

LINKS, 4/22/12

I was never able to keep up with my goal of doing daily link posts last year. That said, there's so much out today that I want to at least note that I can't keep up with my own posting unless I dump all these here.

Steven Aftergood notes that your elected representatives are clarmoring for more leak prosecutions.

The EU just caved to US demands for EU passenger data. With Israel dictating no fly lists to Europe and Julian Assange's lawyer being placed on an "inhibited" list with no explanation, this probably will lead to the US unilaterally dictating who can fly where in this world.

The Guardian asked pastor Terry Jones whether he bears any responsibility for the deaths he may cause if he insists on conducting another Quran burning. The Guardian doesn't appear to have asked DOD, which is trying to convince Jones not to conduct the burning, why it doesn't first take responsibility for ending the anti-Muslim abuses and the Quran burning committed by some troops.

In addition to the cooperation with Libya in exposing refugees in the UK, the documents liberated in Libya last year also describe how MI6 collaborated with Moammar Qaddafi to set up a radical mosque in some Western European country to use as bait for Islamic extremists.

Obama just issued an Executive Order basically saying that Syria and Iran should not be able to use tech to crack down on the opposition in the same way the US does.

Apparently we don't have enough spies so now DOD is rolling out a new (actually, newly renamed) Clandestine Service.

Micah Zenko addresses the stupidity behind refusing to acknowledge our Third War—the drone one—publicly.

As Jack Goldsmith notes in Charlie Savage's piece describing Obama's increasing reliance on executive orders to do the work of business, "This is what Presidents do." Congress has, with its capitulation to big money and greed, basically turned itself into a rump institution doing no more than channeling money into DC's main industry. I think Obama, with his congressional majority in 2008, might have been able to begin to reverse that if he had actually used his majority rather than pissing it away in a bid for bipartisan crap rather than effective legislation. But he didn't.

Evgeny Morozov explains why Anonymous' structure and disparate goals has led to increased surveillance rather than less. I think his analysis suffers from the classic chicken-and-egg fallacy, and fails to account for the degree to which these choices are probably being dictated by FBI-directed double agents. But it worthwhile analysis.

File this news—that half of Iran's super-tanker capacity is sitting anchored in the gulf with no place to go—in the "whatever could go wrong?" file. If we're lucky it will involve nothing more than pirates and not fully-laden tankers sunk and draining into the gulf.

Jose Padilla's mom has appealed her suit against Donald Rumsfeld for torture to SCOTUS. This case is the best set of facts—but the least empathetic plaintiff—of several suits trying to hold the government accountable for torturing American citizens.

LINKS, 9/28/11

Back in the day we were watching cut submarine telecom cables pretty closely. Here's a map of the global Toobz network. (h/t Global Guerrillas)

A Muslim Republican, Nezar Hamze, was denied a spot on Broward County Republican Party's Executive Committee not because he is Muslim, the party claimed, but because he has ties to CAIR. The DOJ owns significant responsibility for this, as they have not rescinded a document in the Holy Land Foundation trial naming CAIR as an unindicted conspirator.

Hershey has gotten increasingly dickish in response to the foreign workers who they've been exploiting all summer. The latest? They're pushing these kids out of housing and harassing their parents. (h/t Susie)

Among other things, Facebook includes a record of every event you've been invited to, and whether you've accepted, declined, or ignored that invitation. This must be why FB, on a seemingly daily basis at this point, spams me to tell me I've got notices I'm ignoring.

The Obama Administration has delayed implementation—from November to January—of the new fuel efficiency standards that it was bragging about back in July. I'm sure implementing them during an election year won't be a problem.

Anthony (Tony Baloney) Bologna actually pepper-sprayed at least one other group of protestors over the weekend. Check out Bologna's face as he engages in this kind of senseless brutality.

As hard as you New Yorkers think it is to find a parking space, take solace in knowing that it is far harder to find spaces in cities in China and India. This, btw, is one of the fundamental flaws to plans car companies have to keep expanding wildly in China. There's simply not space to park all those cars.

I was going to write a post on how the Administration should be focusing its energy on Chinese currency manipulation rather than its jobs bill (or better yet, both). But DDay laid out what's going on, with Harry Reid postponing Obama's jobs bill for now to work on the currency bill. So go read his post.

LINKS, 9/26/11

It looks like the CIA may have gotten hit by another double agent in the attack on its Afghan station yesterday.

“What is unique in the Obama administration is their decision that in spite of the disagreements on the political level, the military and intelligence relationship which benefits both sides will not be spoiled by the political tension,” the former head of Israel’s military intelligence is quoted by Eli Lake as saying, in an article describing Obama’s approval of bunker-buster sales to Israel.

A Tiny Revolution chronicles how Lewis Powell Jr’s plan for a right wing conspiracy is being renamed, “Attack of the American Free Enterprise System.”

This great piece on Countrywide’s retaliation against whistleblowers says that one woman wrote Angelo Mozilo describing fraud in mortgage origination in March 2007, and another did so sometime before November 2007. How is it, again, that DOJ decided not to file criminal charges against him?

Reuters continues its excellent series on how corporations use secrecy jurisdictions. This installment? How what gets incorporated in Las Vegas—and Nevada generally—stays secret in Las Vegas.

Steven Aftergood notes that the CIA has classified—and, on that basis, refused a FOIA in its entirety—on its investigations of climate change.

Note: I realized today I never posted a links post I started last week. So these are, uh,

dated. But all still worthwhile.

I have been meaning to write about the Solyndra faux scandal but haven't gotten to it. Thankfully, Kate Sheppard made one of the points I've been meaning to make—with visuals! That is, if you want to see a real scandal, not some penny ante pipsqueak faux scandal, you're gonna have to look at DOD boondoggles like ballistic missile defense or the F-35.

Stephen Walt, in a perhaps self-congratulatory piece, argues that Tom Friedman only discovered the Israel lobby because there have been glaring spotlights focused on it finally (largely by Stephen Walt).

Sony, whose incompetence exposed 100 million customers to data breach earlier this year, is now making people sign away their right to sue Sony in a class action.

Justin Elliott reports that the Obama Administration is seeking a waiver on human rights related trade restrictions with Uzbekistan. We're doing this not because Uzbekistan has cleaned up its act, but because Pakistan is no longer that reliable an ally, so we need another supply chain into Afghanistan. But as former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan Craig Murray argues that the effort will be counterproductive.

Here's a cool visualization of where the population centers of the world are and what the lifestyle there is. Make sure to click through to see what each of those lifestyles entails.

LINKS, 9/7/11

A chain of Mormon boarding schools has been accused of torturing hundreds of the teenagers

who attended the schools. That's horrible on its face. But remember, too, that key architects of the country's torture program—Bruce Jessen and James Mitchell, Jay Bybee, and Tim Flanigan—are also Mormon. That's not to damn the entire faith. But c'mon, folks, that's a lot of embrace of torture.

Most of the 9/11 reviews are just fluff. But Will Bunch has a list of 10 unanswered questions about 9/11 that's worth your time. (h/t Susie)

First the guy who tried to cut USGS and emergency communication funding gets hit with an earthquake, and now Governor Perry, who cut funding to support volunteer firefighters, has had his state get hit by horrible fires.

This guest post at Tom Ricks' place notes that the push to cut military retirement benefits is being led by a bunch of officers who have forgotten the class differences between them and the average retiree.

When I first heard about Obama's capitulation to polluters on ozone standards, I was reminded that when Bush did something similar, lefties got outraged. This piece, titled "Obama pulls a Bush on clean air," details that earlier incident, then explains just how shitty Obama's capitulation here is. Meanwhile, Al Gore weighs in: "Instead of relying on science, President Obama appears to have bowed to pressure from polluters who did not want to bear the cost of implementing new restrictions on their harmful pollution..."

You know those documents conveniently found in Libya showing US and British collaboration with Libya on renditions? One of the guys involved in the rendition of a rebel leader moved from MI6 to BP not long after the rendition.

Peter Daou looks at how GOP ideology has led to a decline in American exceptionalism.

Two authors who have added up the \$1T+ dumped into homeland security wonder why we don't use a cost-benefit analysis before we waste this

money.

Pew looks at the factors that make it more likely for someone to be downwardly mobile. The secret to maintaining the same level of affluence as your parents? Marriage and higher education (not surprisingly).

Chicago Fed President Charles Evans does the math to show a 9% unemployment rate is as bad as 5% inflation—and the Fed ought to respond accordingly.

“Every step taken by the US has benefited Al Shabab,” a Somali warlord interviewed by Jeremy Scahill for this important piece told him. “What brought about the [Islamic Courts Union, a group of Islamic organizations that unified to push out the CIA]? It was the US-backed warlords. If Ethiopia did not invade and the US did not carry out airstrikes, Al Shabab would not have survived so long, because they were outnumbered by those who had positive agendas.” The piece concludes, “the Shabab’s meteoric rise in Somalia, and the legacy of terror it has wrought, is blowback sparked by a decade of disastrous US policy that ultimately strengthened the very threat it was officially intended to crush. In the end, the greatest beneficiaries of US policy are the warlords, including those who once counted the Shabab among their allies and friends.”

LINKS, 9/6/11

Remember that top DHS cybersecurity official who quit in June? He’s now working for Sony, which badly needs help protecting their users’ privacy.

In their latest installment reporting on the NYPD’s “CIA-on-the-Hudson,” Goldman and Apuzzo reveal that the NYPD’s spooks have 250 mosques and student groups under surveillance.

Jeffrey Bloomberg reports on Robert Gates bitching about Israel and specifically Bibi Netanyahu for being ungrateful for US efforts to protect Israel's interests. But he then concludes that the US should nevertheless go to the mat to oppose Palestinian statehood in the UNSC.

Mitch McConnell is cross with Obama because he's not sending American jobs to Korea fast enough, and not asking Americans to compete against workers who will be killed for organizing fast enough.

This article suggests the rising middle class in developing nations may demand a new focus on getting rid of corruption and expanding democracy. While I'm dubious about this claim generally—it uses the World Bank's measure for middle class, which is shockingly low, to show the ballooning of the middle class, but then uses Pew results for middle class attitudes—I do wonder whether the reverse is happening in the US, as more and more people fall out of the middle class.

The AP's headline suggests that Americans are willing to trade civil liberties to protect against terrorism. But poll results seem to say a majority do not want to make that trade—which I believe is a swing back in favor of civil liberties and (for the question on torture) human rights.

This DKos diary anecdotally quantifies austerity at the state level: a couple, both of whom work for the WI state government, who will see \$500 less a month in their paycheck because of Scott Walker's new deductions. That adds up to \$20M taken out of the WI economy immediately. Note, this has been going on for part time workers for some years—it's what the declining average hours worked in BLS surveys translate into.

The DC District Court upheld a District Court ruling that DOJ should turn over at least some of the information ACLU FOIAed on the government's use of cell phone tracking in

criminal prosecutions. DOJ is hiding that cell phone tracking info like a crown jewel—I would imagine things may get interesting when DOJ releases this stuff.

AlterNet has a list of 5 brands to avoid if you're trying to avoid war profiteers: BP, FedEx, Dell, Kraft, and Pepsi.

A blogger who, after receiving the full gate grope treatment, called it rape on her blog. Now, the TSA Agent who administered the gate grope is suing for \$500,000.

LINKS, 8/29/11



Mr. EW took this picture this weekend of a teeny frog living in a hole in a picnic table (that's his index finger in the picture, giving you a sense of how small this fella was).

While he doesn't use the word "lie" (he lists "reasons to doubt Cheney's version" and says it's difficult to see how his claims could be true), Barton Gellman catches Cheney in one he told about his illegal wiretap program. I think there are a few more reasons to support the case Cheney is lying here (which I'll lay out once I've read the book).

The AP confirms what appeared likely when Der Spiegel and David Ignatius first reported that a close associate of Mullah Omar, Tayyab Aga, had been brokering a peace deal: Hamid Karzai leaked news of the peace discussions to ensure he

remained a part of any peace discussions.

The CIA is redacting chunks of publicly known details about their interrogation practices from Ali Soufan's book. They're not just doing this with Soufan's book: his testimony to the 9/11 Commission has been pending release at the National Archives since I did some work there in spring 2009.

Jonathan Hafetz has a post summarizing the various Bivens suits suing the government for torture (we've talked about most of these—Vance, the two Padilla suits, and Doe v. Rumsfeld—here). It helps to explain why one of all of these is likely to be heard by SCOTUS.

CAP has done an excellent report on the systematic attempt to get Americans to fear creeping sharia law and other Muslim culture. It describes the funders, the "scholars," and the press that has fostered Islamophobia in this country. I hope to write more on the report, but until then, read it for yourself.

It turns out Wobbly songwriter Joe Hill was shot by a rival for his sweetheart's attention and not the son of the grocer he was wrongly executed for killing.

The people ~~providing material support to a terrorist organization~~ lobbying to delist MEK from the State Department's list of terrorist organizations are being paid big money to do so. Add Patrick Kennedy to that list of people.

I joked last week that if Apple didn't take over this country, then people might turn to churches, neighborhoods, and small businesses as they grow increasingly disgusted with government. But Gallup also shows that people like the computer industry a whole lot. I was most interested in how well food companies—the restaurant, farming, and grocery industries did in this Gallup poll.

Washington Monthly has developed its own set of college and university rankings to measure how institutes of higher learning are serving

society. They've done so to drive better higher ed decisions. While Berea College (unsurprisingly and deservedly) leads the list, I'm proud to say both my alma maters—Amherst and University of Michigan—are in the top 10 in their respective categories.

LINKS, AUGUST 25, 2011

I got really behind on these for a few days, so some of these are dated.

A senior military officer claims they've finally "got our arms around" contracting to Afghan contractors. But if that doesn't work, a senior congressional staffer says, they're going to have "to reduce the [U.S.] footprint in Afghanistan."

Japan has reintroduced lessons on radioactivity into their middle school curriculum. "The nature of radiation" had been taught until reforms during the 1980s dropped the subject.

We had a heated debate about the canard that half the country doesn't pay taxes last week. Corey Robin makes a point that I and others also made in the thread: that the real problem with that stat is that it means half of the people who work in this country are paid terrible wages. I agree with him; we'd be better focusing on the low wages here than engaging on the nonsensical claim that these people are deadbeats solely because they're paid so poorly.

Iran-Contra spook Clair George died of a heart attack on August 11. He was so old (81), he lived at a time when DOJ actually prosecuted Executive Branch figures who lie to Congress. Of course, that was in the era when we didn't claim the Executive Branch could investigate the Executive Branch. Ah, those were good times.

Jared Bernstein thinks that the collapse in approval of Obama's treatment of the economy has to do with the focus on the debt ceiling. I'd love to see someone like Nate Silver do more nuanced analysis on this point. In particular, I'd like to see whether people even understand that the "debt ceiling" is related to the "deficit" that polls show, in abstract, concerns people.

The BATF says the supervisors involved in Operation Fast and Furious were not, in fact, promoted, but just moved from a operational to an administrative function. The LAT's sources stand by the interpretation that these were promotions.

Part of this article about rising levels of drinking in China talks about how important drinking is to doing business, which certainly is consistent with what I experienced when I was doing business there. But it doesn't consider what that means for gender equality. I would have to explicitly invite women to events (even lunches) that might involve drinking and even there it was generally assumed they wouldn't drink (I guess, as a heathen I was excepted from that expectation). And I got a real sense that this meant the women were left back at dealers running the business with an "Associate Manager" title while their colleagues with full "Manager" titles were out at drinking lunches with the boss.

SEC whistleblower Gary Aguirre points outs that apologists for the SEC's document destruction policy—who claim the SEC didn't violate any existing understanding with the National Archives with their policy—are ignoring a 1992 agreement and pretending a mere name change gimmick changed the rules.

An inquest into the death of the GCHQ spy who was killed and left in a duffel bag last year, Gareth Williams, is scheduled to happen this year.

Detroit says an increasing number of squatters

are taking over vacant homes; It seems our state laws make it hard to get rid of them. They should just do what they banks do: pretend they own it. The Registers, after all, can do nothing when they see something out of order on such paperwork.

National Security Archives' Nate Jones notes that DOD has centralized all FOIA responses for requests on the Osama bin Laden to the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He notes that, while OSD has one of the better records on FOIA response at DOD, this might be an attempt to keep the bin Laden photos from Judicial Watch. I'd add, too, that there's tension between the Army and Navy over this raid, so by centralizing it, you might avoid selective leaks.

China just came out in support of a Palestinian plan to bid for statehood at the UN.

LINKS, 8/17/11

I guess it takes a lot of smart kids from other countries to show us what assholes Hershey is—and to teach us about solidarity.

I assume you've already read the Matt Taibbi piece revealing that the SEC has been destroying records of its preliminary investigations, effectively giving serial problem corporations an apparent clean bill of health. If you haven't read it, go do so. But you should also read Felix Salmon on Taibbi's piece; he points out that while the traditional media is discussing Chuck Grassley's response to the story, most are not pointing back to Taibbi's own article describing what it's all about.

I've seen predictions the student loan bubble was going to crash for some time—even before it became clear that recent graduates aren't getting jobs. That crash is getting much closer,

as delinquencies rise.

After the Knights of Columbus got bullied to accept the \$8.5 billion settlement with Bank of America, the trustee, Bank of NY Mellon blew them off. So now the KoC have expanded their suit challenging the settlement, including breach of fiduciary duty, based on claims BNY Mellon botched the foreclosures.

Blackwater: still spying in Afghanistan.

This is actually a sweet story. A Chinese-American businessman named ZhaoHui Tang saw Gary Locke in the Seattle Airport on his way to his new job as Ambassador to China. Locke was carrying his own knapsack, buying his own Starbucks coffee. So Tang took a picture and posted it to a Chinese social media site, where it was a big hit because it showed Locke in such a down-to-earth light.

A few weeks back, Joe Klein reported that Obama was reading Nixonland. At the time, I saw Rick Perlstein tweet that he hoped Obama took the right message from the book. Here's Rick explaining what that message should be (the answer? emphasizing how Democrats have helped real people).

Lee Fang reports that the Darrell Issa staffer who probably wrote a letter complaining about margin requirements for derivatives used to work for Goldman Sachs.

Rortybomb has the best post on the "Texas miracle" I've seen. Short version: it didn't have a housing bubble and therefore hasn't deleveraged like similar states. I still think you have to add in the oil industry (not least to distinguish TX's success from OH, MI, and PA's woes in that very first graphic.

LINKS, 8/16/11

The Steelworkers made this cool video for their Convention. I think the voiceover guy is the same one as did the Chrysler 200 Super Bowl ad.

Banana Republic of America

Public Citizen has a calculator you can use to find out how many jobs from your congressional district may be lost in the Korean Trade deal.

The GOP is gaining among poor and younger white voters. A lot of these people are the same hardest hit by the jobs crisis.

Naomi Klein compares the London riots to Argentine riots of 2001 and looting after the fall of Saddam Hussein.

It turns out Quantitative Easing helps the MOTUs, but not so much the little people—it mostly went to increased profits and higher prices for goods. Yet these same people who benefited from the higher profits say they can't be taxed because it'd be unfair.

WalMart's sales continue to be at risk because their customers keep switching down to lower priced goods.

~~Our War on Communism Terror Drugs African-Americans Photographers Commuters~~

The National Security Archive, after much work, has liberated the CIA's official history of the Bay of Pigs. One of the big revelations is a judgment from November 15, 1960 that the plan would fail without full DOD support—a judgment never shared with Kennedy.

Yochi Dreazen says the SEALs killed in last week's helicopter attack were pursuing low-level militants unworthy of such an elite team. Of course, one might ask why we're fighting Taliban with SEALs and not those last 50 al Qaeda members in Afghanistan, too.

Another Al Jazeera journalist has been arrested,

this time by Israel. They claim the journalist, Kabul bureau chief Samer Allawi, has ties to Hamas.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms just gave promotions to the supervisors who lost a bunch of guns in Operation Fast and Furious—one of them to be Deputy Assistant in BATF's Office of Professional Responsibility and Security, their internal watchdog. If Darrell Issa didn't already think this was a cover-up I'm sure this would convince him.

Rahm wants to settle the civil suits arising out of Jon Burge's torture. While he seems squeamish about letting Mayor Daley testify, settling the suits is absolutely the right thing to do—and a far cry from what Rahm's former boss is doing in the Vance, Doe, and Padilla suits—these men were all tortured by their government and it's just appalling to try to deny liability to save a few bucks. Athenae has more on the reporting on this story.

I once took a photography class with a guy doing an entire book of road kill—some of the images were very cool. Lucky, that was in UT and not Long Beach, since cops in that city have a policy that says they can detain photographers if their images have no aesthetic value.

SUSA shows that most people aren't that bugged that BART shut down its tunnel network last week. (h/t Digby) Hopefully, that won't deter the FCC from their investigation.

Power to the Power Companies

Japanese utilities, encouraged by the government (and specifically the nuclear industry watchdog), are astroturfing meetings to create the illusion of support for reopening nuclear power plants. Now the effort is backfiring.

LINKS, 8/12/11

The Daily Show

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The National Security State

While David Cameron has just been speaking hypothetically about shutting down social networks to stop riots, BART turned off cell phone coverage at San Francisco Civic Center station. Didn't Egypt fine Hosni Mubarak for this kind of censorship?

Slate reports that Andres Breivik may have put a code in his manifesto, with GPS coordinates of locations across Europe.

The AP has profiles of many of the men who died in the helicopter downing over the weekend.

As Paul Pillar summarizes, at the same time as almost 1/6 of Congress goes to Israel on a junket, Israel continues to encourage illegal settlements, forcing the US to waste political capital on preventing Palestinians from getting justice via other means, like statehood. Meanwhile, Antiwar notes that AIPAC's funding has gotten really fishy, presumably in response to the Steve Rosen defamation lawsuit against it.

In a "Six Questions" with Scott Horton, Harold Bloom draws parallels between the Presidents Bush and late Roman emperors and calls Obama a "pseudo-Aurelius" for the way he has continued W's policies.

The Vice President of the Maersk Line limited thinks bad policies passed by Congress are worse than pirates. Of course, there's a significant underlying bias here that says that shipping companies should not have to pay the external costs, so take what is otherwise a very intriguing essay with that grain of salt.

Our Dying Economy

Finally, someone in Congress has pointed out that one way to minimize chances of hacked circuits and chips is to make them in the United States.

The SEC is investigating the S&P's downgrade. Not competently, I'm guessing.

I talked about how insane it is that people who produce (manufacture or farm) get such a small chunk of the money we spend on their products. This Grist article talks about how Farmers Markets support jobs.

64% of Americans don't have enough cash to handle a \$1000 emergency expense. Give stats on net worth, this should not be a surprise to anyone. Still bad news, but not a surprise.

Justice and Injustice

The Cash for Kids judge got sentenced to 28 years. Heck, I wouldn't have minded if his sentence were longer.

On the same day Multiple Choice Mitt reminded us all that corporations are people, Exxon filed to have the full Circuit review an opinion holding that corporations, like individuals, could be held liable for torture and other human rights violations.