

Watch Replay of 13th Vigil for Assange

Watch Friday's broadcast here on **Consortium News** that discussed the latest news on WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

The WikiLeaks publisher continues to resist pressure to leave the Ecuador Embassy and be sent to the U.S. for prosecution, even as he has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and Donald Trump's lawyer says he should not be charged with any crime.

Julian Assange's is an historic test-case for press freedom.

Guests that appeared to discuss the latest news about Julian Assange and issues related to WikiLeaks included Bill Binney, former NSA technical director; Brian Becker, radio host of "Loud and Clear;" Ray McGovern, former CIA analyst; activist Kevin Zeese; author and activist David Swanson.

Past participants have included academics, journalists, politicians and activists, including Daniel Ellsberg, Chris Hedges, John Kiriakou, George Galloway, Craig Murray, Francis Boyle, former U.S. Senator Mike Gravel, Andrew Fowler, Caitlin Johnstone, Tim Black, Jimmy Dore, Lee Camp, Margaret Kimberley, Vivian Kubrick and more.

CN Editor-in-Chief Joe Lauria conducted the interviews and moderated the discussion. The [Unity4J](#) online vigil was broadcast live at unity4j.com, on YouTube, on Periscope.

Now a weekly event, the vigil has moved to a new time slot to accommodate participants and viewers around the world. It will air every Friday from 4pm to 7pm in the U.S. Eastern time zone; from 9 pm

to midnight in the UK; from 10 pm to 1 am in continental Europe; from 11 pm to 2 am in the Middle East and Africa; from midnight to 3 am in Moscow, Istanbul and Baghdad; from 8 am to 11 a.m. on Saturday in Australia and from 10 am to 1 pm on Saturday in New Zealand.

Because we lost the stream during the program, the recording is in two parts. You can watch Part Two [here](#) live. Part One is below:

Triumph of Conventional Wisdom: AP Expunges Iran/Contra Pardons from Barr's Record

Sam Husseini writes that the news agency ignored the nominee's link to a major U.S. scandal broken by its own investigative reporter at the time, the late Robert Parry, founder of **Consortium News**.

By SamHusseini

FAIR



A president facing a major scandal, just as the highest-profile trial is about to begin, pardons the indicted or convicted officials around him to effectively stop the investigation that's closing in on his own illegal conduct.

Trump soon? We'll see. But this actually describes what President George H.W. Bush did in 1992.

The Iran/Contra scandal revealed, among other things, that the Reagan/Bush White House had secretly sold missiles to Iran in exchange for hostages held in Lebanon, using the proceeds to fund right-wing forces fighting the leftist Nicaraguan government in violation of U.S. law.

O
n
C
h
r
i
s
t
m
a
s
E
v
e
l
9
9
2

BUSH PARDONS 6 IN IRAN AFFAIR, AVERTING A WEINBERGER TRIAL; PROSECUTOR ASSAILS 'COVER-UP'

Caspar W. Weinberger, former Secretary of Defense. Charged with perjury and making false statements stemming from a secret missile shipment to Iran in 1985. Trial was scheduled for next month.

Duane R. Carridge, former senior C.I.A. official. Charged with seven counts of perjury and making false statements stemming from secret missile shipment to Iran. Trial was scheduled for March.

Clair E. George, former head of C.I.A. covert operations. Found guilty this month on two felony counts of lying to Congress. Was awaiting sentence.

Elliott Abrams, former Assistant Secretary of State. Pleaded guilty in 1991 to withholding information from Congress. Sentenced to two years' probation and 100 hours of community service.

Alan G. Fiers Jr., former head of C.I.A. Central American Task Force. Pleaded guilty in 1991 to withholding information from Congress. Sentenced to one year probation and 100 hours of community service.

Robert C. McFarlane, former national security adviser. Pleaded guilty in 1986 to withholding information from Congress. Sentenced to two years' probation and 200 hours of community service and fined \$20,000.



Former Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger after he was granted a pardon by President Bush in the arms-for-hostages case.

BUSH DIARY AT ISSUE

6-Year Inquiry Into Deal of Arms for Hostages All but Swept Away

By DAVID JOHNSTON
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 24 — Six years after the arms-for-hostages scandal began to cast a shadow that would darken two Administrations, President Bush today granted full pardons to six former officials in Ronald Reagan's Administration, including former Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger.

Mr. Weinberger was scheduled to stand trial on Jan. 5 on charges that he lied to Congress about his knowledge of the arms sales to Iran and efforts by other countries to help underwrite the Nicaraguan rebels, a case that was expected to focus on Mr. Weinberger's private notes that contain references to Mr. Bush's endorsement of the secret shipments to Iran.

In one remaining facet of the inquiry, the independent prosecutor, Lawrence E. Walsh, plans to review a 1986 campaign diary kept by Mr. Bush. Mr. Walsh has characterized the President's failure to turn over the diary until now as misconduct.

Decapitated Walsh Efforts
But in a single stroke, Mr. Bush

, just as the indicted former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger was about to face trial, Bush pardoned him and five others, including former Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams and and former National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane. *The New York Times* (12/25/92) reported

this as “Bush Pardons 6 in Iran Affair, Averting a Weinberger Trial; Prosecutor Assails ‘Cover-Up.’”

The attorney general for Bush who approved the pardons, William Barr, is now being nominated for the same position by Trump. Is this background relevant? Though current news columns are rife with speculation that Trump might likewise protect himself by pardoning his indicted or convicted associates, the dominant U.S. news wire service doesn't seem to think so.

In “Barr as Attorney General: Old Job, Very Different Washington” (1/14/19), *Associated Press* reporter Eric Tucker made no mention whatsoever of the Iran/Contra pardons. Rather than seriously examine the trajectory of presidential power and accountability, Tucker framed the story, as the headline indicates, as a stark contrast between the gentlemanly Bush and the “twice-divorced” Trump:

Serving Trump, who faces intensifying investigations from the department Barr would lead, is unlikely to compare with his tenure under President George H.W. Bush.

The false implication is that Bush did not himself face intensifying investigations from Lawrence Walsh, who operated out of the Justice Department's Office of Special Counsel. The misleading comparison is compounded by Tucker describing Trump as “breaking with the practice of shielding law enforcement from political influence” and ousting Attorney General Jeff Sessions for “not protecting him in the Russia investigation” – as if Barr didn't have direct experience in the first Bush administration with imposing political influence on law enforcement to protect a

president from investigation.

Instead, Tucker cites Barr's supporters calling him "driven by his commitment to the department" and "very much a law-and-order guy." (The praise for the new head of the department Tucker regularly covers marks his article as a "beat-sweetener," a long and unfortunate tradition of journalists' making their jobs easier by sucking up to sources.)

This deceptive piece was apparently picked up by literally thousands of media outlets. A search of "unlikely to compare with his tenure under President George H.W. Bush" produces over 2,400 results.

As **Consortium News** founder Robert Parry, who broke much of the Iran-Contra story for *AP*, would later write in a review of Walsh's book "Firewall: Inside the Iran/Contra Cover-Up:"

"The Republican independent counsel [Lawrence Walsh] infuriated the GOP when he submitted a second indictment of Weinberger on the Friday before the 1992 elections. The indictment contained documents revealing that President Bush had been lying for years with his claim that he was "out of the loop" on the Iran/Contra decisions. The ensuing furor dominated the last several days of the campaign and sealed Bush's defeat at the hands of Bill Clinton."

Walsh had discovered, too, that Bush had withheld his own notes about the Iran/Contra Affair, a discovery that elevated the president to a possible criminal subject of the

investigation. But Bush had one more weapon in his arsenal. On Christmas Eve 1992, Bush destroyed the Iran/Contra probe once and for all by pardoning Weinberger and five other convicted or indicted defendants.

Parry, who died a year ago, left *AP* after many of his stories on Iran/Contra were squashed (**Consortium News**, [1/28/18](#)).

After I [criticized](#) *AP* on Twitter for the omission, a later [piece](#) by Tucker, co-written with Michael Balsamo, noted perfunctorily in the 16th graph: “As attorney general in 1992, he endorsed Bush’s pardons of Reagan administration officials in the Iran/Contra scandal.” (A [search](#) on “as attorney general in 1992, he endorsed Bush’s pardons of Reagan administration officials in the Iran/Contra scandal” produced a mere 202 results.)

While much of the media obsesses over every bit of “Russia-gate,” some breathlessly anticipating the next revelation will surely bring down the Trump presidency, it’s remarkable how little interest there is in the trajectory of presidential power.

Rather, much of the establishment media has gone to great lengths to rehabilitate officials from both Bush administrations, including the elder Bush himself when he died last month. (One exception to the generally [hagiographic](#) coverage of his death was Arun Gupta’s “Let’s Talk About George H.W. Bush’s Role in the Iran/Contra Scandal” – in *The Intercept*, [12/7/18](#).) Indeed, Trump naming Barr just after George H.W. Bush’s funeral could be seen as a jiu-jitsu move: How could anyone object

to his nominating the AG of the just-sainted Poppy Bush? It's as though Trump were saying, "If you all like him so much, I'll have what he had." [See the Institute for Public Accuracy [news release](#), "Barr as AG? Bush and Trump Dovetail."]

AP's actions also fit into the institution-protecting mode of what Parry derided as the "conventional wisdom" – which in its current formulation depicts Trump's authoritarian tendencies as [aberrations from the norms](#) of U.S. politics, rather than a continuation of the worst tendencies of his predecessors.

Sam Hussein is an independent journalist, senior analyst at the Institute for Public Accuracy, and founder of [VotePact.org](#), which encourages disenchanting Democrats and Republicans to pair up. Follow him on Twitter [@samhuseini](#).

CN Blows Past Fund Raising Goal; Top 10 Stories Revealed

Thank you readers. **Consortium News** far surpassed its Winter Fundraising goal. Thank you also for voting on the top 10 stories of 2018. Here are the results.

Thanks to the generosity of our readers **Consortium News** blew past our \$50,000 Winter Fund Drive target. Our drive ran from Dec. 10 to Jan. 10. In that time we raised **\$91,867.00**. We consider that a referendum on the job we are doing to bring you independent journalism in the tradition of Robert Parry, our founding editor.

Here are the top ten **Consortium News** stories of 2018 as voted on by readers. Each story that received a first place vote earned 10 points, second place got nine votes, third place eight votes down to tenth place, which netted one point. The winner received the most total points.

1. [The Battle for Our Minds](#) September 25, 2018. By Patrick Lawrence. 40 Total Points.
 2. [The West is Failing Julian Assange](#) November 6, 2018 By Stefania Maurizi. 34 Total Points.
 3. [Letter from Britain: The Real Reason for the 'Anti-Semite' Campaign Against Jeremy Corbyn](#) September 10, 2018 By Alexander Mercouris. 28 Total Points.
 4. [Robert Parry's Legacy and the Future of Consortium News](#) January 28, 2018 By Nat Parry. 27 Total Pts.
 4. (Tied) [How the Department of Homeland Security Created a Deceptive Tale of Russia Hacking US Voter Sites](#). August 28, 2018 By Gareth Porter. Total Points 27.
 5. [The Other Side of John McCain](#) August 27, 2018 By Max Blumethal. 25 Total Points.
 6. [How Yasser Arafat Led the Palestinians to Trump's 'Deal of the Century'](#) September 17, 2018 By As'ad AbuKhalil. 23 Total Points.
 7. [Distorting the Life of Bobby Kennedy](#) June 4, 2018 By Jim DiEugenio. 20 Points.
 8. ['A Very Different Journalist': John Pilger's Tribute to Bob Parry](#) April 15, 2018 By John Pilger. 18 Total Points.
 9. [The Shaky Case That Russia Manipulated Social Media to Tip the 2016 Election](#) October 10, 2018 By Gareth Porter. 17 Total Points.
 10. [Letter from Britain—Lost in a Brexit Maze: a Baffled Political Class Dreads the Prospect of Jeremy Corbyn](#) July 26, 2018 By Alexander Mercouris. 14 Total Points.
-

Watch the 12th Vigil for Julian Assange Here

Consortium News broadcast the 12th Unity4J online vigil for WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange on Friday, hosted by **Consortium News** Editor Joe Lauria.

Julian Assange is a wanted man because he published classified information that revealed the crimes and corruption of government officials around the world, not just in the United States.

But it is the U.S., the supposed beacon of freedom and democracy (and press freedom) around the world that has indicted him and wants him extradited to the United States for the crime of publishing.

That's why Julian Assange has been a refugee in the Ecuadorian embassy in London for the past six years. He knows that the second he steps back onto British territory he will be arrested and sent to the U.S. where he is unlikely to receive a fair trial and would likely spend the rest of his life in prison.

Discussing the following headlines from the past week were former U.S. Senator Mike Gravel from Monterrey, California; journalist Cassandra Fairbanks in Washington; Greg Barns, a member of Assange's legal team speaking from Cape Town, South Africa and former Australian Broadcasting Corporation correspondent Andrew Fowler from Sydney:

1. Nobel Peace Laureate Mairead Maguire on Monday nominated JA for the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize.
2. Former Australian ambassador Tony Kevin has reiterated his support for Julian Assange. He tweeted on Dec. 31: "I have always called for #Assange's release and his safely escorted return home to Australia in RAAF aircraft. This innocent man is being treated

so badly by Ecuador, UK and US govts."We hope to have Amb. Kevin join us later in the program.

3. Cassandra Fairbanks, a frequent guest on these vigils, visited Julian Assange last Monday and reports that his Living Conditions are More Akin to a Dissident in Stasi-Era Germany Than an Award-Winning Publisher With Asylum

4. On Wednesday, [WikiLeaks issued official denial](#) of Trump election contacts, saying that the organization never provided election information to Donald Trump campaign adviser Roger Stone or to Jerome Corsi, a conservative author and conspiracy advocate.

5. Yanis Varoufakis' DiEM25 on Jan 4 launched a petition calling on governments of Ecuador and the UK to prevent the extradition of Julian Assange to the US. It has more than 8,000 signatures.

6. Greg Barnes a member of the JA's Australian legal team spoke to the Unity4J vigil yesterday in a pre-recorded interview that was aired at the start of the program.

You can watch the recorded broadcast [here](#). There is a musical break from 00:38 minute mark to 1:12, when the discussion resumes with an interview of Australian journalist Andrew Fowler about the state of the media and its impact on Assange.

Last Chance Today to Make a 2018 Tax-Deductible Donation and to Vote on the Top Ten Consortium News Stories of the Year

You have until midnight tonight to make a tax-deductible donation to **Consortium News** for your 2018 returns and to vote on the top 10 CN stories of the year.

Happy New Year from Consortium News!

*Please give to our Winter fund drive, by
clicking [Donate](#).*

**Vote for the top 10 Consortium News stories of
2018 by clicking [here](#).**

Watch Replay of 10th Online Vigil for Julian Assange

Consortium News on Friday night broadcast live the 10th online vigil for WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange. Among the guests was Francis Boyle, a University of Illinois international law professor, who spoke about his experiences with the U.S.-British extradition treaty.

Other guests were radio host Scott Horton, activists Cathy Vogan and Vivian Kubrick, journalist Nozomi Hayase, priest and boxer Father Dave, radio journalist Ann Garrison, CIA analyst Ray McGovern and journalist and historian Gareth Porter. If you missed the live broadcast you can watch the entire replay [here](#), which ends with a video of a talk given by Julian Assange:

There's Still Time to Make a 2018 Tax-Deductible Contribution to Maintain Bob Parry's Legacy

Time is running out to make a tax-deductible donation for your 2018 returns to help keep **Consortium News** going.

If you want to keep reading original articles by Ray McGovern, Max Blumenthal, Pepe Escobar, Patrick Lawrence, Annie Machon, and more please take this opportunity to make a tax-deductible contribution to **Consortium News**.

Consortium News is one of the few websites where you can find a different angle on the news—one suppressed by the dominant corporate media. Unlike many other websites, we pay our writers for original articles, marked as *Special to Consortium News*. Their contributions make up the vast majority of what we publish. We have a new deputy editor helping to put out our fact-checked articles and we've incorporated a lot more video and added many new writers. All this, plus managing the site and its business administration, costs money.

If you think **Consortium News**, the earliest independent news website in history, founded in 1995, should continue in the tradition of its founder Robert Parry, please dig deep and offer what you can. **Consortium News** is counting on you.

Please give today to our end-of-year fund drive, by clicking Donate.

Thank you!

Choose the Top Ten Consortium News Stories of 2018

As part of our Winter Fund Drive, **Consortium News** is asking readers to name the top ten articles CN published during 2018. The results will be announced on Dec. 31.

Happy Holidays from Consortium News

Please Donate to our Winter Fund Drive

Vote for the Top 10 CN Stories of the Year

List your top ten choices in the comments section. Among the themes we covered most in 2018 were Iran, Palestine, Syria, Russia-gate, European populism, Intelligence, Media, North Korea, Empire, Immigration and Julian Assange/WikiLeaks.

Here is a list of 50 original stories we have nominated in chronological order but you can choose any that you favor:

[Robert Parry's Legacy and the Future of Consortiumnews](#)

January 28, 2018

[The Mueller Indictments: The Day the Music Died](#)

February 24, 2018

[How 'Operation Merlin' Poisoned U.S. Intelligence on Iran](#)

March 3, 2018

[The National Endowment for \(Meddling in\) Democracy](#)

March 8, 2018

[American Public Troubled by 'Deep State'](#)

March 21, 2018

[America's Complicated Relationship with International Human Rights Norms](#)

March 30, 2018

[King's Legacy Betrayed](#)

April 4, 2018

[America's 'Unlimited Imperialists'](#)

April 11, 2018

['A Very Different Journalist': John Pilger's Tribute to Bob Parry](#)

April 15, 2018

[Bob Parry: Holding Government and Media to Account](#)

April 15, 2018

It Started Over Lunch and Led to the Exposure of One of the Greatest Scandals in U.S. History

April 16, 2018

War Fever

April 19, 2018

May Day '71: When Bob Parry Went to Jail in the Biggest Mass Arrest in U.S. History

May 1, 2018

Robert Mueller: Gone Fishing

May 1, 2018

The Latest Act in Israel's Iran Nuclear Disinformation Campaign

May 3, 2018

Haspel Says CIA Won't Torture Again as Ray McGovern is Dragged Out of Hearing

May 10, 2018

U.S. Media Whitewashes Gaza Massacre

May 14, 2018

A Tale of Two Tortures

May 17, 2018

European Earthquake as Populist Government Forms in Italy

May 24, 2018

Spooks Spooking Themselves

May 31, 2018

Distorting the Life of Bobby Kennedy

June 4, 2018

Democrats Put Partisanship Before

Prospects for Peace

June 13, 2018

Letter From Britain: An Establishment Blinded By Russophobia

June 15, 2018

The Legacy and Fallacies of Bernard Lewis

June 29, 2018

Corporate Media's About-Face on Ukraine's Neo-Nazis

July 5, 2018

Clinging to Collusion: Why Evidence Will Probably Never Be Produced in the Indictments of 'Russian Agents'

July 14, 2018

US Media is Losing Its Mind Over Trump- Putin Summit

July 16, 2018

Inside WikiLeaks: Working with the Publisher that Changed the World

July 19, 2018

Moon-Strzok No More, Lisa Page Spills the Beans

July 23, 2018

The Case for Stripping Former Officials of their Security Clearances

July 25, 2018

The Gray Lady Thinks Twice About Assange's Prosecution

July 25, 2018

Letter from Britain—Lost in a Brexit Maze: a Baffled Political Class Dreads the Prospect of Jeremy Corbyn

July 26, 2018

Ahed Tamimi and Her Mother are Freed from Jail

July 29, 2018

VIPS to Trump: Intel on Iran Could be CATASTROPHIC

August 1, 2018

Giving Trump Carte Blanche for War

August 8, 2018

Senator Richard Burr: a Longtime Fan of Torture

August 11, 2018

The Other Side of John McCain

August 27, 2018

How the Department of Homeland Security Created a Deceptive Tale of Russia Hacking US Voter Sites

August 28, 2018

Letter from Britain: The Real Reason for the 'Anti-Semite' Campaign Against Jeremy Corbyn

September 10, 2018

How Yasser Arafat Led the Palestinians to Trump's 'Deal of the Century'

September 17, 2018

The New York Times as Judge and Jury

September 21, 2018

The Battle for Our Minds

September 25, 2018

Seven Days in September

October 3, 2018

The Shaky Case That Russia Manipulated Social Media to Tip the 2016 Election

October 10, 2018

Khashoggi Was No Critic of Saudi Regime

October 15, 2018

Welcome to the Jungle

October 29, 2018

The Saudi-US Crisis Will Pass

November 5, 2018

The West is Failing Julian Assange

November 6, 2018

National Exclusive: Former Sen. Barbara Boxer's Son and California Powerbroker Found Bilking Indian Tribe

November 16, 2018

Israel's Overlooked Strategic Losses in Wars Against Arabs

November 29, 2018

Please give to our end-of-year fund drive, by clicking [Donate](#).

Watch the 9th Vigil for Julian Assange

with John Pilger, John Kiriakou and Ray McGovern

Consortium News broadcast the 9th Online Vigil for Julian Assange Friday night. Among the special guests were journalist and filmmaker John Pilger, who visited Assange at the Ecuador embassy in London. Watch the replay [here](#).

The Unity4J vigil in support of WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange began with CN Editor Joe Lauria interviewing John Pilger, who's just been to see Assange. Other guests were former CIA agent and whistleblower John Kiriakou, and former CIA analyst Ray McGovern.

Diane Duston on Her Late Husband, Robert Parry

Bob Parry worked at his job nearly every waking hour. Diane Duston asked him why he kept it up. Her husband's answer was pretty simple. It's what journalists are supposed to do, he said.

Dear Readers:

It has been almost a year since the death of my husband, **Consortium News** founder Robert Parry. The stroke he mentioned in the final piece he wrote for **Consortium News** was the first of three, caused by undiagnosed pancreatic cancer. It has been a challenging year for me and our family since he passed away on Jan. 27, but one of the things that has given us comfort is the continuation of his journalism through the website he founded.

The only way this can live on is through your donations. I urge you to contribute today so [Consortiumnews.com](https://www.consortiumnews.com) will thrive and grow.

A lot has happened in Washington since Bob wrote his last piece. But one thing that has not changed is the need for independent journalism. Bob was fond of saying, "I don't care WHAT the truth is. I just care what the truth IS."

I met Bob in the 1980s at the Associated Press where we both worked. As a member of the special assignments team, he was delving into inconsistencies about what the Reagan administration was saying and what it was doing. Eventually, his work led to revelations that became known as the Iran-Contra scandal. I never ceased in my admiration for Bob's dogged pursuit of the truth, no matter what might happen politically. It took patience and long hours of documents research. It required source development and double-triple-quadruple fact-checking. It meant going to battle with editors who were worried about political fall-out. It wasn't easy. I was a journalist, too, but I didn't have the same kind of drive. Few do, really.

In 31 years of marriage, I remained in awe of his persistent quest for truth. He worked at it nearly every waking hour. I asked him why he kept it up. His answer was pretty simple. It's what journalists are supposed to do, he said.

It hadn't brought him any particular financial rewards. His books never became best-sellers. He didn't seek praise from anyone, and he was irrationally modest about the awards he received. He eschewed self-promotion. He was too busy practicing journalism.

Consortiumnews.com is home for those who are interested in truth and fearless journalism. You can help keep this important mission alive. Please send a [donation](#) today.

Please consider [making a donation](#) to Consortium News during our Winter Fund Drive.

Here is the last piece that Bob Parry wrote:

An Apology and Explanation

From Editor Robert Parry: For readers who have come to see **Consortium News** as a daily news source, I would like to extend my personal apology for our spotty production in recent days. On Christmas Eve, I suffered a stroke that has affected my eyesight (especially my reading and thus my writing) although apparently not much else. The doctors have also been working to figure out exactly what happened since I have never had high blood pressure, I never smoked, and my recent physical found nothing out of the ordinary. Perhaps my personal slogan that “every day’s a work day” had something to do with this.

Perhaps, too, the unrelenting ugliness that has become Official Washington and national journalism was a factor. It seems that since I arrived in Washington in 1977 as a correspondent for The Associated Press, the nastiness of American democracy and journalism has gone from bad to worse. In some ways, the Republicans escalated the vicious propaganda warfare following Watergate, refusing to accept that Richard Nixon was guilty of some extraordinary malfeasance (including the 1968 sabotage of President Johnson’s Vietnam peace talks to gain an edge in the election and then the later political dirty tricks and cover-ups that came to include Watergate). Rather than accept the reality of Nixon’s guilt, many Republicans simply built up their capability to wage information warfare, including the creation of ideological news organizations to protect the party and its leaders from “another Watergate.”

So, when Democrat Bill Clinton defeated President George H.W. Bush in the 1992 election, the Republicans used their news media and their control of the special prosecutor apparatus (through Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Appeals Court Judge David Sentelle) to unleash a wave of investigations to challenge Clinton's legitimacy, eventually uncovering his affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

The idea had developed that the way to defeat your political opponent was not just to make a better argument or rouse popular support but to dredge up some "crime" that could be pinned on him or her. The GOP success in damaging Bill Clinton made possible [George W. Bush's disputed "victory" in 2000](#) in which Bush took the presidency despite losing the popular vote and almost certainly losing the key state of Florida if all ballots legal under state law were counted. Increasingly, America – even at the apex of its uni-power status – was taking on the look of a banana republic except with much higher stakes for the world.

Though I don't like the word "weaponized," it began to apply to how "information" was used in America. The point of **Consortium News**, which I founded in 1995, was to use the new medium of the modern Internet to allow the old principles of journalism to have a new home, i.e., a place to pursue important facts and giving everyone a fair shake. But we were just a tiny pebble in the ocean. The trend of using journalism as just another front in no-holds-barred political warfare continued – with Democrats and liberals adapting to the successful techniques pioneered mostly by Republicans and by well-heeled conservatives.

Barack Obama's election in 2008 was another turning point as Republicans again challenged his legitimacy with bogus claims about his "Kenyan birth," a racist slur popularized by "reality" TV star Donald Trump. Facts and logic no longer mattered. It was a case of using whatever you had to diminish and destroy your opponent.

We saw similar patterns with the U.S. government's propaganda agencies developing themes to demonize foreign adversaries and then to smear Americans who questioned the facts or challenged the exaggerations as "apologists." This approach was embraced not only by Republicans (think of President George W. Bush distorting the reality in Iraq in 2003 to justify the invasion of that country under false pretenses) but also by Democrats who pushed dubious or downright false depictions of the conflict in Syria (including blaming the Syrian government for chemical weapons attacks despite strong evidence that the events were staged by Al Qaeda and other militants who had become the tip of the spear in the neocon/liberal interventionist goal of removing the Assad dynasty and installing a new regime more acceptable to the West and to Israel).

More and more I would encounter policymakers, activists and, yes, journalists who cared less about a careful evaluation of the facts and logic and more about achieving a pre-ordained geopolitical result – and this loss of objective standards reached deeply into the most prestigious halls of American media. This perversion of principles – twisting information to fit a desired conclusion – became the *modus vivendi* of American politics and journalism. And those of us who insisted on defending the journalistic principles of

skepticism and evenhandedness were increasingly shunned by our colleagues, a hostility that first emerged on the Right and among neoconservatives but eventually sucked in the progressive world as well. Everything became “information warfare.”

The New Outcasts

That is why many of us who exposed major government wrongdoing in the past have ended up late in our careers as outcasts and pariahs. Legendary investigative reporter Seymour Hersh, who helped expose major crimes of state from the My Lai massacre to the CIA’s abuses against American citizens, including illegal spying and LSD testing on unsuspecting subjects, has literally had to take his investigative journalism abroad because he uncovered inconvenient evidence that implicated Western-backed jihadists in staging chemical weapons attacks in Syria so the atrocities would be blamed on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The anti-Assad group think is so intense in the West that even strong evidence of staged events, such as the first patients arriving at hospitals before government planes could have delivered the sarin, was brushed aside or ignored. The Western media and the bulk of international agencies and NGOs were committed to gin up another case for “regime change” and any skeptics were decried as “Assad apologists” or “conspiracy theorists,” the actual facts be damned.

So Hersh and weapons experts such as MIT’s Theodore Postol were shoved into the gutter in favor of hip new NATO-friendly groups like Bellingcat, whose conclusions always fit neatly with the propaganda needs of the Western powers.

The demonization of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russia is just the most dangerous feature of this propaganda process – and this is where the neocons and the liberal interventionists most significantly come together. The U.S. media’s approach to Russia is now virtually 100 percent propaganda. Does any sentient human being read the New York Times’ or the Washington Post’s coverage of Russia and think that he or she is getting a neutral or unbiased treatment of the facts? For instance, the full story of the infamous Magnitsky case cannot be told in the West, nor can the objective reality of the Ukraine coup in 2014. The American people and the West in general are carefully shielded from hearing the “other side of the story.” Indeed to even suggest that there is another side to the story makes you a “Putin apologist” or “Kremlin stooge.”

Western journalists now apparently see it as their patriotic duty to hide key facts that otherwise would undermine the demonizing of Putin and Russia. Ironically, many “liberals” who cut their teeth on skepticism about the Cold War and the bogus justifications for the Vietnam War now insist that we must all accept whatever the U.S. intelligence community feeds us, even if we’re told to accept the assertions on faith.

The Trump Crisis

Which brings us to the crisis that is Donald Trump. Trump’s victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton has solidified the new paradigm of “liberals” embracing every negative claim about Russia just because elements of the CIA, FBI and the National Security Agency produced a report last Jan 6 that blamed Russia for “hacking” Democratic emails and releasing

them via WikiLeaks. It didn't seem to matter that these "hand-picked" analysts (as Director of National Intelligence James Clapper called them) evinced no evidence and even admitted that they weren't asserting any of this as fact.

The hatred of Trump and Putin was so intense that old-fashioned rules of journalism and fairness were brushed aside. On a personal note, I faced harsh criticism even from friends of many years for refusing to enlist in the anti-Trump "Resistance." The argument was that Trump was such a unique threat to America and the world that I should join in finding any justification for his ouster. Some people saw my insistence on the same journalistic standards that I had always employed somehow a betrayal.

Please give to our end-of-year fund drive, by clicking [Donate](#).

Other people, including senior editors across the mainstream media, began to treat the unproven Russia-gate allegations as flat fact. No skepticism was tolerated and mentioning the [obvious bias among the never-Trumpers](#) inside the FBI, Justice Department and intelligence community was decried as an attack on the integrity of the U.S. government's institutions. Anti-Trump "progressives" were posturing as the true patriots because of their now unquestioning acceptance of the evidence-free proclamations of the U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

Hatred of Trump had become like some invasion of the body snatchers – or perhaps many of my journalistic colleagues had never believed in the principles of journalism that I had embraced throughout my adult life. To me, journalism

wasn't just a cover for political activism; it was a commitment to the American people and the world to tell important news stories as fully and fairly as I could; not to slant the "facts" to "get" some "bad" political leader or "guide" the public in some desired direction.

I actually believed that the point of journalism in a democracy was to give the voters unbiased information and the necessary context so the voters could make up their own minds and use their ballot – as imperfect as that is – to direct the politicians to take actions on behalf of the nation. The unpleasant reality that the past year has brought home to me is that a shockingly small number of people in Official Washington and the mainstream news media actually believe in real democracy or the goal of an informed electorate.

Whether they would admit it or not, they believe in a "guided democracy" in which "approved" opinions are elevated – regardless of their absence of factual basis – and "unapproved" evidence is brushed aside or disparaged regardless of its quality. Everything becomes "information warfare" – whether on Fox News, the Wall Street Journal editorial page, MSNBC, the New York Times or the Washington Post. Instead of information provided evenhandedly to the public, it is rationed out in morsels designed to elicit the desired emotional reactions and achieve a political outcome.

As I said earlier, much of this approach was pioneered by Republicans in their misguided desire to protect Richard Nixon, but it has now become all pervasive and has deeply corrupted Democrats, progressives and mainstream journalism. Ironically, the ugly personal characteristics of Donald

Trump – his own contempt for facts and his crass personal behavior – have stripped the mask off the broader face of Official America.

What is perhaps most alarming about the past year of Donald Trump is that the mask is now gone and, in many ways, all sides of Official Washington are revealed collectively as reflections of Donald Trump, disinterested in reality, exploiting “information” for tactical purposes, eager to manipulate or con the public. While I’m sure many anti-Trumpers will be deeply offended by my comparison of esteemed Establishment figures with the grotesque Trump, there is a deeply troubling commonality between Trump’s convenient use of “facts” and what has pervaded the Russia-gate investigation.

My Christmas Eve stroke now makes it a struggle for me to read and to write. Everything takes much longer than it once did – and I don’t think that I can continue with the hectic pace that I have pursued for many years. But – as the New Year dawns – if I could change one thing about America and Western journalism, it would be that we all repudiate “information warfare” in favor of an old-fashioned respect for facts and fairness – and do whatever we can to achieve a truly informed electorate.

The late Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. He founded Consortiumnews.com in 1995 as the Internet’s first investigative magazine. He saw it as a way to combine modern technology and old-fashioned journalism to counter the increasing triviality of the mainstream U.S. news media.

Please give to our end-of-year fund drive, by

clicking **Donate**.
