

Selected Writings by Sachi Sri Kantha

Tamil Nation:



The Sloths, The Snails and the Primates of the U.S. State Department...



...Mandela Removed at long last from US 'terrorism watch list'!

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The news got splashed on July 2nd that the names of Nelson Mandela and his colleagues of African National Congress (ANC) have been removed from the notorious 'terrorism watch list' maintained by the U.S. State Department.

Mandela was released from the South African prison on February 11, 1990, after 27 years. Then, he was inaugurated as President of South Africa on May 10, 1994. Five years later on June 14, 1999, he retired from active politics. Now, 9 years later, the Primates of the U.S. State Department got into action, to felicitate Mandela's forthcoming 90th birthday by removing his name from its 'terrorism watch list'.

The ultra-slowness of this bureaucratic action could make even the sloths and snails wince! The ingenuity of American rocket scientists may have landed men in the moon way back in 1969, but the work performance of the primates manning the U.S. State Department in the terrestrial sphere would make even the proverbial pace of

sloths and snails as speedy as rabbits.

Relating to the removal of Mandela's name from the terrorism watch list, Mr. Tom Casey, the U.S. State Department spokesman, had asserted "What it will do is make sure that there aren't any extra hoops for either a distinguished individual, like former President Mandela, or other members of the African National Congress to get a U.S. visa." [CNN.com news, July 2, 2008].

I noted two points which were glaringly missing. First, a non-acknowledgement that the originally biased decision that made Mandela a terrorist was largely based on ethnic type casting. In 1960s, institutionalized racism in the Washington corridors of power was a given. Simply put, while Mandela and his agitators were black, the rulers of South Africa were whites and capitalist interests of Uncle Sam dictated that ruling whites were the preferred partners as opposed to ANC and Mandela.

It need not be stressed that the 1997 decision of the U.S. State Department to tag LTTE as a foreign terrorist organization was also based on the ANC-Mandela example of ethnic type casting.

Secondly, a diligent omission that the CIA operatives had goofed (as is their habitual wont!) in distinguishing a liberation movement leader from that of a terrorist.

CIA Involvement in Mandela's Arrest

In his autobiography, [*Long Walk to Freedom* \(Little Brown & Co, Boston, 1994\)](#), a time-mellowed Mandela has been unduly diplomatic and gentlemanly in being courteous to the CIA on the issue of how he got arrested in 1962 by the South African apartheid police. To quote him,

"The most oft-cited story was that an American consular official with connections to the CIA had tipped off the authorities. This story has never been confirmed and I have never seen any reliable evidence as to the truth of it. Although the CIA has been responsible for many contemptible activities in its support of American imperialism, I cannot lay my capture at their door. In truth, I had been imprudent about maintaining the secrecy of my movements." (pp. 319-320)

Mandela may have had his own reasons for being uncritical about CIA's involvement in South African politics. I'd state that Mandela was prudent and pragmatic, for at least two reasons. First, his autobiography was released by a Boston publisher. Thus, he may have been advised by his American editors that softening his criticism to American institutions like CIA is good for sales in the American market. Secondly, in 1994, as the newly elected president of South Africa, he was in need of economic aid package from Uncle Sam.

However, more details on CIA involvement in Mandela's arrest appeared in British journalist [Martin Meredith's work, *Nelson Mandela – A Biography*](#) (Penguin Books, 1997). To quote four relevant paragraphs of Meredith,

"There were persistent rumours that the United States Central Intelligence Agency was involved. Mandela's links with communists had made him a target for US officials embroiled with the Soviet Union in a murky struggle for influence in a number of newly independent African states and obsessed with the need to contain communist encroachment in Africa. The CIA was active throughout southern Africa, keeping track of the activities of liberation movements there, determined to prevent what it saw as communist-supported armed intervention 'under the guise of African liberation'. It found an ally in the South African government, which was only too willing to collaborate. Intelligence information was exchanged on a regular basis.

“The CIA covert-operations section in Johannesburg had expended considerable energy penetrating the ANC. Its chief undercover agent, Millard Shirley, the son of American missionaries who had been born in South Africa, had cultivated contacts at all levels of the organization. A stocky, balding figure, with a reputation as a heavy drinker and a womanizer, he passed himself off as a reporter for an American television news network, readily gaining access dissident groups. He was known by South African intelligence to possess a high-ranking ‘deep throat’ – a Durban-based Indian in the ranks of the Communist Party there.

“Two pieces of evidence subsequently came to light linking the CIA to Mandela’s arrest. The first concerned the local CIA agent in Durban at the time, Don Rickard, a consular officer who, at the end of his tour in South Africa, was heard boasting at a diplomatic party of the role that he had played in Mandela’s arrest. The second concerned Paul Eckel, the CIA station chief based at the US Embassy in Pretoria. Eckel, who died in 1986, confided what had happened to another US official and in 1990 that official, then retired, told an American journalist, Joseph Albright, what Eckel had said: ‘We turned Mandela over to the South African Security Branch. We gave them every detail, what he would be wearing, the time of day, just where he would be. They picked him up. It was one of our greatest coups.’

“Given Mandela’s amateurish conduct in the days before his arrest, it was equally possible that the South African police already knew of his whereabouts from their own efforts. Mandela had been carried away by romantic notions of his role as ‘Commander-in-Chief’, the showman of the law courts now wanting to become the showman of the battlefield, wearing army fatigues and khaki, carrying a gun, though never intending to use it, flaunting his presence at gatherings of the faithful. These were dangerous pretensions at such a time. In all, Mandela survived in the field in South Africa as [head of Umkhonto](#) since its launching in December 1961 for no more than five weeks. And in that time, as a result of keeping notebooks, he came close to incriminating a considerable number of other people.”

In the subsequent paragraph, Meredith also notes,

“When asked in later years about the evidence of the CIA’s involvement in his arrest, his response was, ‘Let bygones be bygones. Let’s forget about that, where it is true or not.’ ”

Two Humor Columns of Art Buchwald

It is a pity that satirist [Art Buchwald](#) is not with us now, to comment on the sloth and stinginess of spirit of U.S. State Department officials. But he had opined on the two issues which I have noted were missing in the proclamation of the primates of U.S. State Department: (1) institutionalized racism of American agencies, and (2) hanky-panky deals of CIA.

To savor, I reproduce below two humor columns of Art Buchwald, that appear in his anthology book, [While Reagan Slept](#) (1983). The column with the title, ‘The Gates’ Syndrome’ (pp.183-185) indeed makes passing reference to the then South African apartheid leader P.W. Botha. The second column with the title, ‘No Business Like CIA Business’ (pp.114-116) lampoons the nosy trans-border business practices indulged by the CIA, that are then tagged mercilessly onto the heads of American taxpayers.

The Gates’ Syndrome by Art Buchwald

It seems that Los Angeles Police Chief Daryl Gates has been under fire because so many blacks have been dying from a vicious ‘chokehold’ the police use to cut off the supply of blood to the

brain.

Gates said in defense of the LA force that he had a ‘hunch’ that blacks are more susceptible to neck injuries because more blacks are harmed with this hold than whites. ‘We may be finding that in some blacks when it [the chokehold] is applied, the veins or arteries do not open as fast as they do on normal people,’ he told the *Los Angeles Times*. ‘There may be something arresting the ability of the blood to flow again [after the hold]. We’re going to look at that very carefully’.

What Gates doesn’t know is that a lot of work has been done in the field of black mortality by Professor Ku at the University of Kluxclan. Ku is the one who discovered that more young black than white suspects were killed by police bullets, and thus arrived at the conclusion that there is something in blacks that will not fight lead poisoning. In another study, he postulated that more black suspects in handcuffs were injured in police cars on the way to station houses than white, which he attributes to a metabolic defect in blacks who lose their balance when being roughed up in the backseats of automobiles.

In his most recent paper titled ‘Racial Weaknesses as Applied to the Gates’ Syndrome’, just published in the *Police Gazette*, Professor Ku writes:

“With regard to chokeholds in the United States, three times as many blacks as whites suffer severe injuries to themselves before being booked at the police station. For reasons that cannot yet be medically explained, blacks require twice as much oxygen when being choked as whites. This phenomenon, known as ‘Gates’ Syndrome’, has doctors perplexed, particularly because a black’s arteries cannot deliver sufficient blood to the brain.

“A normal white person can withstand being choked for at least three minutes without passing out. In tests at several Los Angeles police stations, black volunteers passed out in less than two minutes. One theory expounded by visiting Professor Bother of the University of South Africa is that, when arrested, a black’s fear of the police causes his veins to contract at the moment he is being choked. When the hold is released the trauma remains and it is impossible for the blood to go to the head.

“Professor Lembeck, of the National Police Institute of Houston, disagrees with Bother on his trauma theory and maintains that the ‘Gates’ Syndrome’ can be attributed to a vitamin deficiency caused by a black person’s diet. Lembeck says, ‘Cutting off a normal victim’s windpipe for a reasonable amount of time should not cause undue damage, unless the victim is lacking Vitamin F, which is essential for breathing. Therefore it is recommended that the arresting officer use a chokehold only after he has been given training in mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.’

“There is not enough data available at this time to accept either Bother’s or Lembeck’s theory. The racial connection has been established as a cause of ‘Gates’ Syndrome’ but the ‘why’ is still a question mark.

“Unfortunately, Civil Rights organizations in Los Angeles are trying to cut off research work in this important area by demanding the chokehold be abolished before the medical cure for ‘Gates’ Syndrome’ can be found.

“I submit that this would be a great mistake for black people everywhere. The circulatory system of

blacks has tremendous scientific importance for the justice system of the country. Until we find out why they can't tolerate choking as easily as normal white people, the mystery of black fatalities in Los Angeles will never be solved."

No Business like CIA Business by Art Buchwald

One of the things the CIA does is run secret businesses known as proprietaries, to provide covers for agents to 'wash' money for covert operations and for other clandestine operations.

Up until recently, these businesses have been very successful but lately many of them have been losing money. So 'the Company' decided to call everyone back to Langley, Virginia, to see what was going wrong.

The director of covert business operations was in a foul temper. He addressed the CIA agents who were charged with running the business covers.

'This is the worst year we've ever had,' he said. 'Our gross sales are down by twenty percent, and the CIA can no longer eat your losses. Now what the hell is going on?'

The agent, whose cover was president of the 'Deutschland Music Box Company,' said, 'It's the fault of the Hong Kong station. They stole our designs and they're flooding the United States market with cheap imitations. I make the best music boxes in the world, but I can't compete on price.'

'Isn't that tough?' the agent from Hong Kong, whose cover was chairman of the 'Kowloon Toy Company,' said. 'If you can't compete, then get out of the music box business. I'm not making a dime on my boxes ever since the 'Taiwan CIA Company' started to undercut us.'

The director said, 'Why does everyone have to make music boxes? Can't you come up with a new product like the Barbie doll?'

The agent running the 'South Korean Novelty Company' said, 'We put out a Nancy and Ronnie doll for Christmas and it laid an egg.'

The director looked over his computer printouts. 'What happened to you, Danfield? It says your 'New Delhi Exporting Company' dropped two million dollars in the last quarter?'

'That wasn't my fault. I sent one million madras welcome mats through Donnegger's shipping company in Bombay, and his stupid people unloaded them in Pakistan. Anyone here ever try to sell a 'Made in India' welcome mat in Pakistan?'

Donnegger said, 'Your company got the invoices all screwed up. You had the yak butter going to the United States and the welcome mats going to Pakistan. We're not mind readers.'

'Oh, shut up,' the director said. 'Let's get to you, Brinkley. How do you explain the fact that you still have two hundred thousand Lapland ski boots in your warehouse in Helsinki?'

'I had an order from Harrod's in London for the whole lot, when the KGB's 'Finlandia Sporting Goods Company' got wind of it and made Harrod's an offer they couldn't refuse. I've asked covert operations to burn down the Finlandia factory three times, but they keep ignoring my request. How can I run a clandestine business if our people won't get tough with the competition?

The director said, 'I'll talk to the arson people later. Now we get to Biberman. I have a report that you used CIA covert funds to cover up your losses from the 'Mediterranean Fruit Fly Company'.

'I'm suing Jerry Brown and the State of California. As soon as I win the case, I'll replace the money. I can prove every fruit fly we sent them was sterile.'

The director said, 'Biberman, you wouldn't know a sterile fruit fly from a gypsy moth. I see from this printout the only one who made a profit this year for 'the Company' was Tablestone. Let him tell the rest of you dunderheads how he did it.'

'He isn't here, sir. He resigned last month and went into business for himself.'

'What kind of business?'

'Selling submachine guns, bombs and poison gas canisters to the Libyans. He said that as far as business was concerned, the CIA didn't offer him a future, and he'd rather strike out on his own.'

'Where is he getting all his stuff?'

'The same people we get it from sir.'

'Do you mean to say he is telling people he is still working for the CIA?'

'No, just the opposite. He keeps telling them he isn't. But the more he insists he has nothing to do with us, the more our suppliers believe he does.'

The director said, 'You have to hand it to Tablestone. He always had a talent for making a buck. I wish I had a hundred more like him.'