

What if Putin is Telling the Truth?

By F. William Engdahl

May 17, 2015 "Information Clearing House" - "NEO" - On April 26 Russia's main national TV station, Rossiya 1, featured President Vladimir Putin in a documentary to the Russian people on the events of the recent period including the annexation of Crimea, the US coup d'état in Ukraine, and the general state of relations with the United States and the EU. His words were frank. And in the middle of his remarks the Russian former KGB chief dropped a political bombshell that was known by Russian intelligence two decades ago.

Putin stated bluntly that in his view the West would only be content in having a Russia weak, suffering and begging from the West, something clearly the Russian character is not disposed to. Then a short way into his remarks, the Russian President stated for the first time publicly something that Russian intelligence has known for almost two decades but kept silent until now, most probably in hopes of an era of better normalized Russia-US relations.

Putin stated that the terror in Chechnya and in the Russian Caucasus in the early 1990's was actively backed by the CIA and western Intelligence services to deliberately weaken Russia. He noted that the Russian FSB foreign intelligence had documentation of the US covert role without giving details.

What Putin, an intelligence professional of the highest order, only hinted at in his remarks, I have documented in detail from non-Russian sources. The report has enormous implications to reveal to the world the long-standing hidden agenda of influential circles in Washington to destroy Russia as a functioning sovereign state, an agenda which includes the neo-nazi coup d'état in Ukraine and severe financial sanction warfare against Moscow. The following is drawn on my book, *Amerikas' Heilige Krieg*.

CIA's Chechen Wars

Not long after the CIA and Saudi Intelligence-financed Mujahideen had devastated Afghanistan at the end of the 1980's, forcing the exit of the Soviet Army in 1989, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself some months later, the CIA began to look at possible places in the collapsing Soviet Union where their trained "Afghan Arabs" could be redeployed to further destabilize Russian influence over the post-Soviet Eurasian space.

They were called Afghan Arabs because they had been recruited from ultraconservative Wahhabite Sunni Muslims from Saudi Arabia, the Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and elsewhere in the Arab world where the ultra-strict Wahhabite Islam was practiced. They were brought to Afghanistan in the early 1980's by a Saudi CIA recruit who had been sent to Afghanistan named Osama bin Laden.

With the former Soviet Union in total chaos and disarray, George H.W. Bush's Administration decided to "kick 'em when they're down," a sad error. Washington redeployed their Afghan veteran terrorists to bring chaos and destabilize all of Central Asia, even into the Russian Federation itself, then in a deep and traumatic crisis during the economic collapse of the Yeltsin era.

In the early 1990s, Dick Cheney's company, Halliburton, had surveyed the offshore oil potentials of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and the entire Caspian Sea Basin. They estimated the region to be "another Saudi Arabia" worth several trillion dollars on today's market. The US and UK were determined to keep that oil bonanza from Russian control by all means. The first target of Washington was to stage a coup in Azerbaijan against elected president Abulfaz Elchibey to install a President more friendly to a US-controlled Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline, "the world's most political pipeline," bringing Baku oil from Azerbaijan through Georgia to Turkey and the Mediterranean.

At that time, the only existing oil pipeline from Baku was a Soviet era Russian pipeline that ran through the Chechen capital, Grozny, taking Baku oil north via Russia's Dagestan province, and across Chechnya to the Black Sea Russian port of Novorossiysk. The pipeline was the only competition and major obstacle to the very costly alternative route of Washington and the British and US oil majors.

President Bush Sr. gave his old friends at CIA the mandate to destroy that Russian Chechen pipeline and create such chaos in the Caucasus that no Western or Russian company would consider using the Grozny Russian oil pipeline.

Graham E. Fuller, an old colleague of Bush and former Deputy Director of the CIA National Council on Intelligence had been a key architect of the CIA Mujahideen strategy. Fuller described the CIA strategy in the Caucasus in the early 1990s: "The policy of guiding the evolution of Islam and of helping them against our adversaries worked marvelously well in Afghanistan against the Red Army. The same doctrines can still be used to destabilize what remains of Russian power."⁶

The CIA used a dirty tricks veteran, General Richard Secord, for the operation. Secord created a CIA front company, MEGA Oil. Secord had been convicted in the 1980s for his central role in the CIA's Iran-Contra illegal arms and drugs operations.

In 1991 Secord, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, landed in Baku and set up the CIA front company, MEGA Oil. He was a veteran of the CIA covert opium operations in Laos during the Vietnam War. In Azerbaijan, he setup an airline to secretly fly hundreds of bin Laden's al-Qaeda Mujahideen from Afghanistan into Azerbaijan. By 1993, MEGA Oil had recruited and armed 2,000 Mujahideen, converting Baku into a base for Caucasus-wide Mujahideen terrorist operations.

General Secord's covert Mujahideen operation in the Caucasus initiated the military coup that toppled elected president Abulfaz Elchibey that year and installed Heydar Aliyev, a more pliable US puppet. A secret Turkish intelligence report leaked to the Sunday Times of London confirmed that "two petrol giants, BP and Amoco, British and American respectively, which together form the AIOC (Azerbaijan International Oil Consortium), are behind the coup d'état."

Saudi Intelligence head, Turki al-Faisal, arranged that his agent, Osama bin Laden, whom he had sent to Afghanistan at the start of the Afghan war in the early 1980s, would use his Afghan organization Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK) to recruit "Afghan Arabs" for what was rapidly becoming a global Jihad. Bin Laden's mercenaries were used as shock troops by the Pentagon and CIA to coordinate and support Muslim offensives not only Azerbaijan but also in Chechnya and, later, Bosnia.

Bin Laden brought in another Saudi, Ibn al-Khattab, to become Commander, or Emir of Jihadist Mujahideen in Chechnya (sic!) together with Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev. No matter that Ibn al-Khattab was a Saudi Arab who spoke barely a word of Chechen, let alone, Russian. He knew what Russian soldiers looked like and how to kill them.

Chechnya then was traditionally a predominantly Sufi society, a mild apolitical branch of Islam. Yet the increasing infiltration of the well-financed and well-trained US-sponsored Mujahideen terrorists preaching Jihad or Holy War against Russians transformed the initially reformist Chechen resistance movement. They spread al-Qaeda's hardline Islamist ideology across the Caucasus. Under Secord's guidance, Mujahideen terrorist operations had also quickly extended into neighboring Dagestan and Chechnya, turning Baku into a shipping point for Afghan heroin to the Chechen mafia.

From the mid-1990s, bin Laden paid Chechen guerrilla leaders Shamil Basayev and Omar ibn al-Khattab the handsome sum of several million dollars per month, a King's fortune in economically desolate Chechnya in the 1990s, enabling them to sideline the moderate Chechen majority.²¹ US intelligence remained deeply involved in the Chechen conflict until the end of the 1990s. According to Yossef Bodansky, then Director of the US

Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, Washington was actively involved in “yet another anti-Russian jihad, seeking to support and empower the most virulent anti-Western Islamist forces.”

Bodansky revealed the entire CIA Caucasus strategy in detail in his report, stating that US Government officials participated in,

“a formal meeting in Azerbaijan in December 1999 in which specific programs for the training and equipping of Mujahideen from the Caucasus, Central/South Asia and the Arab world were discussed and agreed upon, culminating in Washington’s tacit encouragement of both Muslim allies (mainly Turkey, Jordan and Saudi Arabia) and US ‘private security companies’. . . to assist the Chechens and their Islamist allies to surge in the spring of 2000 and sustain the ensuing Jihad for a long time...Islamist Jihad in the Caucasus as a way to deprive Russia of a viable pipeline route through spiraling violence and terrorism.”

The most intense phase of the Chechen wars wound down in 2000 only after heavy Russian military action defeated the Islamists. It was a pyrrhic victory, costing a massive toll in human life and destruction of entire cities. The exact death toll from the CIA-instigated Chechen conflict is unknown. Unofficial estimates ranged from 25,000 to 50,000 dead or missing, mostly civilians. Russian casualties were near 11,000 according to the Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers.

The Anglo-American oil majors and the CIA’s operatives were happy. They had what they wanted: their Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan oil pipeline, bypassing Russia’s Grozny pipeline.

The Chechen Jihadists, under the Islamic command of Shamil Basayev, continued guerrilla attacks in and outside Chechnya. The CIA had refocused into the Caucasus.

Basayev’s Saudi Connection

Basayev was a key part of the CIA’s Global Jihad. In 1992, he met Saudi terrorist Ibn al-Khattab in Azerbaijan. From Azerbaijan, Ibn al-Khattab brought Basayev to Afghanistan to meet al-Khattab’s ally, fellow-Saudi Osama bin Laden. Ibn al-Khattab’s role was to recruit Chechen Muslims willing to wage Jihad against Russian forces in Chechnya on behalf of the covert CIA strategy of destabilizing post-Soviet Russia and securing British-US control over Caspian energy.

Once back in Chechnya, Basayev and al-Khattab created the International Islamic Brigade (IIB) with Saudi Intelligence money, approved by the CIA and coordinated through the liaison of Saudi Washington Ambassador and Bush family intimate Prince Bandar bin Sultan. Bandar, Saudi Washington Ambassador for more than two decades, was so intimate with the Bush family that George W. Bush referred to the playboy Saudi Ambassador as “Bandar Bush,” a kind of honorary family member.

Basayev and al-Khattab imported fighters from the Saudi fanatical Wahhabite strain of Sunni Islam into Chechnya. Ibn al-Khattab commanded what were called the “Arab Mujahideen in Chechnya,” his own private army of Arabs, Turks, and other foreign fighters. He was also commissioned to set up paramilitary training camps in the Caucasus Mountains of Chechnya that trained Chechens and Muslims from the North Caucasian Russian republics and from Central Asia.

The Saudi and CIA-financed Islamic International Brigade was responsible not only for terror in Chechnya. They carried out the October 2002 Moscow Dubrovka Theatre hostage seizure and the gruesome September 2004 Beslan school massacre. In 2010, the UN Security Council published the following report on al-Khattab and Basayev’s International Islamic Brigade:

Islamic International Brigade (IIB) was listed on 4 March 2003. . . as being associated with Al-Qaida, Usama bin Laden or the Taliban for “participating in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing or perpetrating of acts or activities by, in conjunction with, under the name of, on behalf or in support of” Al-Qaida. . . The Islamic International Brigade (IIB) was founded and led by Shamil Salmanovich Basayev (deceased) and is linked to the Riyadus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs (RSRSBCM). . . and the Special Purpose Islamic Regiment (SPIR). . .

On the evening of 23 October 2002, members of IIB, RSRBCM and SPIR operated jointly to seize over 800 hostages at Moscow's Podshipnikov Zavod (Dubrovka) Theater.

In October 1999, emissaries of Basayev and Al-Khattab traveled to Usama bin Laden's home base in the Afghan province of Kandahar, where Bin Laden agreed to provide substantial military assistance and financial aid, including by making arrangements to send to Chechnya several hundred fighters to fight against Russian troops and perpetrate acts of terrorism. Later that year, Bin Laden sent substantial amounts of money to Basayev, Movsar Barayev (leader of SPIR) and Al-Khattab, which was to be used exclusively for training gunmen, recruiting mercenaries and buying ammunition.

The Afghan-Caucasus Al Qaeda "terrorist railway," financed by Saudi intelligence, had two goals. One was a Saudi goal to spread fanatical Wahhabite Jihad into the Central Asian region of the former Soviet Union. The second was the CIA's agenda of destabilizing a then-collapsing post-Soviet Russian Federation.

Beslan

On September 1, 2004, armed terrorists from Basayev and al-Khattab's IIB took more than 1,100 people as hostages in a siege that included 777 children, and forced them into School Number One (SNO) in Beslan in North Ossetia, the autonomous republic in the North Caucasus of the Russian Federation near to the Georgia border.

On the third day of the hostage crisis, as explosions were heard inside the school, FSB and other elite Russian troops stormed the building. In the end, at least 334 hostages were killed, including 186 children, with a significant number of people injured and reported missing. It became clear afterward that the Russian forces had handled the intervention poorly.

The Washington propaganda machine, from Radio Free Europe to The New York Times and CNN, wasted no time demonizing Putin and Russia for their bad handling of the Beslan crisis rather than focus on the links of Basayev to Al Qaeda and Saudi intelligence. That would have brought the world's attention to the intimate relations between the family of then US President George W. Bush and the Saudi billionaire bin Laden family.

On September 1, 2001, just ten days before the day of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks, Saudi Intelligence head US-educated Prince Turki bin Faisal Al Saud, who had directed Saudi Intelligence since 1977, including through the entire Osama bin Laden Mujahideen operation in Afghanistan and into the Caucasus, abruptly and inexplicably resigned, just days after having accepted a new term as intelligence head from his King. He gave no explanation. He was quickly reposted to London, away from Washington.

The record of the bin Laden-Bush family intimate ties was buried, in fact entirely deleted on "national security" (sic!) grounds in the official US Commission Report on 911. The Saudi background of fourteen of the nineteen alleged 911 terrorists in New York and Washington was also deleted from the US Government's final 911 Commission report, released only in July 2004 by the Bush Administration, almost three years after the events.

Basayev claimed credit for having sent the terrorists to Beslan. His demands had included the complete independence of Chechnya from Russia, something that would have given Washington and the Pentagon an enormous strategic dagger in the southern underbelly of the Russian Federation.

By late 2004, in the aftermath of the tragic Beslan drama, President Vladimir Putin reportedly ordered a secret search and destroy mission by Russian intelligence to hunt and kill key leaders of the Caucasus Mujahideen of Basayev. Al-Khattab had been killed in 2002. The Russian security forces soon discovered that most of the Chechen Afghan Arab terrorists had fled. They had gotten safe haven in Turkey, a NATO member; in Azerbaijan, by then almost a NATO Member; or in Germany, a NATO Member; or in Dubai—one of the closest US Allies in the Arab States, and Qatar—another very close US ally. In other words, the Chechen terrorists were given NATO safe haven.

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