports/contents.htm](http://www.aarclibrary.org/publib/church/reports/contents.htm) (accessed September 6, 2004). See also Lawrence E. Walsh, "Final Report of the Independent Counsel for Iran/Contra Matters," Federation of American Scientists, [www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/walsh/](http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/walsh/) (accessed September 6, 2004).
6. See also Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars against Domestic Dissent* (Boston: South End, 2002); and Kathryn S. Olmsted, *Challenging the Secret Government: The Post-Watergate Investigations of the CIA and FBI* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Finally, a useful text for evaluating the social and political consequences of secrecy during the Cold War is Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Secrecy: The American Experience* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).
7. For a detailed analysis of the complexity and history of the antinuclear movement, see Lawrence S. Wittner's three-volume history: *One World or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement through 1953* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993); *Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement 1954–1970* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997); and *Toward Abolition: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement 1971 to the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).
8. See Rick Lyman, "Hollywood Discusses Role in War Effort," *New York Times*, November 12, 2001.
9. See, for example, the arguments about the problem of public dissent raised in "NSC 68: United States Objective and Programs for National Security (April 14, 1950)," a core planning document of the Cold War; reprinted in Ernest R. May, *American Cold War Strategy: Interpreting NSC 68* (New York: St. Martin's, 1993). See also Olmsted, *Challenging the Secret Government*, on U.S. media coverage of intelligence activities during the Cold War.