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With Release of "Family Jewels," CIA Acknowledges Years of Assassination Plots, Coerced Drug Tests and Domestic Spying



The CIA has released its so-called "family jewels"—nearly 700 pages of documents detailing some of its most infamous and illegal operations dating back to the 1950s. These include assassination plots against foreign leaders, drugs tests on unwitting citizens, wiretapping of U.S. journalists, spying on activists, opening mail, break-ins at the homes of ex-CIA employees and more. We speak with John Prados of the National Security Archive, an independent research institute that filed the original Freedom of Information Act request for the "family jewels" 15 years ago. [includes rush transcript]

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The CIA has released its so-called "family jewels." On Tuesday, the Agency declassified nearly 700 pages of documents that detail some of its most infamous and illegal operations from the 1950s to the early 1970s. Although many portions of the documents were blacked out, they detail assassination plots against foreign leaders like Fidel Castro and Patrice Lumumba, the testing of mind- and behavior-altering drugs like LSD on unwitting citizens, wiretapping of U.S. journalists, spying on civil rights and anti-Vietnam war protesters, opening mail between the United States and the Soviet Union and China, break-ins at the homes of ex-CIA employees and more.

Announcing the release of the "family jewels" last week, CIA Director Michael Hayden said: "Most of it is unflattering, but it is CIA's history." He added that the declassified documents provided "a glimpse of a very different time and a very different Agency."

Tuesday's release of the documents marks the first time the CIA is publicly acknowledging responsibility for its illegal activities. The file was produced in 1973 in response to a directive from then CIA director James Schlesinger to conduct an internal investigation into the agency's covert operations that were "outside the CIA's charter."

John Prados is a Senior Fellow at the National Security Archive. The

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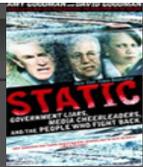
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archive is an independent research institute that filed the original Freedom of Information Act request for the "family jewels" fifteen years ago. John Prados, joining us from Washington, D.C.

- **John Prados.** Senior Fellow at the National Security Archive. He directs the Vietnam Documentation Project at the Archive and is the author of Pulitzer Prize-nominated books, including "Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA", "Hoodwinked: The Documents that Reveal How Bush Sold Us a War", and "Lost Crusader: The Secret Wars of CIA Director William Colby."

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AMY GOODMAN: The CIA has released its so-called "family jewels." On Tuesday, the agency declassified nearly 700 pages of documents that detail some of its most infamous and illegal operations from the '50s to the '70s. Although many portions of the documents have been blacked out, they detail assassination plots against foreign leaders like Fidel Castro and Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, the testing of mind- and behavior-altering drugs like LSD on unwitting citizens, wiretapping of US journalists, spying on civil rights and anti-Vietnam War protesters, opening mail between the United States and the Soviet Union and China, break-ins at the homes of ex-CIA employees, and more.

Announcing the release of the "family jewels" last week, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Michael Hayden, said, "Most of it is unflattering, but it is CIA's history." He added the declassified documents provided "a glimpse of a very different time and a very different agency."

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John Prados is a Senior Fellow at the National Security Archive. The Archive is an independent research institute that filed the original Freedom of Information Act request for the "family jewels" fifteen years ago. John Prados joins us from Washington, D.C. Welcome to *Democracy Now!*

JOHN PRADOS: Thank you. Pleasure to be here.

AMY GOODMAN: John, why don't you start off by explaining how you ended up applying for these under the Freedom of Information Act, how you came to have these delivered by CIA agents yesterday in your offices?

JOHN PRADOS: Well, the existence of the "family jewels" has been known since the 1970s, when they figured in the whole series of investigations of the Central Intelligence Agency that was carried out by Congress and by a presidential commission headed by Vice President Nelson Rockefeller. It had long been an idea to go and file a Freedom of Information Act request for these documents, and other people had done so in the past, and, indeed, I'm sure, aside

from ours, there probably were other FOIA requests for those documents on the books. But our request from 1992 happened to be the oldest existing FOIA request that the CIA had not serviced, and so we were next on the list, I guess, and the agency decided it

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- **Hours After Jeremy Scahill Exposé, Clinton Proposes Military Contractor Ban**

Hours after Democracy Now! correspondent Jeremy Scahill revealed Barack Obama would not "rule out" using private military companies like Blackwater Worldwide in Iraq, Hillary Clinton announced she would co-sponsor a measure to ban the use of Blackwater and other private military firms.

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- **Amy Goodman's New Column: Taxi to the Dark Side**

On the Sunday following Sept. 11, 2001, Vice President Dick Cheney told the truth. On NBC's "Meet the Press," he said regarding plans to pursue the perpetrators of that attack: "We have to work the dark side, if you will. We're going to spend time in the shadows."

The grim, deadly consequences of his promise have, in the intervening six years, become the shame of our nation and have outraged millions around the world. President George Bush and Cheney, many argue, have overseen a massive global campaign of kidnapping, illegal detentions, harsh interrogations, torture and kangaroo courts where the accused face the death penalty, confronted by secret evidence obtained by torture, without legal representation.

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From *The Black World Today* "Outside the New World Stages in midtown Manhattan, above in the heavens, a lunar eclipse held hundreds of stargazers breathless. Inside the



Alan Greenspan v. Naomi Klein



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would release these documents now.

AMY GOODMAN: So explain how these documents were compiled; the former CIA Director Schlesinger, why he called for these documents to be written.

JOHN PRADOS: Very good. Well, this is actually a Watergate story for those fans of Watergate. Howard Hunt, who was a former CIA officer, had been going back and forth with the agency about their supporting him and supporting his claims when he was under legal indictment in the Watergate case and had been threatening the agency, specifically, that he would violate his secrecy agreement with them.

AMY GOODMAN: Howard Hunt, one of the plumbers, one of the people who broke into the Watergate, the Democratic National Committee.

JOHN PRADOS: That's right, exactly. And in the spring of 1973, Hunt was before a federal grand jury testifying, and he testified to the fact that the CIA had given him certain help: fake identity, wigs, this kind of thing. And this, of course—this grand jury testimony leaked to the papers and appeared in the papers, and Mr. Schlesinger saw press reporting of Howard Hunt saying that he had this plumbers, this Watergate tie to the agency, that the agency had given him specific help.

And Schlesinger was furious and demanded to know what other things CIA people hadn't told him about that the agency might be in legal jeopardy about doing. So he and his executive director at that time, William E. Colby, produced an order that was circulated throughout CIA asking everyone to give them anything, whether they had participated in it or even heard about it, that might be of questionable legal status. And so, various components of the agency—and this, in fact, is the way this document is organized. It's a series of replies to the director from each of the major components of the CIA, each of them saying, well, we have nothing like this, or else saying, well, we have this and this and this. And the various components report on different things that they did or were asked to do, or once considered and never did, and so on and so forth. And —

AMY GOODMAN: So, John Prados—

JOHN PRADOS: One last point. In cases where—the documents are very confusing in some ways, because in some of these instances different parts of the CIA participated, so you'll see one little piece of the story in one place and another one somewhere else.

AMY GOODMAN: So tell us what you found most surprising in these documents. Maybe could you start with the documentation of the assassination attempts and also successful ones—I mean, from Fidel Castro to Patrice Lumumba of the Congo.

JOHN PRADOS: Absolutely. I was surprised by the documents' coverage of assassination attempts, because it's mostly not there. In the part of the document that pertains to the Office of Security, which actually handled CIA's efforts with the Mafia in 1960 to '62 period, there is material on their connections with the Mafia figure Johnny Roselli in several different more or less detailed memoranda. But the larger text or the larger narrative of the CIA assassination efforts is missing from this document. It was very surprising to me. I can only infer that Roselli was covered because he was an American national, and thus this was domestic in some fundamental sense of that word.

There is a mention of [inaudible] and Lumumba very much later in a section where Bill Colby is trying to figure out how to answer an article in the press, and he's working out draft language, and he's crossing things

entertainment palace, Jackson Browne, Willie Nelson, Dick Gregory, and coterie of well-known writers left folks in awe as they appeared to support Democracy Now's mission to build a new home."

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- **Taxi To The Dark Side**

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- **Lessons of Internment**

Nearing 87 years old, Yuri Kochiyama lives in a small room in an Oakland, Calif., senior living facility. Her walls are adorned with photos, posters, postcards and mementos detailing a living history of the revolutionary struggles of the 20th century. She is quiet, humble and small, and has trouble at times retrieving the right word. Yet, with a sparkle in her eyes, she has no trouble recalling that incredible history--not from books, not from documentaries, but from living it, on the front lines.

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- **Jeremy Scahill Wins George Polk Book Award for "Blackwater"**

Democracy Now! correspondent and best-selling author Jeremy Scahill has won the The George Polk Book Award for his book "Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army." The judges said: "Scahill's work exposed killings, human rights

...and during things in the process of creating a copy of this press thing. So that was negatively surprising to me, that there was so little of this, because, in fact, in 1967—and we do have this document in the public record already—the CIA inspector general did a massive internal investigation of all the assassination plots. And that document has long been in the public record. Alright, so that's assassinations.

AMY GOODMAN: On Lumumba, on page 464, the plan to poison him?

JOHN PRADOS: The plan to poison Lumumba, right, effecting from the Technical Services Division section. Sidney Gottlieb, the CIA's version of James Bond's character Q, was involved in that segment of CIA activity and actually crafted poisons that he hand-carried to the Congo in the first effort to assassinate Lumumba, an aborted CIA effort. The station chief there took Gottlieb's poisons and actually threw them into the Congo River, because he refused to carry out an operation like that. But the fact that the agency had conceived and carried it that far was in and of itself questionable. And this is what I was referring to in this Colby response to the article, where he mentions the Lumumba thing in his remarks that he's trying to craft, in the sense of trying to knock down the story.

One thing I found very surprising—astonishing, in fact—because it's brand new, is that after President Nixon used American forces to invade Cambodia in April 1970, he gave a speech, of course, introducing this federal government action. And naturally, there was a flow of mail, pro and con, to the White House after the Nixon speech. And Nixon actually required the Central Intelligence Agency to pay for White House political mail, to pay for the White House responses to people who had written letters to the White House after Nixon's Cambodia speech. Almost \$17,000, in fact, was taken out of agency funds to pay for White House political activity. I think that's a brand new thing that's in these documents.

There are other new things, too, but they're scattered here and there. And there are many new details about things that were known a little bit at the time. For example, you mentioned drug experiments. There's a memo in there also where the CIA adverts that it actually conducted drug experiments with drugs that American drug companies had rejected. And the ones that seemed promising in laboratory tests were then tested on volunteers. And the purpose, they said, was defensive, i.e. that this way they would know what impact these drugs might have on a person.

AMY GOODMAN: John Prados, while the news reports now will often say nothing new, I think most Americans don't even know what has been talked about in the past or what is known. So I do think it's useful to go through things that might not be new to the insiders like you, who are carefully following what the CIA does, like the whole experimentation with MK-ULTRA, the drugging of American citizens who were completely unsuspecting, unwitting, the experimentation, not only MK-ULTRA, but other drugs being injected with plutonium and other things. But explain what these MK-ULTRA experiments were.

JOHN PRADOS: The MK-ULTRA experiments were the CIA experiments with drugs that went the furthest. They went far beyond this kind of loose experimentation that I just referred to. They, in this case, took a drug that was being developed in Switzerland, LSD, which is now widely recognized as a psychotropic drug—then it was in experimental stages—and they thought it might have potential either for a "truth serum," quote/unquote, or as a way of inducing control over enemy agents. So they carried out a process of experimentation on these drugs, which actually led to the psychotic break and then death by suicide of an American, an Army doctor, in fact, who was helping the CIA with these drug studies and who himself ingested LSD as part of their testing program.

AMY GOODMAN: We're going to go to break, but we'll come back to John Prados, Senior Fellow at the National Security Archive, talking about the "family jewels." The CIA delivered to the National Security Archive yesterday, well, close to 700 pages of documents that were previously undisclosed.

violations and misconduct by the firm's personnel and revealed the U.S. government's growing reliance on this 'shadow army.' His reporting and Congressional testimony helped propel legislation that would ban U.S. government security contracts with Blackwater and other private military companies."

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• **Lessons of the Chesapeake Sweep**

After the Potomac Primary, Virginia is the new Massachusetts and Texas is the new Florida. Barack Obama claimed a "Chesapeake Sweep," winning all three primaries—Maryland, the District of Columbia and Virginia—by decisive margins. Hillary Clinton, whose campaign conceded these, is betting the house on the forthcoming delegate-rich primaries of Texas, Ohio and Pennsylvania, with no campaign stops announced for next week's voting states, Wisconsin and Hawaii.

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[REDACTED]

AMY GOODMAN: We continue on the "family jewels," as they're known within the agency. That's the CIA. More than—close to 700 pages, 693 to be exact, were delivered on the doorstep of the National Security Archive yesterday, applied to by the National Security Archive fifteen years ago. John Prados is our guest, Senior Fellow at the National Security Archive. His books include *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA* and *Hoodwinked: The Documents that Reveal How Bush Sold Us a War*, as well as *Lost Crusader: The Secret Wars of CIA Director William Colby*. As we talk about some of what's being learned in these documents, how heavily redacted are they, John?

JOHN PRADOS: I would say that about 10% of the document, in all, has been censored out of it in the course of its release by the CIA

AMY GOODMAN: You referred to Frank Olson, the CIA doctor who ultimately, we believe, killed himself. It's not clear. His drink spiced with LSD by other members of the agency. His son has never given up on this case to find out why his father died.

JOHN PRADOS: That's correct. And by the way, that's another important Freedom of Information Act question. There are pending and outstanding FOIA requests for documents concerning these CIA drug experiments for many years. And there's been a huge quantity also of released documents on the MK-ULTRA case—that's what the CIA cryptonym was for this—without his son actually having reached closure or gotten to the bottom of that whole story.

AMY GOODMAN: So, apparently, what, in 1975 President Ford invited the Olsons to the White House to apologize and gave them something like \$750,000. His son feels the story has never been honestly told.

JOHN PRADOS: That's right. The government tried to make some kind of a settlement with the Olsons. But, in fact, the story remains to be completely told.

AMY GOODMAN: Let's talk about the surveillance of journalists. What have you learned from these documents? And add that to what you already know from other documents.

JOHN PRADOS: I think the surveillance of journalists is importantly illuminated by the "family jewels" documents. What we see here is brief accounts by the Office of Security on the specific surveillance of a series of journalists, including Michael Getler, then of the *Washington Post*, and columnist Jack Anderson and his team of investigative reporters, all of whom were surveilled by the CIA at specific times.

In another place in the documents there is a set of extracts from the staff meetings of the CIA director, at that time Richard Helms. And in his staff meetings you can see specific discussions of items that appeared in the press, the reporters who reported those stories, speculations on what the sources of the stories might be, and even orders to go out and surveil the journalists. The order to surveil Getler, I believe, is reflected in these staff notes. And one of the things that surprised me in the "family jewels" is how frequently these kinds of discussions occurred at the CIA's director staff meetings.

AMY GOODMAN: Can you explain what Project Mockingbird was?

JOHN PRADOS: Project Mockingbird was one of these surveillance operations against American journalists, who were wiretapped and followed in an attempt for the CIA to find their sources.

AMY GOODMAN: Also, Jack Anderson, of course, the famous muckraker being monitored here, as well as someone who worked for him, Brit Hume, who now is a FOX News anchor.

JOHN PRADOS: And two other of Anderson's staff assistants, as well. The cryptonym for that operation was CELOTEX II. And they were followed for a period of about three to four months. And the great story that has come out of the Anderson surveillance, actually, is the one of how his children turned the tables on the CIA surveillance team by—one day they were playing in the yard with the CIA guys watching from across the street in their car. They were fed up with this. They decided to run into the house and come back out with a camera and took pictures of the CIA guys taking pictures of them. I believe that led to the termination of that surveillance effort.

AMY GOODMAN: John Prados is a senior fellow at the National Security Archive. Now, the surveillance of antiwar activists, was it called MHCHAOS?

JOHN PRADOS: MHCHAOS was—yes—was the cryptonym for the antiwar operation that was set up by Director Helms in the summer of 1967 as a result of President Lyndon Johnson's demands to get to the bottom of the question of what foreign country was really behind political protest in the United States. Of course, no foreign country was behind political protest in the United States, but that did not stop the CIA from setting up a special staff to monitor this question, pulling in a whole lot of people—there were more than forty people working directly just in the headquarters on this project by 1972—and producing a great deal of paper. They probably cut down several forests in the efforts here. They actually issued over a thousand reports. They brought in and shared 10,000 items from the FBI annually in 1970 and 1971. They compiled files on over 7,000 Americans, including fourteen congresspersons, among them Bella Abzug and Patsy Mink.

AMY GOODMAN: Both women dead now.

JOHN PRADOS: Unfortunately, yes. And compiled name lists with the names of more than 300,000 Americans, a fairly huge operation. But it went beyond—CIA activities with the antiwar movement went beyond this kind of analytical effort.

And I think one thing that we see in the "family jewels," specifically, is a kind of crescendo of sorts that occurred in 1972. I mentioned that Director Helms had had staff meetings and that they are extracted here. And in one of these staff meetings, he makes the comment—now we're in the summer of '72, going into the political phase. This is a presidential election year of the nominating conventions for the candidates of both parties. And it just so happened that in 1972 both party conventions were held in the city of Miami, Florida. Well, at one of his staff meetings Director Helms issues an order. He says that the CIA will lend a safe house in Miami to the Secret Service for it to use during these conventions, but that the agency should not give any other assistance to the other US agencies, including the Secret Service, of a technical or personnel nature. Well, in another section of the "family jewels" you will see the report by one CIA office, which, in fact, went ahead and lent the Secret Service audio and video surveillance equipment for them to use in the Miami conventions and let the Secret Service continue to use this equipment through the election itself, through November of 1972.

So, in 1972—oh, and by the way, there's a whole series of these MHCHAOS reports in the period going up to the convention detailing the activities, planning and operations of various antiwar groups in the period leading up to the convention. So you see a very conscious stream of reporting about the political activities of American citizens. And then you see the agency providing facilities and equipment to other US agencies for their purposes in going after the same antiwar protesters.

AMY GOODMAN: John Prados, can you talk about John Lennon—yes, the Beatle—and his increasing antiwar activity? Ultimately, the US government, Nixon—actually Strom Thurmond was involved with this—J.

Edgar Hoover, the FBI, in trying to get him deported. What came out in these documents about Lennon?

JOHN PRADOS: Lennon is mentioned in these very same reports of the period leading up to the '72 convention. And let me backtrack on that a little bit. Lennon exercised his rights as a citizen to contribute to different causes in the United States. One of the causes that he contributed to was a group called the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, which at the beginning of 1971 held an activity in Detroit, Michigan, that was kind of a truth-telling. Veterans stood up and talked about things that they had seen, they had personally witnessed in Vietnam. Lennon apparently continued to be friendly with this organization, made more contributions to it, leading into 1972. And in the period of 1972, this same outfit, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, organized a strong protest effort at the Republican political convention in Miami. And his name appears in these very same MHCHAOS reports that I was referring to a moment ago.

Now, the actual persecution of Lennon was not so much an artifact of CIA activity as it was of the FBI. I believe that J. Edgar Hoover had something against John Lennon. I don't know if it was personal or not, but he went out of his way, I think, to set American and FBI agents after Lennon and persecute him any way he could.

AMY GOODMAN: John Prados is our guest of the National Security Archive, talking about the crackdown on dissent in the United States. John, if you could explain the significance of this being the CIA—some people might be listening and say we know the government watches—and, of course, the parallels to today, even looking at the conventions, the level of arrests and surveillance right here in New York at the convention, the Republican National Convention, where about 1,800 people were arrested, now a lot of these cases going to court—what is the right of the police to monitor, of the FBI? But the difference between the CIA and FBI in the role—in surveillance in this country, what their purviews are, what they're supposed to be doing and what they're doing illegally.

JOHN PRADOS: Absolutely. The whole question of why this aspect of the "family jewels" is so controversial goes directly to the origins of the Central Intelligence Agency. Actually, until the Central Intelligence Agency, America had never had a peacetime intelligence organization. And it was created in the aftermath of World War II. And one of the things about World War II was the very sinister and scary idea of having Gestapo, having a secret police with those kinds of powers monitoring over a citizenry. So when the issue of creating a peacetime intelligence organization was posed, one of the points of discussion was this question of what kind of police powers the agency would have. And the congressional and senatorial figures who were central in passing this legislation that created the CIA were squarely against the agency having any kind of a police function, so that when the charter of the Central Intelligence Agency was written into the National Security Act of 1947, it explicitly gave the agency no police powers, and it implicitly prohibited the agency from carrying out activities inside the United States.

AMY GOODMAN: Covert mail opening, codenamed SRPOINTER/HTLINGUAL at JFK Airport?

JOHN PRADOS: One of the longest-running CIA operations was opening of mail, American citizens' mail. It started with the idea of trying to track Russian secret agents in the United States by following sort of the path that mail might take from where it was sent from to where it arrived in the United States, or Americans where they sent mail to. That soon led to: let's look at everybody who sends letters to Russia and China, communists powers that were our adversaries in the Cold War. And as political dissent multiplied in the 1960s, that then led to: let's monitor mail that goes to anyone that we can identify as somehow connected with this struggle.

So there were levels of coverage in these two programs, under which, at the most general level, they would simply record what was the mailing address and receiving address of a letter, but at the most detailed level of coverage they would actually open the mail. First-class mail is sacrosanct under US legal provisions. Therefore, it was illegal to open this mail in the first place. They would open the mail and photograph the letters, before resealing the envelopes and sending them on their way. So they actually had files of American citizens' mail to and from whoever it was they had

decided that they would collect on. And this is part of those 7,000-plus files on Americans that the CIA accumulated during this period of time.

AMY GOODMAN: John Prados, what about the treatment of—well, questions of Soviet defectors, or are they spies?—Yuriy Nosenko?

JOHN PRADOS: The Nosenko matter is something that surprises me in the "family jewels" document, again, like with the assassinations, because I expected to see a lot more of it. There is a brief account of the Nosenko case in the response of the CIA's director of security to the Schlesinger order. And that brief memorandum is scary enough. It recounts how Nosenko was held in potential violation of kidnapping and other US laws and then sequestered in illegal detention and interrogated in a hostile fashion—another thing that rings a bell today—by CIA officers in an attempt to break him and make him tell them that he was a phony defector. Nosenko, of course, didn't feel he was a phony defector and held out against these interrogations. But that's actually another issue.

This was a major point of controversy within the Soviet Division and the Counterintelligence Division of the CIA for—excuse me, throughout the late 1960s. And several internal investigations were made of the treatment of Nosenko and his *bona fides*, of whether he was approached correctly by CIA case officers. And that huge body of material is not reflected in the "family jewels," only this brief memorandum.

AMY GOODMAN: He was held, he was detained for years. How does this compare to what we're seeing at Guantanamo?

JOHN PRADOS: That's why I said this has reflections in current experience. We have now replicated, in a sense, what was done to Yuriy Nosenko on a massive scale.

AMY GOODMAN: It's interesting, James Bamford, who wrote *Puzzle Palace*, well known for his work on the CIA and National Security Agency, etc., in the *Times* is quoted as saying, "What's going on today makes the 'family jewels' pale in comparison." In your sense of looking at these documents and your overall look at the documents you've had access to at the National Security Archive, how does it compare?

JOHN PRADOS: I'm not sure I would—I think that the situation is a little bit different than Jim's quotation that you've got. Yes, today's activities pale, in terms of the scale in which we're carrying these things out and, in some senses, the sinister activities and techniques that we've so blithely resorted to. But there is a difference from the 1960s, and that is that then a much greater proportion of this activity was directed at Americans, whereas now a lot of this effort is aimed at foreign nationals.

AMY GOODMAN: I guess the question is, the document dump hasn't been done at this point to know the extent of surveillance of Americans, people in this country.

JOHN PRADOS: Well, we're talking about the "family jewels" here. Now, I will agree with you and with Jim that lots of surveillance of Americans has been done. But haven't we shifted the operators here? You know, we're having the military do the surveillance. We're having the NSA collect everybody's phone calls. So we've taken it away from these guys that are by law not supposed to be doing American stuff. We've shifted the playing field, if you like.

AMY GOODMAN: John Prados, I want to thank you for being with us, Senior Fellow at the National Security Archive.

JOHN PRADOS: My pleasure.

AMY GOODMAN: Thanks for joining us. And we will certainly [link](#) to all of these documents at our website, democracynow.org.



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