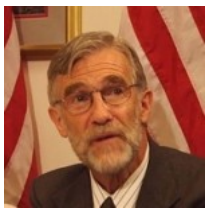


RAY McGOVERN: Unaccountable Media Faced with Dilemma in Next Phase of Deep State-gate

Now that the media has been exposed for wrongly siding with the intelligence agencies, how will it handle Devin Nunes's criminal referrals in Deep State-gate?, asks Ray McGovern.

By **Ray McGovern**

Special to Consortium News



Readers of *The Washington Post* on Monday were treated to more of the same from editorial page chief Fred Hiatt. Hiatt, who won his spurs by promoting misleading “intelligence” about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and suffered no consequences, is at it again.

This time he is trying to adjust to the fading prospect of a Deus ex Mueller to lessen Hiatt's disgrace for being among the most shameless in promoting the Trump-Russia collusion narrative.

He is not giving up. When you are confident you will not lose your job so long as you adhere to the agenda of the growing Military-Industrial-Congressional-Intelligence-Media-Academia-Think-Tank complex (MICIMATT if you will), you need not worry about being a vanguard for the corporate media. It is almost as though Hiatt is a tenured professor in an endowed chair honoring Judith Miller, the *New York Times* reporter who perhaps did most to bring us Iraqi WMD.

In his Monday column Hiatt warned: “Trump was elected with the assistance of Russian spies and trolls, which he openly

sought and celebrated. But he did not (or so we are told) secretly conspire with them.” In effect, Hiatt is saying, *soto voce*: “Fie on former (now-de-canonized) Saint Robert of Mueller; we at the *Post* and our colleagues at *The New York Times*, CNN et al. know better, just because we’ve been saying so for more than two years.”

Times executive editor Dean Baquet said, about the backlash to the *Times*’ “collusion” coverage: “I have no regrets. It’s not our job to determine whether or not there was illegality.” CNN President Jeff Zucker said: “We are not investigators. We are journalists.” (One wonders what investigative journalist Bob Parry, who uncovered much of Iran-Contra and founded this site, would have thought of that last one.)

Going in Circles

Hiatt’s circular reasoning is all too familiar. It is the kind a former director of national intelligence excels at when he’s not lying, sometimes under oath. For instance, James Clapper was hawking his memoir at the Carnegie Endowment last year when he was confronted by unexpectedly direct questions from the audience.

Asked about the misleadingly labeled, rump “Intelligence Community Assessment” (ICA) of Jan. 6, 2017, which he orchestrated, and which blamed Russia for interfering in the 2016 election, Clapper gave an ipse dixit response: The ICA simply had to be correct because that’s what he had told President Barack Obama and President-elect Donald Trump.

In fact, that “Intelligence Community Assessment” stands out as the most irresponsible, evidence-free and at the same

time consequential crock of intelligence analysis since the National Intelligence Estimate of Oct. 2002 claimed there was WMD in Iraq. Recall that that one was shaped by out-and-out fraudulent intelligence to “justify” an attack on Iraq six months later.

Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), as chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, described the main thrust of the committee’s five-year bipartisan report, stating, “In making the case for war, the [Bush] Administration repeatedly presented intelligence as fact when in reality it was unsubstantiated, contradicted, or even non-existent.”

Hiatt was one of the media’s major offenders, feeding on what the Cheney/Bush folks told him. When no “weapons of mass destruction” were found in Iraq, Hiatt conceded during an interview with *The Columbia Journalism Review* that, “If you look at the editorials we write running up [to the war], we state as flat fact that he [Saddam Hussein] has weapons of mass destruction ... If that’s not true, it would have been better not to say it.” [CJR, March/April 2004] As Parry wryly observed at the time in a piece calling for Hiatt’s dismissal, “Yes, that is a common principle of journalism, that if something isn’t real, we’re not supposed to confidently declare that it is.”

The Morning After

The media set the prevailing tone the day after the ICA was published. The banner headline atop page one of the *Times* read: “Putin Led Scheme to Aid Trump, Report Says.” That put in motion more than two years of Dick Cheney-like chicanery in the media.

Buried inside the *Times* that same day was a cautionary paragraph written by staff reporter Scott Shane who noted, "What is missing from the public report is what many Americans most eagerly anticipated: hard evidence to back up the [three] agencies' claims that the Russian government engineered the election attack. That is a significant omission." Indeed it was; and remains so.

(Sadly, Shane was then given his marching orders and fell in line with many other formerly reputable journalists in what has been the most miserable performance by the mainstream media since they helped pave the way for war on Iraq.)

Clapper and Hiatt are kindred souls when it comes to the "profound effect" of Russian election interference. In his column, Hiatt asserted as flat fact that: "Trump was elected with the assistance of Russian spies and trolls ..." At the Carnegie event in November, Clapper opined:

"As a private citizen, understanding the magnitude of what the Russians did and the number of citizens in our country they reached and the different mechanisms that, by which they reached them, to me it stretches credulity to think they didn't have a profound impact on election on the outcome of the election."

Hiatt: Captain of Cheerleaders

Hiatt emulated peppy, preppy cheerleader George W. Bush in leading Americans to believe that war on Iraq was necessary. Appointed *Washington Post* editorial page editor in 2000, he still runs the page – having not been held accountable for gross misfeasance, if not malfeasance, on Iraq. Shades of

Clapper, whom President Obama allowed to stay on as director of national intelligence for three and a half years after Clapper lied under oath to the Senate Intelligence Committee about NSA surveillance of U.S. persons.

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That Obama appointed Clapper to lead the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election speaks volumes. Clapper claims to have expertise on Russia and has made no effort to disguise his views on “the Russians.” Two years ago, he told Chuck Todd on *Meet the Press*:

“... in context with everything else we knew the Russians were doing to interfere with the election, and just the historical practices of the Russians, who are typically, almost genetically driven to co-opt, penetrate, gain favor, whatever, which is a typical Russian technique ... we were concerned.”

It beggars belief that Obama could have been unaware of Clapper’s bizarre views on “the Russians.” Clearly, Obama was bowing yet again to pressure from powerful Deep State actors arguing that Clapper was the ideal man for the job.

And there is now documentary evidence that, from the Deep State point of view, indeed he was. In the text exchanges between discredited FBI sleuth Peter Strzok and his girlfriend, Lisa Page, a lawyer working for the FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, it seems clear that Obama wanted to be kept apprised of the FBI’s behind-the-scenes

machinations. In a Sept. 2, 2016 text to Strzok, Page writes that she was preparing talking points because the president “wants to know everything we’re doing.”

A Sweaty Pate?

Clapper is aware now that he is going to have to sweat it out. He may believe he can ignore White House press secretary Sarah Sanders, who has said that he and other former intelligence officials should be investigated after special counsel Mueller did not establish collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia.

But recent statements by members of the House and Senate intelligence committees cannot be dismissed so easily. In his media appearances, the supremely confident, hero-of-many-liberals Clapper has been replaced by a squirming (but-Obama-made-me-do-it) messenger of facts. He may find it harder this time to avoid being held accountable.

Devin Nunes (R-CA), the House Intelligence Committee ranking member, has gone on the offensive, writing Friday that committee Republicans “will soon be submitting criminal referrals on numerous individuals involved ... in the abuse of intelligence for political purposes. These people must be held to account to prevent similar abuses from occurring in the future.”

On Sunday, Nunes told Fox News he’s preparing to send eight criminal referrals to the Department of Justice this week concerning alleged misconduct during the Trump-Russia investigation. This will include leaks of “highly classified material” and conspiracies to lie to Congress and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) court. It’s no-

holds-barred for Nunes, who has begun to talk publicly about prison for those whom DOJ might indict and bring to trial.

Nunes's full-speed-ahead offensive is being widely ignored in "mainstream" media (with the exception of Fox), giving the media the quality of "The Dog That Did Not Bark in the Night." The media has put its ducks in a row, such as they are, to try to rip Attorney General William Barr apart this coming week when he releases the redacted text of the Mueller report that so disappointed the Democratic Party/media coalition.

But how will they cover criminal referrals of the "heroes" who have leaked so much to them, providing grist for their Russia-gate mill? They will likely find a way, eventually, but the media silence about Nunes is depriving oxygen to the story.

On Sunday, Nunes said,

"They [the Democrats] have lied multiple times to the American people. All you have to do is look at their phony memos. They have had the full support of the media, 90 percent of the media in this country. They all have egg on their face. And so the fact of the matter remains, is there going to be – is justice going to be served or is justice going to be denied? And that's why we're sending over these criminal referrals."

Nunes is, of course, trying to project an image of confidence, but he knows he is fighting uphill. There is no more formidable foe than the MICIMATT, with the media playing *the* crucial role in these circumstances. How will

the American people be able to see egg on anyone's face if the "mainstream media" find ways to wipe it off and turn the tables on Nunes, as they have successfully done in the past?

Though the Democrats now control the House, they have lost some key inside-the-Deep-State allies.

By all appearances, House Democrats still seem to be banking on help from the usual suspects still on duty in the FBI, CIA, and the Justice Department. Lacking that they seem ready to go down with the Schiff—Rep. Adam Schiff of California, perhaps the most virulent Russia-gater that there's been.

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Clapper is no long in position to help from the inside, and there's no knowing how his sleepy replacement, Dan Coates, will react, if and when he wakes up long enough to learn chapter and verse about the machinations and dramatic personae of 2016.

Of course, there is a new sheriff in town running the Department of Justice. Attorney General William Barr, for better or ill, is a far cry from Jeff Sessions, who let himself be diddled into recusing himself. He's not Rod Rosenstein either, whose involvement in this affair may have already earned him a prominent place on Nunes's list of referrals.

What Did Obama Know, and When Did He Know It?

BREAKING: A high-level source tells me it was Brennan who insisted that the unverified and fake Steele dossier be included in the Intelligence Report.. Brennan should be asked to testify under oath in Congress ASAP.

On top of this, Sen. Rand Paul (R, KY) has called for an investigation into the origins of Mueller’s probe, including on the dicey question of how witting President Obama was of the Deep State chicanery during the last months of his administration. Page did tell Strzok in that Sept. 2, 2016 text that the president “wants to know everything we’re doing.”

Sen. Paul has also tweeted information from “a high-level source” that it was former CIA Director John Brennan who “insisted that the unverified and fake Steele dossier be included in the Intelligence Report... Brennan should be asked to testify under oath in Congress ASAP.”

Vying for Media Attention

If, as expected, Nunes discloses the names of those being criminally referred to DOJ, and Barr releases a redacted text of the Mueller report, the “mainstream” media will have a fresh challenge on their hands. The odds would seem to favor the media covering the Democrats’ predictable criticism of Barr – and perhaps even of Mueller, now that he has been defrocked.

The *Post*’s Hiatt should be counted on, as always, to play a leading role.

At the same time, there are signs the America people are tired of this. It would be difficult though for the media to avoid reporting on criminal referrals of very senior law enforcement and intelligence officials. Given the media’s obvious preference for siding with the intelligence agencies

and reporting on Russia-gate rather than Deep-State-gate, it would be even harder for the media to explain why these officials would be in trouble.

Things appear to be unraveling but, as always, much will depend on whether the media opts to remain the “dog that didn’t bark,” and succeeds again in hoodwinking too many people.

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We got Russia-gate right. Help us to keep on going.
