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Sources:

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A little more than a year before he was fired on June 23, 2010, for making potentially insubordinate remarks in a *Rolling Stone* profile, General Stanley McChrystal was appointed by

President Barack Obama as commander in charge of the war in Afghanistan. He had been formerly in charge of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) headed by former Vice President Dick Cheney. Most of what General McChrystal has done over a thirty-three-year career remains classified, including service between 2003 and 2008 as commander of the JSOC, a special black operations commando unit of the Navy Seals and Delta Force so clandestine that the Pentagon for years refused to acknowledge its existence.

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh claims that the Bush administration ran an executive assassination ring that reported directly to former Vice President Dick Cheney, and that Congress had no oversight of it whatsoever. The JSOC team would go into countries, without talking to the ambassador or to the CIA station chief, find people on a to-be-killed list, execute them, and leave. There was an ongoing list of targeted people, cleared by Vice President Cheney's office, who had committed acts of war or were suspected of planning operations of war against the United States. Hersh asserts that there have been assassinations in a dozen countries in the Middle East and Latin America. "There's an executive order, signed by President Ford, in the '70s, forbidding such action. It's not only contrary—it's illegal, it's immoral, it's counterproductive," he added.

JSOC was also involved in war crimes, including the torture of prisoners in secret "ghost" detention sites. Camp Nama in Iraq was one such "ghost" facility hidden from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the international body charged under international law with monitoring compliance with the Geneva Conventions, and given the right to inspect all facilities where people are detained in a country that is at war or under military occupation. On July 22, 2006, Human Rights Watch issued a report, titled "No Blood, No Foul," about American torture practices at three facilities in Iraq. One of them was Camp Nama, accused of some of the worst acts of torture, and operated by JSOC, under the direction of McChrystal. McChrystal, then a Major General, was officially based at Fort Bragg in North Carolina, but he was a frequent visitor to Camp Nama and other bases in Iraq and Afghanistan under his command.

An interrogator at Camp Nama described locking prisoners in shipping containers for twenty-four hours at a time in extreme heat, exposing them to extreme cold with periodic soaking in cold water, bombardment with bright lights and loud music, sleep deprivation, and severe beatings. When he and other interrogators went to the colonel in charge and expressed concern that this kind of treatment was not legal, and that they might be investigated by the military's Criminal Investigation Division or the ICRC, the colonel told them he had "this directly from General McChrystal and the Pentagon that there's no way that the Red Cross could get in." The interrogator said that he did see McChrystal visiting the Nama facility on several occasions. "I saw him a couple of times. I know what he looks like."

In describing why no other press had covered the story, Hersh stated, “My colleagues at the press corps often don’t follow up, not because they don’t want to but because they don’t know who to call. If I’m writing something on the Joint Special Operations Command, which is an ostensibly classified unit, how do they find it out? The government will tell them everything I write is wrong or that they can’t comment. It’s easy for those stories to be dismissed. I do think the relationship with JSOC is changing under Obama. It’s more under control now.”

However, according to Press TV, the decision by Obama’s administration to appoint General McChrystal as the new commander in charge of the war in Afghanistan, as well as the continuation of the military commission for the detainees held in the Guantánamo Bay prison, are unfortunately examples of the Obama administration continuing to walk in Bush’s footsteps.

Update

Rock Creek Free Press reported in their June 2010 issue that Seymour Hersh, speaking at the Global Investigative Journalism conference in Geneva in April 2010, had criticized President Barack Obama and alleged that US forces are engaged in “battlefield executions.” “Those we capture in Afghanistan are being executed on the battlefield,” Hersh claimed.