

INTELLIGENCE AIDE FLYNN RE MCCHRYSTAL: “EVERYONE HAS A DARK SIDE”

[youtube]<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WX0MPcN08Zc>[/youtube]

As Marcy pointed out yesterday, Rolling Stone has published an excerpt from Michael Hastings' new book *The Operators*. As she predicted, I am unable to refrain from commenting on it. The polarizing figure of Stanley McChrystal has always intrigued me. The way that McChrystal's "Pope" persona was embraced by a large portion of the press never made sense to me, given how deeply McChrystal was involved as the primary agent behind the "success" of David Petraeus' brutal night raids and massive detention program in Iraq. For those paying attention, it was known as early as 2006 that McChrystal's JSOC was at the heart of the abuses at Camp Nama and even that he was responsible for preventing the ICRC from visiting the camp.

In preparing for the short passage from Hastings that I want to highlight, it is important to keep in mind that McChrystal's mode of operation when heading JSOC was to bypass both the normal chain of command and Congressional oversight by working directly for Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld. From Jeremy Scahill:

While JSOC has long played a central role in US counterterrorism and covert operations, military and civilian officials who worked at the Defense and State Departments during the Bush administration described in interviews with *The Nation* an extremely cozy relationship that developed between the executive branch (primarily through Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld) and JSOC.

During the Bush era, Special Forces turned into a virtual stand-alone operation that acted outside the military chain of command and in direct coordination with the White House. Throughout the Bush years, it was largely General McChrystal who ran JSOC.

Next, we need to consider the figure of Michael Flynn, whom Hastings quotes. Flynn served under McChrystal in a number of positions related to intelligence gathering. From his biography:

Major General Michael T. Flynn assumed duties as the Chief, CJ2, International Security Assistance Force, with the additional appointment as the CJ2, US Forces – Afghanistan on 15 June 2009. Prior to serving in this capacity, he served as the Director of Intelligence, Joint Staff from 11 July 2008 to 14 June 2009. He also served as the Director of Intelligence, United States Central Command from June 2007 to July 2008 and the Director of Intelligence for Joint Special Operations Command from July 2004 to June 2007, with service in Operations ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) and IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF). Major General Flynn commanded the 111th Military Intelligence Brigade from June 2002 to June 2004. Major General Flynn served as the Assistant Chief of Staff, G2, XVIII Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, North Carolina from June 2001 and the Director of Intelligence, Joint Task Force 180 in Afghanistan until July, 2002.

Both the New York Times and Esquire articles linked above on torture at Camp Nama discuss events primarily from early 2004. From Flynn's biography, that coincides with his duty as heading the 111th Military Intelligence Brigade and being promoted to Director of Intelligence for all of JSOC. Given those roles, it seems impossible that Flynn could have been unaware of

what took place at Camp Nama, as he would have been assessing the information gleaned from interrogations there at the very least. It's likely he spent a lot of time there. From the Esquire article:

To this day, Jeff has no idea of the true names of his superior officers. His supervisor was a colonel who called himself Mike, although Jeff is sure that wasn't his real name.

Perhaps Jeff was mistaken. As Hastings notes, Flynn wasn't always particularly good at mission security:

Living up to his scatterbrained reputation, Flynn accidentally left his e-mail address on the report. He received, he said, "thousands of e-mails" commenting on it.

The final bit of preparation for Flynn's quote is to consider Dick Cheney's famous "dark side" quote. As seen in the trailer above, the quote made its way into being the most enduring catchphrase regarding US torture. Cheney's remarks came on September 16, 2001 on *Meet the Press*:

We also have to work, though, sort of the dark side, if you will. We've got to spend time in the shadows in the intelligence world. A lot of what needs to be done here will have to be done quietly, without any discussion, using sources and methods that are available to our intelligence agencies, if we're going to be successful. That's the world these folks operate in, and so it's going to be vital for us to use any means at our disposal, basically, to achieve our objective.

So now the stage is set. Hastings is sitting around a table at a bar with McChrystal, a

number of McChrystal's subordinates and many of their wives. This is the team that for all intents and purposes has served as Cheney's dark side in carrying out his work "in the shadows of the intelligence world" and Flynn himself has headed much of that intelligence effort. The key segment from the Hastings excerpt:

I didn't want to miss my train. The conversation drifted back to public images and profiles. "Everyone has a dark side," Flynn said, seemingly referring to McChrystal.

At least one other person at the table seemed to take that remark in the same way I do, as a reference to torture:

"Mike, don't tell him that," said Flynn's wife, Lori, sitting across the table.

Sorry Lori, we already know about McChrystal's dark side.

Not everyone agrees with this view of McChrystal and Flynn. Spencer Ackerman has a very different description of when and how these two interacted with Camp Nama:

Although no public investigation has ever been conducted into the abuses at Nama, McChrystal reportedly said "This is how we lose," when he toured the facility for the first time. He assigned his top intelligence officer, then-Brig. Gen. Michael Flynn, to professionalize JSOC interrogations. Flynn reached out to trained interrogators throughout the U.S. bureaucracy and even to around the world to provide instruction.

It appears that the Obama administration shares this more benign view of Flynn, who was promoted to Assistant Director of National Intelligence in October. What does it say about

our country that someone in such a high office operates under the assumption that "Everyone has a dark side", and, from the what can be seen of his record, appears to operate on that side when he feels that it is necessary.