

You know, friends, teaching for many years, I thought it was extremely important to ask students their opinion. In fact, many tests that I gave were simply what is your opinion of such and such. Why is that important? Because it tells us *where we stand*. No some students told me that they always had to agree with their professors in earlier years, and it was hard for me to get it across to them is that what I want is some documentation for why they have the opinion, and some clarity, and you will never be punished for disagreeing with me.

Strange. Many of them didn't believe that, because when I asked them if they had always agree with their teachers in high school in the social sciences, most of the time all hands would go up. So we had to get through that and be able to develop an opinion. Without an opinion, we're like a low-grade computer that has a lot of facts but doesn't know what to do with them. Suppose I say to you: We have been killing children for 26 years in Iraq. The Taliban - we've been fighting them for a while to - that is, after we formed them in Afghanistan. They are now very powerful in Afghanistan.

Do you have an opinion about Iraq? No, I don't have an opinion. Okay. So you may even be teaching, and you don't have an opinion. That is a tragedy. A terrible tragedy. You've taken in a lot of data but forgotten much of it and you are a lousy computer and you have no opinion. That is really kind of a death to education.

So let's try to develop an opinion backed up by all the facts that we can find by all the truth that we can seek out so that we don't become simply low level computers but are able to explain why we feel the way we do. Why we believe as we do. Yes, I have an opinion. Today I think that will be very important, because we want to look at the Intercept and two really great people that are conversing on the Intercept. Jeremy Scahill, the unembedded reporter who has taught us so much about private armies. As you know, the private armies are taking over everywhere because there's good money in private armies. Tell your children to start forming private armies, and they'll make a lot of money. The good part about the private army is that they are not subject to the code of military conduct. They can do anything they please. Jeremy Scahill has contributed so much to seeing these horrible entities, private armies and the billions that are spent on them and the many people who have gotten rich.

Together with him, we have one of the great professors of our time, the Harrington Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin / Madison, author of the now classic book, *The Politics of Heroin, CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*. So we have the two in conversation at the Intercept. I wish I could say that they were here personally - and it's very hard to get them on the phone, because they are on the ground so often. Here's a professor, but yet he is on the ground in some of the most dangerous situations imaginable. So they're looking at the fall of the American empire.

“Even as President Donald Trump faces ever-intensifying investigations into the alleged connections between his top aides and family members and powerful Russian figures, he serves as commander in chief over a U.S. military that is killing an astonishing and growing number of civilians.

And friends, this goes on while we listen to pundit after pundit after pundit within the beltway who don't speak a language that is intelligible. Beltway language.

Under Trump, the U.S. is re-escalating its war in Afghanistan, expanding its operations in Iraq and Syria, conducting covert raids in Somalia and Yemen, and openly facilitating the Saudi's genocidal military destruction of Yemen.

Meanwhile, China has quietly and rapidly expanded its influence without deploying its military on foreign soil.

A new book by the famed historian Alfred McCoy predicts that China is set to surpass the influence of the U.S. globally, both militarily and economically, by the year 2030. At that point, McCoy asserts the United States empire as we know it will be no more.

I might say, friends, together with the father of peace studies, Galtung, I love the American democracy, but hate the American empire. He sees the Trump presidency as one of the clearest byproducts of the erosion of U.S. global dominance, but not its root cause. At the same time, he also believes Trump may accelerate the empire's decline.

McCoy argues that the 2003 invasion of Iraq was the beginning of the end. McCoy is not some chicken little. He is a serious academic. And he has guts.

During the Vietnam War, McCoy was ambushed by CIA-backed paramilitaries as he investigated the swelling heroin trade. The CIA tried to stop the publication of his now classic book, "The Politics of Heroin." His phone was tapped, he was audited by the IRS, and he was investigated and spied on by the FBI. McCoy also wrote one of the earliest and most prescient books on the post-9/11 CIA torture program and he is one of the world's foremost experts on U.S. covert action. His new book, which will be released in September, is called "In the Shadows of the American Century: The Rise and Decline of U.S. Global Power."

"The American Century, proclaimed so triumphantly at the start of World War II, may already be tattered and fading by 2025 and, except for the finger pointing, could be over by 2030," McCoy writes. Imagining the real-life impact on the U.S. economy, McCoy offers a dark prediction:

For the majority of Americans, the 2020s will likely be remembered as a demoralizing decade of rising prices, stagnant wages, and fading international competitiveness. After years of swelling deficits fed by incessant warfare in distant lands, in 2030 the U.S. dollar eventually loses its special status as the world's dominant reserve currency.

Suddenly, there are punitive price increases for American imports ranging from clothing to computers. And the costs for all overseas activity surges as well, making travel for both tourists and troops prohibitive. Unable to pay for swelling deficits by selling now-devalued Treasury notes abroad, Washington is finally forced to slash its bloated military budget. Under pressure at home and abroad, its forces begin to pull back from hundreds of overseas bases to a continental perimeter. Such a desperate move, however, comes too late.

Faced with a fading superpower incapable of paying its bills, China, India, Iran, Russia, and other powers provocatively challenge U.S. dominion over the oceans, space, and cyberspace.

Alfred McCoy is the Harrington professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is the author of the now-classic book “The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade.” His new book, out in September, is “In the Shadows of the American Century: The Rise and Decline of U.S. Global Power.”

Jeremy Scahill: One of the things that you’re best known for is a book that continues to this day to be relevant when studying covert U.S. operations around the world, as well as the international narcotics trafficking industry, and of course you tie both of those together. We’re going to get into all of that in a moment but I wanted to begin by asking you to assess this current moment that we’re in with Donald Trump. How do you see him in a historical context, and what does his presidency represent about the American empire?

Alfred McCoy: What I think right now is that, through some kind of malign design, Donald Trump has divined, has figured out what are the essential pillars of U.S. global power that have sustained Washington’s hegemony for the past 70 years and he seems to be setting out to demolish each one of those pillars one by one.

JS: We’ve seen this kind of convergence of the agendas of some neoconservatives who formed part of the core of the “Never Trump” movement of Republicans and then the liberal elites that host shows on MSNBC or are identified as “Democratic strategists.” And this line that we’ve seen repeated over and over is that, what they deride as people calling the “deep state” — in other words, the elements within the CIA in the military — that they’re actually secretly protecting the country from Trump. Given your scholarship on what people loosely call the deep state right now, what do you make of those claims that the CIA and certain elements within the Pentagon are actually the protectors of the Democratic republic?

AM: A complex argument. One: the rapid growth of that state documented by the Washington Post, in a series about eight years ago, 2010, what they called the fourth branch of the U.S. government. That under the terms of the global war on terror, a massive infusion of nearly a trillion dollars into the Homeland Security. And all of the 17 agencies in the so-called intelligence community plus the considerable expansion of the Joint Special Operations Command, which is the military’s permanent integration with that security apparatus, that secret security apparatus, all of this has built a fourth branch of the U.S. government.

And I think that, just as Congress has proved independent from the Trump administration to a certain extent, and we’ll see about the Supreme Court, those are the classic three branches of executive, legislature, and judiciary — now we have this fourth branch. And, what you’re proposing is we need to take this very seriously when we look at the array of power in Washington, D.C. And I agree, we need to. And like all of the other branches it will coordinate with the executive because the executive has a great deal of power, of funding, you can set priorities, but it has a 10-year cycle — ultimately a much longer-term cycle of preparation and responsibility.

A president is in office for eight or maybe four years. A military career, if successful, an intelligence career, is 30 years. So those professionals, and the agencies they represent, have a much longer-term viewpoint. You can see this, for example, in the periodic reports of the

National Intelligence Council, that every four years when there's a new administration coming in, they're the one agency of the U.S. government that looks ahead 20 years. Not just four or eight or 10. But they actually look ahead 20 years and they try and see the shape of the world and then, set, through the intelligence community and through the national security establishment, priorities for coping with this fast changing world.

So at the apex of the intelligence community, there is this formal procedure for establishing a long range, or medium range, 20-year perspective. So, yes, they look longer, they have their own policies, they have their contracts, their programs that are in many ways autonomous from the executive, and increasingly so. And depending on your point of view and how it plays out, that's either a strength of the American system in the short term, when you have an executive that some people don't like, like Donald Trump, over the longer term it could be seen as a threat to democracy, creating a bureaucratic apparatus that's autonomous, even independent from both the executive and the legislative branch. So, it's an open question but a good question.

So then there's the question of US complicity in the illicit drug trade, a very important topic. McCoy goes on to say:

AM: Now, almost 50 years ago, looking back it was an extraordinary experience. In the space of 18 months to two years, I acquired an amazing education. Up to that point I was a graduate student looking at the history of colonialism in Southeast Asia, writing articles that had lots of footnotes. I was a library rat.

And in 1970 and '71, there were rumors that started coming back from Vietnam, particularly 1971, that heroin was spreading rapidly in the ranks of the U.S. forces fighting in South Vietnam. And in later research, done by the White House, it was determined that in 1971, 34 percent, one-third of all the American combat troops fighting in South Vietnam were heavy heroin users. There were, if that statistic is accurate, more addicts in the ranks of the U.S. Army in South Vietnam than there were in the United States.

And so what I did was I set out to investigate: Where was the opium coming from? Where was the heroin coming from? Who was trafficking it? How is it getting to the troops in their barracks and bunkers across the length and breadth of South Vietnam? Nobody was asking this question. Everyone was reporting on the high level of abuse, but nobody was figuring out where and who.

So I started interviewing. I went to Paris. I interviewed the head of the French equivalent of the CIA in Indochina, who was then head of a major French helicopter manufacturing company, and he explained to me how during the French Indochina war from 1946 to 1954, they were short of money for covert operations, so the hill tribes in Laos produced the opium, the aircraft picked it up, they turned it over to the underworld, the gangsters that controlled Saigon and secured it for the French and that paid for their covert operations. And I said, "What about now?" And he said, "Well I don't think the pattern's changed. I think it's still there. You should go and look."

So I did. I went to Saigon. I got some top sources in the Vietnamese military. I went to Laos. I hiked into the mountains. I was ambushed by CIA mercenaries and what I discovered was

that the CIA's contract airline, Air America, was flying into the villages of the Hmong people in Northern Laos, whose main cash crop was opium and they were picking up the opium and flying it out of the hills and there were heroin labs — one of the heroin labs, the biggest heroin lab in the world, was run by the commander-in-chief of the Royal Laotian Army, a man whose military budget came entirely from the United States. And they were transforming, in those labs, the opium into heroin. It was being smuggled into South Vietnam by three cliques controlled by the president, the vice president, and the premier of South Vietnam, and their military allies and distributed to U.S. forces in South Vietnam.

Friends, this is a real professor. Alfred McCoy. He did not get locked in the bell tower with tenure. He is on the ground doing his research, and identifying a vast amount of heroin in Vietnam. He continues:

And the CIA wasn't directly involved, but they turned a blind eye to the role of their allies' involvement in the traffic. And so this heroin epidemic swept the U.S. Army in Vietnam. The Defense Department invented mass urine analysis testing, so when those troops left they were tested and given treatment. And what I discovered was the complexities, the complicity, of the CIA in this traffic and that was a pattern that was repeated in Central America when the Contras became involved in the traffic. The CIA looked the other way as their aircraft and their allies were smuggling cocaine from Colombia through Central America to the United States. Same thing in the 1980s, during the secret war in Afghanistan, the Mujahideen turned to opium. The opium production in Afghanistan during that secret war increased from about 100 tons of opium per annum to 2000 tons, a massive increase. Afghanistan went from supplying zero percent of U.S. heroin supply — soared to 65 percent of the illicit heroin supply for the United States came out of Afghanistan. The CIA sent arms across the border through caravans to the Mujahideen fighters and those same caravans came out carrying opium. The CIA prevented the DEA, the Drug Enforcement Administration, from investigating. Again, complicity in the traffic.

So a clear pattern. The other thing was when I began to do that investigation and write up the book, I faced enormous pressures. My phone was tapped by the FBI, the IRS investigated, I had an audit as a poverty-stricken graduate student. The Department of Education investigated my graduate fellowship. Friends of mine who had been serving in military intelligence were recruited to spy on me. In other words, what I found was the CIA penetrated every aspect of my life. The head of CIA covert operations, a very famous operative named Cord Meyer Jr., visited the offices of Harper and Row, my publisher, and tried to persuade the publisher to suppress the book, hold the contract, just don't release the book, claiming that it was a threat to national security.

So what I discovered was not only CIA complicity, complex compromise relationships with covert allies far away in remote places like Southeast Asia, but also the incredible depth of the penetration of the CIA within U.S. society under the conditions of the Cold War. I found my phone, my fellowship, my friends, my publisher, every aspect of my life was manipulated by the CIA. It was a fascinating discovery.

JS: And you write in your forthcoming book, “In the Shadows of the American Century,” “I had crafted a historical method that would prove over the next 40 years of my career surprisingly useful in analyzing a diverse array of foreign policy controversies, CIA alliances with drug lords, the agency’s propagation of psychological torture, and our spreading state surveillance.” Part of the reason it seems that they were concerned about what you were investigating in Vietnam, Laos, and elsewhere was that you were tapping into something that was an emerging nexus that the CIA would rely on for decades to come.

AM: Indeed. All of those areas. The method I came up with was very simple. Start far back in the past, as far back as you can go, when the — let’s say the research on torture, although somewhat secret is not controversial because it hasn’t been applied. Go back to the U.S. colonial policy in the Philippines when we started surveillance circa 1898 to pacify the Philippines, and then track it forward step by step all the way to the present, keeping in mind the patterns, the structure of the operation. And then when you get to the present where it becomes secret, highly classified, and very controversial, you understand the structure, so you know where to look, what assumptions are likely to be sound, what hypotheses might work, how you can conduct your analysis and that can lead you to an insight.

For example, let’s take the case of torture, OK? I work on the Philippines as my main area in Southeast Asia that I study, and I was very interested in the overthrow of the Marcos regime. I did some research that contributed to that overthrow. In the aftermath of the overthrow of the Marcos regime, there was this coterie of military colonels that had plotted an abortive coup, that had sparked a so-called People Power Revolution that put a million Filipinos on the streets of Manila calling for Marcos’ downfall, forcing Washington to provide him with aircraft that flew him out to exile in Hawaii and brought democracy. So I was very interested in who these colonels were.

And what I found when I investigated them is that they weren’t line officers, say combat officers, they weren’t even intelligence officers. They were internal security officers who’ve been personally involved in torture. And what I begin to realize is that torture was a transactional experience, that these officers who’ve been trained by the CIA on how to interrogate and use torture, that, as they broke down their victims, they empowered themselves and inspired themselves to this coup to overthrow Marcos.

Well, that also introduced me to the idea that the CIA was training torturers around the globe. And I figured this out in the 1980s, before it was common knowledge. There was some research in the ’70s, people working on this, but we didn’t have the full picture. And what I began to figure out was also the nature of the methods that these colonels were using. Now, look, these are physical guys that were brutally, physically hazed at their military academy, as often happens in such organizations. And so instead of beating physically their victims, they use something counterintuitive. They didn’t touch their victims. They used psychological techniques. And so in 2004, when CBS television published those photographs from Abu Ghraib prison, and nobody knew what was going on. There was that famous photograph of the Iraqi detainee standing on a box with his arms outstretched with phony electrical wires attached to him, he’d been told that if he lowered his arms, he’d be shocked, and he had a bag on his head.

And I looked at that photo and I said, “Those are not bad apples. That is CIA doctrinal techniques. The bag is for sensory deprivation, the arms are for self-inflicted pain, those are the two fundamental techniques of CIA psychological torture.” I wrote a book, “A Question of Torture,” that made that argument. I participated in a documentary that won an Oscar, “Taxi to the Dark Side,” that interviewed me and also made that argument, and it would not be for another 10 years until 2014, when the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee spent \$40 million and reviewed 6 million CIA documents and came to a rather similar conclusions. So the method’s useful.

JS: I want to ask you how we ended up with the national security state that we have today? What I mean is, the NSA with its vast powers, which of course you document in the book. The CIA employing tactics under what you’ve called “covert netherworld.” There is this sense, under someone like Barack Obama, that we’re not going to send massive troop deployments around the world, as much as we are going to depend on drones, discreet covert operations, escalated use of Special Operations Forces and CIA paramilitaries. But, talk about the post World War II growth of what now has come to be known as the national security state?

AM: Sure. I think the national security state is the instrument the United States used to build and exercise its global hegemony. Looking at the comparative history of empires in the modern age going back 500 years, the thing that distinguishes the U.S. empire from almost any other, is the reliance upon covert methods and it’s a result of a historical moment.

The U.S. empire coincided with the decolonization, the dissolution of half a dozen European empires that produced 100 new nations, more than half the independent nations on the planet today. And so U.S. hegemony was being exercised, not over colonies, whose sovereignty was compromised, in fact had been transferred to the imperial power, but over independent nation states, who had sovereignty. So you had an empire under conditions that denied empire. So how do you exercise hegemony in a non-hegemonic world? You have to do it covertly.

And in 1947, President Harry Truman, right after World War II, and Congress passed the National Security Act that laid down the bureaucratic apparatus for the U.S. national security state. That National Security Act created the Defense Department, the U.S. Air Force, the CIA, and the National Security Council — the key instruments of the U.S. exercise of global power. And then when the next administration came in, under President Dwight Eisenhower, what he did is he realized that there were nations that were becoming independent across the world and that he had to be intervening in these independent nations and so the only way he could do it was through plausible deniability, you had to intervene in a way that could not be seen. You had to do it covertly. And so Eisenhower turned to the CIA, created by Harry Truman, and he transformed it from an organization that originally tried to penetrate the Iron Curtain, to send agents and operatives inside the Iron Curtain. It was a complete disaster. The operatives were captured, they were used to uncover the networks of opposition inside the Soviet Union, it was absolutely counterproductive. Eisenhower turned the CIA away from that misbegotten mission of penetrating the Iron Curtain and instead assigned them the mission of penetrating and controlling the three-quarters of the globe that was on the U.S. side of the Iron Curtain, the free world.

And Eisenhower relied upon the CIA, and then the National Security Agency, to monitor signals. And we began to exercise our global hegemony, covertly, through the CIA and allied intelligence agencies. And that's been a distinctive aspect of U.S. hegemony since the dawn of American global power in 1945. And that continues today, ever deepening, layer upon layer, through those processes you described. The drones, the surveillance, the cyberwarfare — all of that is covert.

JS: Between 1946 and 2000, rival superpowers the United States and the Soviet Union, then Russia, intervened in 117 elections or 11 percent of all the competitive national level contests held worldwide via campaign cash and media disinformation. And then you write, “Significantly, the United States was responsible for 81 of those attempts, 70 percent of the total.”

This is not new, the idea that nations interfere in the elections of others. Walk us through some of the greatest hits of the CIA and other intelligence agencies in election interference, since the 1940s.

AM: Sure — first of all, that was one of the central instruments of the U.S. exercise of global power covertly. We were promoting democracy worldwide, we stood very strongly for democracy over authoritarianism. On the other hand, we were exercising U.S. hegemony, which meant that somehow for those open free democratic contests to produce a leader who was our guy. And indeed, one of the key aspects of U.S. global power, as exercised by Eisenhower through, covertly, was the change. Look, under the colonial empires, Britain, France, Belgium all the rest, they had district officers and they worked with chiefs, maharajahs, emirs, local officials in colonial districts around the globe. And they controlled who was going to be the new emir, who was going to be the new sultan, who was going to be the new maharajah.

And then, when all of those nations decolonized and became independent, the fulcrum for the exercise of power shifted from the colonial district to the presidential palace. And so the United States paid a lot of attention in controlling who were the leaders in those presidential palaces. If you look at the 240,000 WikiLeaks cables from around the world that were leaked in 2011, you'll find that much of what they're concerned about is, who is in those presidential palaces around the world? So the U.S. did it through coups and, during the period of the 1950s to the 1970s, about a quarter of the sovereign states in the world changed government by coups, and they also did it by electoral manipulation.

One of the most famous ones, the one that actually established the capacity of the CIA to do that, was the 1948 elections in Italy when it looked like the communist and socialist parties were slated for capturing a majority of the seats in parliament, and then forming a government. And you could have on our side of the Iron Curtain, in a very important world power, Italy, a legally elected, democratic elected communist government. And so the CIA spent, bargain basement, \$1 million. Imagine: Buying Italy for a million dollars. Seems like a bargain.

They spent just a million dollars in very skillful, electoral manipulation, and they produced the electoral results of the Christian Democrats, a centrist government. And, throughout the

Cold War, the U.S. deftly intervened in Italy at multiple levels overtly in bilateral aid and diplomacy, covertly, and electoral manipulation and something much deeper, Operation Gladio, where they had, if you will, an underground apparatus to seize power in Italy in the case of a communist takeover, by invasion. And the CIA would intervene, they pump money into the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan, they played electoral politics in the Philippines. They intervened in Korea politics, in South Korean politics, all around the globe. Any time that there was a serious electoral contest in which the outcome was critical to us, geopolitical interests, the U.S. was intervening.

Now, the difference between that and what we've seen with the 2016 elections in the United States, if you're the global hegemon, you are manipulating, influencing other people's elections. If you're a global power like the United States that stands for democracy, that's the way we exercise that power. We did it sometimes crudely, sometimes deftly, but we didn't invade countries, we didn't bomb et cetera. We did it that way. And when we were manipulating other people's elections, we're the global power. And when we're being manipulated, when other powers are penetrating our society and manipulating our elections, that's a sign that we're a declining power. And that's very serious.

In order to maintain our position internationally, not only do we have to exercise our power skillfully, covertly through the operations we've been describing, surveillance and the rest, and overtly through diplomacy and international leadership, treaties and trade and all that, OK? But we also have to make sure that our electoral process is impenetrable, is secure, that other powers cannot manipulate us because they're going to try.

JS: I often find myself, when I'm watching the news, or in some cases even reading very serious powerful newspapers like the New York Times or the Washington Post, as they cover Donald Trump and this issue of Russia, it seems as though we are totally detached from history. And in reading your book I was reminded of the rise of Mobutu to power in Kinshasa, and also you went into great depth about the CIA crack cocaine story that ultimately was broken wide open by Gary Webb in the San Jose Mercury News, and then attacked and major news organizations trying to discredit him. Walk us through the Contra War and the connection to the selling of embargoed weapons to Iran and the fact that you had eleven senior officials in Ronald Reagan's administration actually convicted of selling Iran embargoed arms.

I mean we talk about scandals and then you look at Reagan, and it's like 11 senior officials convicted of selling embargoed arms to finance the CIA's death squad the Contras in Nicaragua?

AM: You know, in the Reagan administration the United States was at a low ebb in its global power. The Reagan administration launched the invasion of Grenada. It was the first time in nearly a decade that the U.S. has been able to exercise its global power anywhere beyond the United States successfully, its military power. And then in Central America, the Reagan administration felt very threatened by the collapse of the Somoza regime, one of the U.S. client regimes in Central America, and the Sandinista guerrilla movement capturing the capital Managua in 1979.

And that occurred at the same time as the Soviet Red Army basically occupied Kabul, the capture of the capital of Afghanistan, so the Reagan administration felt threatened, on a kind of far periphery of U.S. power in Afghanistan, and close at home, kind of a gateway to America — in Central America. So the Reagan administration reacted by mounting two major covert operations: one, to push the Red Army out of Afghanistan and two, to overthrow the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. And both of these operations involved tolerating trafficking in opium in Afghanistan by the Mujahideen Muslim guerrilla fighters, and tolerating the trafficking in cocaine in Central America by our Contra allies.

And there were basically two forms of support for the Contras. The one was the arms-for-money deal to provide black money to sustain the Contra revolt for the decade that it dragged on. And the other thing was a kind of hands-off approach. There was a DEA operative, a Drug Enforcement Administration operative, in Honduras that was reporting on the Honduran military complicity in the transit traffic of cocaine moving from Colombia through Central America to the United States. He was removed from the country. And then the CIA, because of Congress cutting off the arms shipments periodically for the CIA, the so-called Boland amendment that imposed a kind of embargo upon U.S. support for the Contras, they needed to periodically warehouse their arms. And what they found was that the Bay Islands off the coast of Honduras, particularly Roatan Island, was an ideal logistics point right off the coast — it was a major transshipment point for cocaine moving from Colombia across the Caribbean to the United States but it's also an ideal place for the U.S. to warehouse and then ship its arms to the Contras on the border with Nicaragua and Honduras.

And so, the kingpin, the drug kingpin of the Bay Islands was a notorious international trafficker named Alan Hyde who had 35 ships on the high seas smuggling cocaine from Colombia into the United States. Every U.S. security agency involved, the Coast Guard, the CIA itself, the Drug Enforcement Administration, they all had reports about Alan Hyde being a Class A trafficker, arguably the biggest smuggler in the Caribbean. And to get access to his warehouses what the CIA did was they basically blocked any investigation of Alan Hyde from 1987 to 1992, during the peak of the crack-cocaine epidemic, and so the CIA got to ship their guns to his warehouses and then onward to the border post for the Contras. And Alan Hyde was given an immunity to investigation or prosecution for five years.

That's — any criminal, that's all they need, is an immunity to investigation. And this coincided with the flood of cocaine through Central America into the United States. This CIA inspector general in response to protests in South Central, Los Angeles, conducted an investigation also in response to Gary Webb's inquiries and they released Report 1, they called "The California Connection." They said that Gary Webb's allegations that the CIA had protected the distributors, the deal of the Nicaraguan dealers who were brokering the sale of the import cocaine to the Crips and Bloods gangs in South Central, L.A., that that all that was false.

Then they issued, the inspector general in 1998, issued part two of that report, the executive summary said similarly: no case to answer, CIA relations with the Contras in Central America complex, but nothing about drugs. But if you actually read the report, all the way through, which is something historians tend to do, you get to paragraph 913 of that report and

there are subsequently 40 of the most amazing revelations, 40 paragraphs of the most amazing revelations stating explicitly in cables and verbatim quotes from interviews with CIA operatives about their compromised relationship with the biggest drug smuggler in the Caribbean, Alan Hyde.

And if you go on the CIA website and you look for that 1998 Inspector General Report, you'll find a little black line that says paragraphs 913-960 have been excised. Those are those paragraphs. But you can find them on the internet.

Well, friends, that's the great historian Alfred McCoy in conversation with Jeremy Skahill. And the involvement in drugs is going on today in Afghanistan. Why is there so much drug addiction in the US? We might look to the wars in Afghanistan and elsewhere. They set the domestic conditions of unemployment and poverty that lead people to escape through drugs - and then provides the drugs that feed addictions.

The pillars of empire are starting to crumble, and Professor Alfred McCoy is trying to help us understand why. We'll continue with more of his thoughts on subsequent programs because they are so important. And perhaps we'll get him on live. Thank you for joining us today on World Focus.