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Fantasy and the Fantasy of Espionage

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Abstract. This article explores relationships between fantasy and the commission of espionage.

According to documents posted by the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) Project on Government Secrecy, a United States (US) Navy petty officer who was accused of committing espionage against the US and incarcerated for over 500 days was released from custody without substantiation of the espionage allegation. According to the FAS-posted documents, the two key factors in the petty officer's incarceration were, first, polygraph testing yielding indeterminate results concerning deception and, also, the petty officer's admission that he had occasional fantasies about committing espionage over his career. (According to the documents, the petty officer also stated that he would never do anything to harm the US Navy.)

Defenders of the petty officer have maintained that fantasies of committing espionage are common for individuals who have access to classified or sensitive information. They also have maintained that because data suggest the commonality of espionage fantasy but the uncommonality of espionage, then using the former as an indicator of the latter is not only foolish from a personnel security perspective but hurtful to said security in that it engenders false accusations against individuals--and at least a motivation to consider violating security--who already have access to classified and sensitive information. In other words, the fantasy of espionage as an indicator of espionage is a fantasy.

However, the relationship of fantasy of espionage to the commission of espionage may not be so clear-cut. First, data on the frequency of espionage behavior are based on those individuals who have committed espionage and have been caught at it. A reasonable assumption is that all or almost all of these individuals thought about committing espionage before they committed it. Exceptions would be those who could engage in so-called mindless or out-of-consciousness behavior and those who did not realize that the behavior engaged in was, indeed, espionage. However, the number of individuals who engage in espionage and are not caught at it is--by definition--unknowable. Given that the number is something above zero, the relationship between fantasy of espionage and commission of espionage is most likely underestimated.

Second, there is significant psychological research suggesting that fantasy can lead to fantasy-compatible behavior. For example, various cognitive and cognitive-behavior therapies suggest that fantasies of acting differently than how one usually acts can lead to actual behavior similar to the fantasies and differently from how one does usually act. Also, fantasies associated with social learning and vicarious conditioning episodes in everyday life can lead to behavior similar to the fantasy content. As well, fantasy is integral to cognitive and imaginal strategies in sports psychology and performance enhancement approaches that can yield incremental behavior change compatible with fantasy.

Third, there is significant psychological research linking anti-social fantasy and fantasy of criminal violation to anti-social and criminal behavior. This is the case in linking television shows, movies, music, written text, and pictures with graphic sexual and violent content to higher probabilities of illicit and/or illegal sexual and violent behavior in some individuals. This also is the case in developing profiles of

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individuals who have committed assault, serial murder, unsafe sex, masochistic sex, child molestation, homicide, serial crime, and rape.

Fourth, significant elements of self-identity are constructed and maintained through fantasy. A case in point is ethnicity that serves a number of ego-protective and interpersonal functions including the denial of badness and the projection of it onto others and the defense against the hatred that others might have for aspects of the self.

In conclusion, the perfunctory denial of a significant relationship between fantasy of espionage and commission of espionage--nomothetically and idiographically--may be facile and premature. (See Borkovec, T.D., & Mathews, A.M. (1988). Treatment of nonphobic anxiety disorders: A comparison of nondirective, cognitive, and coping desensitization therapy. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 56, 877-884; Crabb, P.B. (2000). The material culture of homicidal fantasies. *Aggressive Behavior*, 26, 225-234; Kocsis, R.N., & Irwin, H.J. (1998). The psychological profile of serial offenders and a redefinition of the misnomer of serial crime. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 5, 197-213; Lachmann, A., & Lachmann, F.M. (1995). The personification of evil: Motivations and fantasies of the serial killer. *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, 4, 17-23; McConaghy, N. (1997). Science and the mismanagement of rapists and paedophiles. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 4, 109-123; Moskowitz, M. (1995). Ethnicity and the fantasy of ethnicity. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 12, 547-555; Oversight of the Daniel King case. (April 4, 2001). *SECRECY NEWS*, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/index.html>; Proulx, J., Perreault, C., & Ouimet, M. (1999). Pathways in the offending process of extrafamilial sexual child molesters. *Sexual Abuse: Journal of Research and Treatment*, 11, 117-129; Pryce, A. (2001). 'Some people live out their own snuff movie': Knowledge, 'safer' sex and managing desire in the city. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 16, 15-34; Rohde-Dachser, C. (1999). the struggle for empathy--Attempt to interpret masochistic fantasy enactments. *Institutional Forum of Psychoanalysis*, 8, 115-123; Silver, R. (1996). Sex differences in the solitary and assaultive fantasies of delinquent and nondelinquent adolescents. *Adolescence*, 31, 543-552.) (Keywords: Espionage, Fantasy.)