

# Have British Spies Been Hacking the EU?

The European Union has accused British intelligence agencies of disrupting Brexit negotiations—creating a new public dispute that could poison further an already toxic situation, says Annie Machon.

**By Annie Machon  
in Brussels**

*Special to Consortium News*



Just after midnight on Aug. 16, I was called by LBC Radio in London for a comment on a breaking story on the front page of *The Daily Telegraph* about British spies hacking the EU. Even though I had just retired to bed, the story was just too irresistible, but a radio interview is always too short to do justice to such a convoluted tale. Here are some longer thoughts.

For those who cannot get past the *Telegraph* paywall, the gist is that that the European Union has accused the British intelligence agencies of hacking the EU's side of the Brexit negotiations. Apparently, some highly sensitive and negative EU slides about British Prime Minister Theresa May's plan for Brexit, the Chequers Plan, had landed in the lap of the British government, which then lobbied the EU to suppress publication.

Of course, this could be a genuine leak from the Brussels sieve, as British sources are claiming (well, they would say that, wouldn't they?). However, it is plausible that this is the work of the spies, either by recruiting a paid-up agent well placed within the Brussels bureaucracy, or through electronic surveillance.

## **The Ugly Truth of Spying**

Before dismissing the latter option as conspiracy theory, the British spies do have experience. In the run-up to the Iraq war in 2003, the United States and the United Kingdom were desperate to get a United Nations Security Council resolution to invade Iraq, thus providing a fig leaf of apparent legitimacy to the illegal war. However, some countries within the UN had their doubts (including France and Germany), and the U.S. asked Britain's listening post, GCHQ, to step up its surveillance game. Forewarned is forearmed in delicate international negotiations.

How do we know this? A brave GCHQ whistleblower named Katharine Gun leaked the information to *The Observer*. For her pains, she was threatened with prosecution under the draconian terms of the UK's 1989 Official Secrets Act and faced two

years in prison. The case was only dropped three weeks before her trial was due to begin, partly because of the feared public outcry, but mainly because her lawyers threatened to use the legal defense of “necessity”—a defense won only three years before during the case of MI5 whistleblower David Shayler. Tangentially, a film is being made about Gunn’s story this year.

We also have confirmation from one of the early 2013 Edward Snowden disclosures that GCHQ had hacked its way into the Belgacom network—the national telecommunications supplier in Belgium. Even back then, there was an outcry from the EU bodies, worried that the UK (and by extension its closest intelligence buddy, the U.S.), would gain leverage with stolen knowledge.

So, yes, it is perfectly feasible that the UK *could* have done this, even though it was illegal back in the day. GCHQ’s incestuous relationship with America’s National Security Agency gives it massively greater capabilities than other European intelligence agencies. The EU knows this well, which is why it is concerned to retain access to the UK’s defense and security powers post-Brexit, and also why it has jumped to these conclusions about hacking.

### **Somebody Needs to Watch the Watchers**

But that was then, and this is now. On Jan. 1, 2017, the UK government finally signed a law called the Investigatory Powers Act, governing the legal framework for GCHQ to snoop. The IPA gave GCHQ the most draconian and invasive powers of any Western democracy. Otherwise known in the British media as the “snoopers’ charter,” the IPA had been defeated in Parliament for years, but Theresa May, then home secretary, pushed it through in the teeth of legal and civil society opposition. This year, the High Court ordered the UK government to redraft the IPA as it is incompatible with European law.

The IPA legalized what GCHQ previously had been doing illegally post-9/11, including bulk metadata collection, bulk data hacking, and bulk hacking of electronic devices.

It also gave the government greater oversight of the spies’ actions, but these measures remain weak and offer no protection if the spies choose to keep quiet about what they are doing. So if GCHQ did indeed hack the EU, it is feasible that the foreign secretary and the prime minister remained ignorant of what was going on, despite being legally required to sign off on such operations. In which case the spies would be running amok.

It is also feasible that they were indeed fully briefed, and that would have been proper protocol. GCHQ and the other spy agencies are required to protect “national security and the economic well-being” of Great Britain, and I can

certainly see a strong argument could be made that they were doing precisely that (provided they had prior written permission for such a sensitive operation) if they tried to get advance intelligence about the EU's Brexit strategy.

This argument becomes even more powerful when you consider the problems around the fraught issue of the border between the UK's Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland, an issue about which the EU is being particularly intransigent. If a deal is not made, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement could be under threat and civil war might break out again in Northern Ireland. You cannot get much more "national security" than that, and GCHQ would be justified in this work, provided it has acquired the necessary legal sign-offs from its political masters.

### **Our Complicated World**

However, these arguments will do nothing to appease the enraged EU officials. The UK government will continue to state that this was a leak from a Brussels insider, and publicly at least, oil will be seen to have been poured on troubled diplomatic waters.

Behind the scenes, though, this action will multiply the mutual suspicion and no doubt unleash a witch hunt through the corridors of EU power, with top civil servant Martin Selmayr (aka "The Monster") cast as witchfinder general. With him on your heels, you would have to be a brave leaker, whistleblower or even paid-up agent working for the Brits to take such a risk.

So, perhaps this is indeed a GCHQ hack. However justifiable the move might be under the nebulous concept of "national security," this event will poison further the already toxic Brexit negotiations. As Angela Merkel famously, if disingenuously, said after the Snowden revelation that the U.S. had hacked her mobile phone: "No spying among friends." But perhaps this is an outdated concept—and the EU has not been entirely friendly to Brexit Britain.

I am just waiting for the first hysterical claim that it was the Russians instead or, failing them, former Trump strategist in chief, Steve Bannon, reportedly on a mission to build a divisive alt-right movement across Europe.

**Annie Machon is a former intelligence officer in the UK's domestic MI5 Security Service.**

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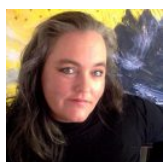
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# How to Beat a Manipulator

In our political and personal lives many of us have been conned. Here's how to recognize how politicians and people manipulate us and how to stop them, according to Caitlin Johnstone.

**By Caitlin Johnstone**



Humans are hackable. Ask any conman. Our desire to think we have control over our lives often hides this from ourselves, but most of us are highly suggestible and hypnotizable. If you think you're not, you're in more danger of being hacked than someone who has humbled themselves enough to see how this works in them.

There's no need to be ashamed of being conned. Realizing that you've been, or are being, conned will naturally bring up feelings of embarrassment, but it's never your fault that someone's taken you for a ride. Get clear: conning someone is the crime; being conned is being a victim of that crime. That's how the law sees it in fraud cases. Manipulators would love you to think that it's your fault for allowing yourself to be manipulated, but that's just another manipulation isn't it?

Manipulators use one of our most astounding, useful, and beautiful human characteristics when they con us—empathy. Our innately trusting nature is the reason why we've been able to collaborate on large scales to create and innovate in extraordinary ways unseen anywhere else in the animal kingdom. Because we learn by modeling, and we are shaped by the group we inhabit and our urge to create harmony will make life viscerally uncomfortable until we are back in alignment with our tribe. We are the peacemakers; we seek alignment, which is how we are paced by manipulators into aligning with their sick agendas. How gross is it then that our ability to empathize and relate to each other is one manipulators use to control us?

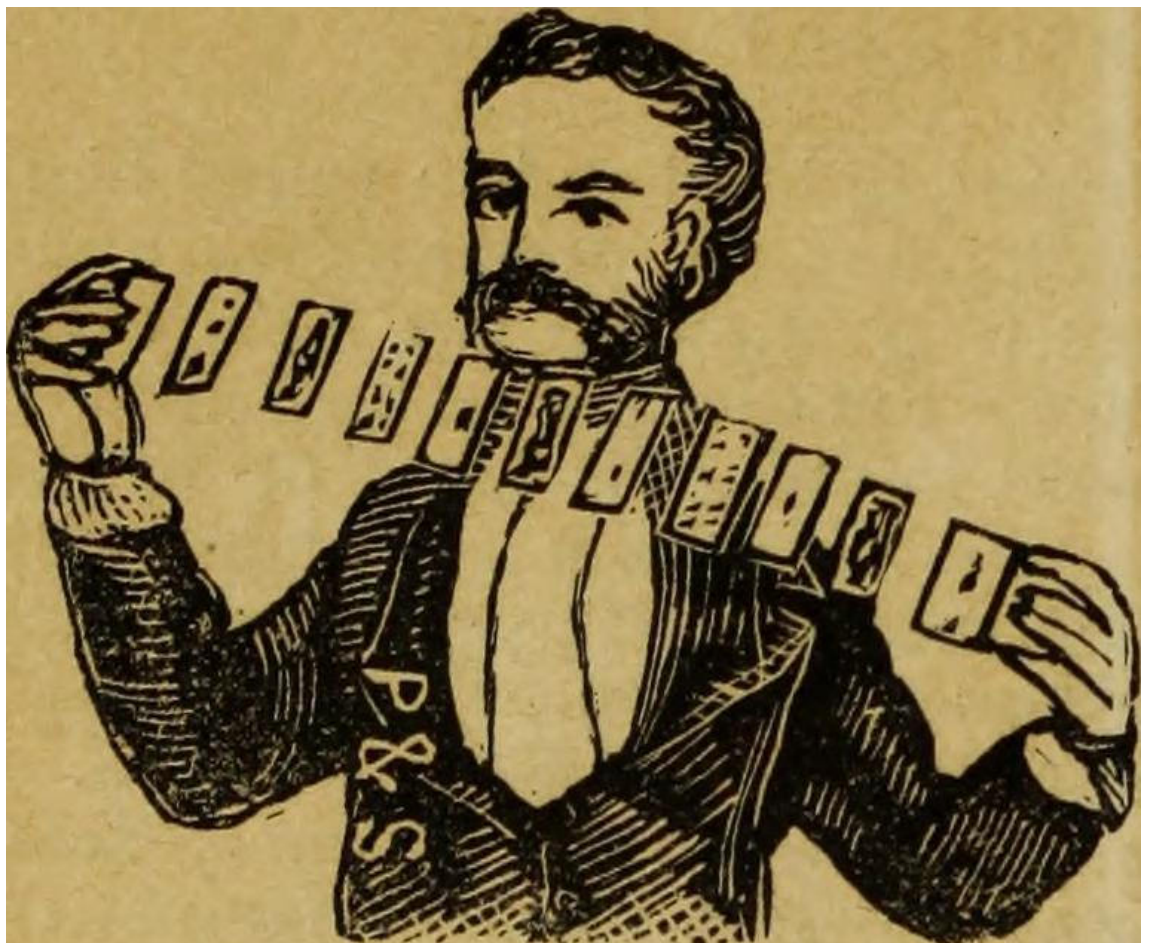
Because of the reach of mass media, every single one of us is in an abusive relationship with plutocratic manipulators. Many of us are in personal relationships with manipulators too. Conveniently, the strategies for dealing with sociopathic manipulators are the exact same, from plutocrats to your live-in partner.

## **Get Clear on Your Own Will**

You are easy prey if you don't know what you want and you leave it up to others to decide for you. If you don't have a sense of who you are and what you stand

for, anyone can come in and co-opt that for their own sick agendas. Sit down, get quiet, and make an inventory of who you are and what you need. Don't be squeamish about adding things that you don't have yet. That's the point. Make a list of what you need not just to survive, but to thrive. Apply the live-and-let-live rule to every one of your wants, and if you're confident that nothing you want will hurt or interfere in anyone else's will, then the list is good. You can stand by it unequivocally, and you should do so with as much strength and confidence as you can muster. Grow to its size and advocate loudly for it.

### **Watch Where the Resources Go**



How do you really know if you're being manipulated? Well, what manipulators understand that the rest of us don't is that there are real life resources like sex, money, work, gold, oil, land, water, food, people, air, etc; and there are good feelings. They will always try to get you to swap real things for good feelings. If you don't have empathy, you see the whole world in a completely different way. Most people are trying to get what they need without hurting anyone, because hurting someone hurts them too. Manipulators don't experience that, so they just get what they need by telling their victim that they'll hurt someone if they don't hand it over.

Zoom out and take an inventory of who's got all the stuff. Which way are the scales tipped? Good manipulators try to shift the ground underneath us to funnel the real wealth into their coffers, while placating us with good feelings about how blessed our hard work is and all that, and how selfish it would be to demand healthcare when there's people in Syria who need to be bombed for their freedom. Leave all that behind and zoom and out and see who's got all the stuff. Who has all the power, all the wealth, all the real stuff that you can really use in the real world, and who is barely existing but has hope for a better tomorrow?

Same in a marriage. Who has all the wealth, power, kudos, retirement savings, and who just has a story about what a good person they are? Religion has primed us for manipulation, and that was by design. Over millennia, we have been taught to value fealty, piety, hard work, submission, and to leave judgement and reward til after we die. This creates the perfect environment for manipulators who can see very clearly what the valuable real-world things are, and what are creations woven of fairytales. Work out what's real in the here and now, and see who is in control of what should be your stuff. Is it you? If it's not, you're being manipulated out of it.

### **Watch Their Actions, Not Their Words**

Manipulators only have words. They can't just walk up to you and say "Give me your life savings," they have to weave a complex story that makes you feel like it's the right thing to do. A good conman will never ask for anything if they can get away with it. Ideally, they want you to make the offer. That's the best kind of con, the one where the victim thinks it was their idea in the first place. A great conman will have you begging him to take the thing that he wanted all along, so then he can even get your gratitude for it.

By zooming out and seeing what they're doing, rather than listening to what they're saying, you can get a much better idea of what's actually happening. If, for example, they're saying they support single-payer healthcare while voting against it, sabotaging any efforts in any direction, taking money from donors who oppose it, and generally running interference on it, then those actions tell the real story. If the offer is not what you asked for but you are so desperate, so far down the line with them, so invested, and so cut off from any alternate solutions that you'll take anything, then the con is complete.

Think about it from their point of view. Ideally, they want to be the ones you go to for the thing they don't want you to have. They want to be the ones you place your hope and energy with so you don't go to someone who will actually help them, but they also need to string you along for as long as possible, doing as little as possible, while taking as much energy as they can from you without arousing suspicion. They sing the song of inertia, of incrementalism, of "Not

now, but soon.” That’s how they keep you trapped. If you zoom out and watch what they’re actually doing, rather than what they’re saying, you will know when it’s time to say bye Felicia and seek out an actual solution.

### **Don’t Try to Out-Manipulate Them**

Once you’ve figured out you’re being manipulated, the knee-jerk reaction is to try and manipulate them back. Dude. Don’t even. Do you know how beautiful and precious you are to even think that that’s possible? These people have had no empathy for all their lives, and without all that emotional noise clouding their decisions, they have been playing every single person in their life like a game of chess. They are masters. They are five moves ahead of you already, and you’re just learning what a rook is. They have a whole lifetime of manipulating under their belt, and you are a total noob. You will lose that game. Don’t play it.

Instead, go with your strengths. Demand what you want and stick to that, loudly and unapologetically. Keep asking for what you want in the most direct way possible. Remember, a manipulator aims to take your will from you. Take it back. Many of us have been so manipulated for so long, we don’t even know what we want anymore. Make your inventory, keep it simple, keep it to what you know you need to thrive, and then plant your feet and demand it.

Meanwhile, keep pointing out the weird things they do to try and avoid giving you what they said they would. Shout it from the rooftops when they do something sly. They’ve used your politeness and goodwill to hide their little indiscretions. Don’t let them anymore. If they’re being creepy, say it. Don’t be manipulated into tacit consent by your politeness.

Keep telling the truth to yourself at least, even when it doesn’t tally with your worldview. Remain as intellectually honest with yourself as possible about what the knowable facts are, and what is conjecture or wishful thinking. Verify everything as much as you can so you know you’re standing on solid, factual ground. Manipulators love to keep people as confused as possible. Get as many quantifiable, verified, real-world facts as you can underneath you and build your worldview on them. And when you’re sure of yourself, say it like it’s true, because you know it is. Be unequivocal with the things you know. When you’re sure, don’t let anyone get in any wriggle room. Approach your private research with curiosity, objectivity and a light hand, but once the work is done, plant your feet in its truth and don’t let them be uprooted.

And lastly, don’t play by the rules, play by what is *right*. Manipulators love rules because they love to strategize about how to bend them, and how to bend *you* with them. Think of the worst kind of lawyers and you’ll know exactly what I mean. If you’re a deeply good person like you know you are, and you are

always trying to point yourself at the highest interest, you know deep down if you're doing the right thing. Trust your guts and forge ahead. Keep doing the right thing, even if it breaks a rule.

### **Apply The Manipulator's Rules In Reverse**

There's something in psychology called "projection", and anyone who has done a good deal of inner work will tell you that it's a handy self-enquiry tool to see if what you hate in others, you can find in yourself. In order not to deal with our guilt, we tend to project the things we don't like on to other people to hide the shame of it from ourselves. Bringing it out into the light can often result in some healthy forgiveness of both ourselves and our perception of others.

That's great, but what the sages neglect to tell you is that people are also projecting all the time on to *you*. If you're suggestible and good-hearted enough to not want to harm anyone, you can take everyone's projections on to you as truth without even realizing it. Unless you develop a strong, conscious, healthy sense of who you are as a person, you can be gaslit into thinking that you're any amount of the horrible things people project on to you, and that can easily grind you to a confused and babbling halt. Again, take an inventory of who you are and what you want, and grow in size until you can stand in that truth and defend it. Find your will and take it back.

Manipulators particularly use projection as a tactic to hide what they're doing to you in plain sight. A manipulator can have you chasing your tail by simply suggesting that you or others are doing what you are seeing them doing with your own eyes. DNC caught rigging the election? Oh no, it was actually Russia who rigged the election by catching the DNC rigging the election. See what I did there? It's so dumb, but it works.

Here's the key: simply reverse the pronouns. When faced with a manipulator, everything he says about you, he is saying about himself, and everything he says about himself, is what he thinks of you. If he's telling you *you're* duplicitous and *you're* a liar and *you're* trying to take him for all he's got, he's actually saying *he's* duplicitous and *he's* a liar and *he's* trying to take you for all *you've* got. If you have good grounds to believe you are being manipulated by someone, reverse the pronouns in your mind and let them tell you who they are. It works from personal relationships right up to the grand manipulators employed by the plutocrats.

Bring as much awareness as possible to all the ways you're being manipulated, and all the ways you've been inadvertently manipulating. Make it as conscious in yourself as possible so we can all add to the sum of human knowledge as to how



to transcend the manipulations. Once we draw back and fill out to our own individual sovereign boundaries, we will be able to trust ourselves to stand in our truth. We will also be able to see who we can trust so much more easily, and once you know you can trust someone, you can collaborate with them. These newly-conscious and divine collaborations will create the very things we need to solve the real world problems we face as a species and take the will of the planet from the sociopaths and return it to the will of the people.

And that's really all it will take. A tipping point of un-manipulatable and awake people collaborating to create new systems that will surpass the old is all it will take to wrest power from the manipulators who only have the old Biblical tools of fear, guilt and shame to work with. This is doable, and it only needs you.

*This [commentary](#) was originally published on [CaitlinJohnstone.com](#) .*

**Caitlin Johnstone is a rogue journalist, poet, and utopia prepper who publishes regularly at [Medium](#). Follow her work on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or her [website](#). She has a [podcast](#) and a new book [Woke: A Field Guide for Utopia Preppers](#). This article was re-published with permission.**

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## Trump-Media Logrolling

Hundreds of mainstream newspapers on Thursday have coordinated editorials against Trump's attacks on the press, but as Sam Hussein explains, the major media need to do some soul-searching itself.

**By Sam Hussein**



Today, hundreds of [newspapers](#), at the initiative of *The Boston Globe*, are purporting to stand up for a free press against Trump's rhetoric.

Today also marks exactly one month since [I was dragged out of the July 16 Trump-Putin news conference in Helsinki](#) and locked up until the middle of the night.

As laid in my cell, I chuckled at the notion that the city was full of billboards proclaiming Finland was the "[land of free press](#)".

So, I've grown an especially high sensitivity to both goonish behavior toward

journalists trying to ask tough questions – and to those professing they are defending a free press when they are actually engaging in a marketing exercise.

As some have noted, the editorials today will likely help Trump whip up support among his base against a monolithic media. But, just as clearly, the establishment media can draw attention away from their own failures, corruptions and falsehoods simply by focusing on Trump's.

Big media outlets need not actually report news that affects your life and point to serious solutions for social ills. They can just bad mouth Trump. And Trump need not deliver on campaign promises that tapped into populist and isolationist tendencies in the U.S. public that have grown in reaction to years of elite rule. He need only deride the major media.

They are at worst frenemies. More likely, at times, Trump and the establishment media log roll with each other. The major media built up Trump. Trump's attacks effectively elevate a select few media celebrities.

My case is a small but telling one. Major media outlets were more likely to disinform about the manhandling I received in my attempt to ask about U.S., Russian and Israeli nuclear threats to humanity – I'll soon give a detailed rebuttal to the torrent of falsehoods, some of which I've already noted on social media – than to crusade against it.

Other obvious cases: None of the newspaper editorials I've seen published today mention the likely prosecution of Wikileaks. If there were solidarity among media, the prospect of Julian Assange being imprisoned for publishing U.S. government documents should be front and center today.

Neither did I see a mention of RT or, as of this week, Al Jazeera, being compelled to register as foreign agents. State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert has openly refused to take questions from reporters working for Russian outlets. Virtual silence – in part because Russia is widely depicted as the great enemy, letting U.S. government policy around the world off the hook.

The above are actual policies that the Trump administration has pursued targeting media – not rhetoric that dominates so much establishment coverage of Trump.

Then there's the threat of social media.

My day job is with the Institute for Public Accuracy. Yesterday, I put out a news release titled "Following Assassination Attempt, Facebook Pulled Venezuela Content." Tech giants can decide – possibly in coordination with the U.S. government – to pull the plug on content at a time and manner of their choosing.

You would think newspaper people might be keen to highlight the threat that such massive corporations thus pose, not least of all because they have eaten up their ad revenue.

The sad truth is that this is what much of the media have long done: Counter to the lofty rhetoric of many of today's editorials, the promise of an independent and truth-seeking press has frequently been subservient to propaganda, pushing for war or narrow economic and other interests.

The other major story of the day – quite related to this – is that of Trump pulling former CIA Director John Brennan's security clearance. NPR tells me this is an attempt to "silence a critic." But Brennan has an op-ed in today's New York Times and is frequently on major media. He oversaw criminal policies during the Obama administration, including drone assassinations. If anything, this has elevated Brennan's major media status.

Those who have been truly silenced in the "Trump era" are those who were critical of the seemingly perpetual U.S. government war machine since the invasion of Iraq.

Trump attacks on the establishment media – like many media attacks on him – are frequently devoid of substance. But recently one of his rhetorically tweets stated that media "cause wars". I would say "push for war", but that's quibbling.

Trump is technically right on that point, but it's totally disingenuous coming from him. He's actually been the beneficiary of the media compulsion he claims to deride. When he exalts U.S. bombing strikes in Yemen, Syria and elsewhere, CNN calls him "presidential".

Many consider "Russia-gate" critical to scrutinizing the Trump administration, but the two reporters, apparently picked by the White House, during the Helsinki news conference focused on "Russia-gate" – which eventually led to Brennan and others attacking Trump as "treasonous". Meanwhile, much more meaningful collusion that can be termed Israel-gate is being ignored as the U.S. and Israeli governments attempt to further mold the Mideast.

The need for genuinely free sources of information is greater than ever. It is unclear to me if traditional newspapers can be part of the equation. Quite likely, the institutions desperately needed to carry out that critical mission are yet to be born.

*This article first appeared on Sam Hussein's blog, Posthaven.*

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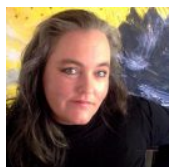
Public Accuracy and founder of [VotePact.org](http://VotePact.org). Follow him on twitter: [@samhusseini](https://twitter.com/samhusseini).

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## In A Corporatist System Of Government, Corporate Censorship Is State Censorship

In a corporatist system of government, wherein there is no meaningful separation between corporate power and state power, corporate censorship is state censorship, argues Caitlin Johnstone in this commentary.

By Caitlin Johnstone

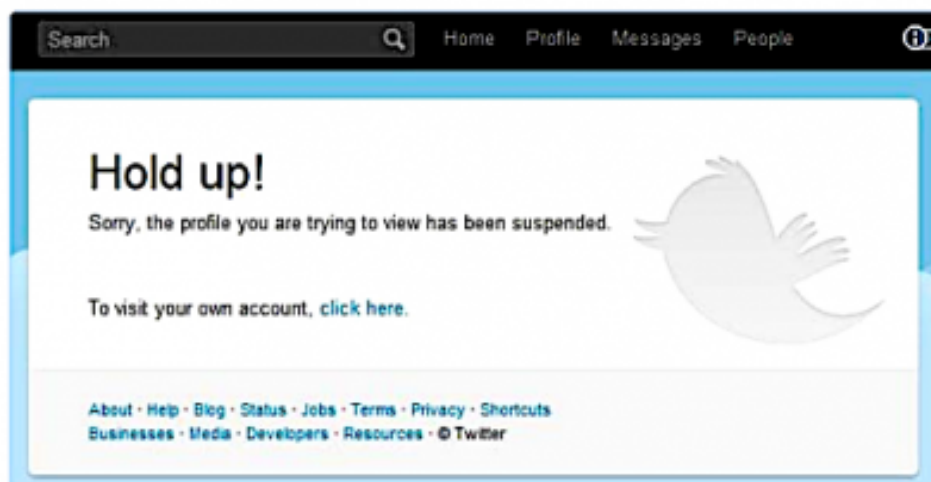


Last year, representatives of Facebook, Twitter, and Google were instructed on the US Senate floor that it is their responsibility to “quell information rebellions” and adopt a “mission statement” expressing their commitment to “prevent the fomenting of discord.”

“Civil wars don’t start with gunshots, they start with words,” the representatives were told. “America’s war with itself has already begun. We all must act now on the social media battlefield to quell information rebellions that can quickly lead to violent confrontations and easily transform us into the Divided States of America.”

Yes, [this really happened.](#)

Today Twitter has silenced three important anti-war voices on its platform: it has [suspended](#) Daniel McAdams, the executive director of the Ron Paul Institute, suspended Scott Horton of the *Scott Horton Show*, and [completely removed](#) the account of prominent Antiwar.com writer Peter Van Buren.



I'm about to talk about the censorship of Alex Jones and Infowars now, so let me get the "blah blah I don't like Alex Jones" thing out of the way so that my social media notifications aren't inundated with people saying "Caitlin didn't say the 'blah blah I don't like Alex Jones' thing!" I shouldn't have to, because this isn't actually about Alex Jones, but here it is:

I don't like Alex Jones. He's made millions saying the things disgruntled right-wingers want to hear instead of telling the truth; he throws in disinfo with his info, which is the same as lying all the time. He's made countless false predictions and his sudden sycophantic support for a US president has helped lull the populist right into complacency when they should be holding Trump to his non-interventionist campaign pledges, making him even more worthless than he was prior to 2016.

But this isn't about defending Alex Jones. He just happens to be the thinnest edge of the wedge.

Infowars has been censored from Facebook, Youtube (which is part of Google), Apple, Spotify, and now even Pinterest, all within hours of each other. This happens to have occurred at the same time Infowars was circulating a petition with tens of thousands of signatures calling on President Trump to pardon WikiLeaks editor-in-chief Julian Assange, who poses a much greater threat to establishment narratives than Alex Jones ever has. Assange's mother also reports that this mass removal of Infowars' audience occurred less than 48 hours after she was approached to do an interview by an Infowars producer.

In a corporatist system of government, wherein there is no meaningful separation between corporate power and state power, corporate censorship *is* state censorship. Because legalized bribery in the form of corporate lobbying and campaign donations has given wealthy Americans the ability to control the U.S. government's policy and behavior while ordinary Americans have no effective influence whatsoever, the U.S. unquestionably has a corporatist system of government. Large, influential corporations are inseparable from the state, so their use of censorship is inseparable from state censorship.

This is especially true of the vast mega-corporations of Silicon Valley, whose extensive ties to U.S. intelligence agencies are well-documented. Once you're assisting with the construction of the US military's drone program, receiving grants from the CIA and NSA for mass surveillance, or having your site's content regulated by NATO's propaganda arm, you don't get to pretend you're a private, independent corporation that is separate from government power. It is possible in the current system to have a normal business worth a few million dollars, but if you want to get to billions of dollars in wealth control in a system where money translates directly to political power, you need

to work with existing power structures like the CIA and the Pentagon, or else they'll work with your competitors instead of you

### **Censorship Through Private Proxy**

And yet every time I point to the dangers of a few Silicon Valley plutocrats controlling all new media political discourse with an iron fist, Democratic Party loyalists all turn into a bunch of hardline free market Ayn Rands. "It's not censorship!" they exclaim. "It's a private company and can do whatever it wants with its property!"

They do this because they know their **mainstream, plutocrat-friendly "centrist" views** will never be censored. Everyone else is on the chopping block, however. Leftist sites have already **had their views slashed** by a manipulation of Google's algorithms, and it won't be long before movements like BDS and Antifa and skeptics of the establishment Syria and Russia narratives can be made to face mass de-platforming on the same exact pretext as Infowars.

This is a setup. Hit the soft target so your oligarch-friendly censorship doesn't look like what it is, then once you've manufactured consent, go on to shut down the rest of dissenting media bit by bit.

Don't believe that's the plan? Let's ask sitting US Senator Chris Murphy: "Infowars is the tip of a giant iceberg of hate and lies that uses sites like Facebook and YouTube to tear our nation apart," Murphy **tweeted** in response to the news. "These companies must do more than take down one website. The survival of our democracy depends on it."



That sure sounds an awful lot like the warnings issued to the Silicon Valley representatives on the Senate floor at the beginning of this article, no? This is headed somewhere dark.

We're going to have to find a way to keep the oligarchs from having their cake

and eating it too. Either (A) corporations are indeed private organizations separate from the government, in which case the people need to get money out of politics and government agencies out of Silicon Valley so they can start acting like it, and insist that their owners can't be dragged out on to the Senate floor and instructed on what they can and can't do with their business, or (B) these new media platforms get treated like the government agencies they function as, and the people get all the First Amendment protection that comes with it. Right now the social engineers are double-dipping in a way that will eventually give the alliance of corporate plutocrats and secretive government agencies the ability to fully control the public's access to ideas and information.

If they accomplish that, it's game over for humanity. Any hope of the public empowering itself over the will of a few sociopathic, ecocidal, omnicidal oligarchs will have been successfully quashed. We are playing for all the chips right now. We have to fight this. We have no choice.

*This commentary was originally published on [CaitlinJohnstone.com](http://CaitlinJohnstone.com) .*

**Caitlin Johnstone is a rogue journalist, poet, and utopia prepper who publishes regularly at Medium. Follow her work on Facebook, Twitter, or her website. She has a podcast and a new book Woke: A Field Guide for Utopia Preppers. This article was re-published with permission.**

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## Consortium News Radio— Episode 1: Peter Van Buren

**INTRODUCING** Consortium News Radio, an ongoing series of radio interviews with newsmakers and Consortium News writers intended to delve deeper into stories published on Consortium News.

On the premiere edition of Consortium News Radio we speak with Peter Van Buren, a former State Department official, whistleblower and victim of Twitter censorship. Van Buren speaks about his experiences in Iraq, the critical book he wrote about those experiences and how the Obama State Department eventually attempted to have him tried under the Espionage Act. This week Van Buren had his Twitter account permanently shut down and seven years of his Tweets wiped from the record. Why? Because he challenged mainstream journalists who contested a Tweet from journalist Glenn Greenwald that mainstream reporters support America's wars and help bring them about. One corporate journalist decided to silence Van Buren by complaining to Twitter, which, within two days, and with no due process, obliged. Joe Lauria, editor-in-chief of Consortium News,

interviewed Van Buren on Wednesday, August 8 for 40 minutes.

Here is the first episode of Consortium News Radio:

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## VIPS Asks Twitter to Restore Van Buren's Account

The Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity in a memo to the Twitter board of directors questions its decision to suspend the account of one of its members without due process.

August 8, 2018

**TO:** Twitter Board of Directors

**FROM:** Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)

**SUBJECT:** Suspension of VIPS Associate Peter Van Buren's Twitter Account

We at Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) are greatly disturbed by the recent decision of your management to permanently suspend the Twitter account @WeMeantWell of our colleague Peter Van Buren. Peter is a highly respected former Foreign Service Officer possessing impeccable credentials for critiquing current developments that might lead to a new war in Eastern Europe or Asia, something which we Americans presumably all would like to avoid.

In 2011 our colleague Peter published a book, *We Meant Well: How I Helped Lose*



*the Battle for the Hearts and Minds of the Iraqi People*, about the poor decision-making by both civilians and military that led to the disastrous occupation and faux-democracy development in Iraq. It is Peter's concern that our country may well be proceeding down that same path again – possibly with Iran, Syria and other countries in the Middle East region.

It is our understanding that Peter became involved in an acrimonious Twitter exchange with several mainstream journalists over the theme of government lying. One of the parties to the exchange, reported to be Jonathan Katz of @KatzOnEarth – possibly joined by some of his associates – complained. Subsequently, and without any serious investigation or chance for rebuttal regarding the charges, Peter was suspended by you for “harass[ing], intimidate[ing], or us[ing] fear to silence someone else’s voice.” Peter absolutely denies that anything like that took place.

We have also learned that Daniel McAdams, Executive Director of the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity and a highly respected former Congressional staffer, weighed in to defend Peter and was also suspended by you. And Scott Horton, editorial director of Antiwar.com Radio, was suspended for use of “improper language” against Katz. Horton and McAdams cannot add new tweets while under suspension, but Peter’s “permanent” suspension included deletion of all of his seven years’ archive of tweets, so the actual exchanges leading up to his punishment cannot currently be examined.

Your action suggests three possibilities – all of which are quite plausible given that your system for punishing users is far from transparent. First, you may be engaged in systematic manipulation if some of your users are able to complain and have their friends do likewise in order to sully the reputation of a Twitter user who is doing little more than engaging in heated debate over issues that concern all of us.

Second, there is a distinct possibility that you are responding to either deep pocketed or particularly strident advocacy groups that may themselves have agendas to silence opposition voices. We note that Google is currently working with some powerful foundations to censor content they object to which comes up in search engine results.

Finally – third – we also suspect a possible government hand in that companies like yours, to include Facebook, have become very sensitive to alleged “subversive” content, deleting accounts and blocking users. Kowtowing to government suggestions to silence critics of administration policies may well be considered a desirable proactive step by your management as well as by other social media companies, but censorship is censorship, no matter how you dress it up.

We Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity believe that systematic and/or institutionalized censorship of tweets and account users is fundamentally the wrong way to go unless there are very explicit and sustained threats of violence or other criminal behavior. The internet should be free, to include most particularly the ability to post commentary that is not mainstream or acceptable to the Establishment. That is what Peter has been doing and we applaud him for it. We respectfully request that you examine the facts in the case with the objective of reconsidering and possibly restoring the suspension of Peter Van Buren's twitter account. Thank you.

*For the Steering Group, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity:*

**William Binney**, former Technical Director, World Geopolitical & Military Analysis, NSA; co-founder, SIGINT Automation Research Center (ret.)

**Richard H. Black**, Senator of Virginia, 13<sup>th</sup> District; Colonel US Army (ret); former chief, Criminal Law Division, Office of the Judge Advocate General, the Pentagon (associate VIPS) (@SenRichardBlack)

**Marshall Carter-Tripp**, Foreign Service Officer (ret.) and Division Director, State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research

**Bogdan Dzakovic**, former team leader of Federal Air Marshals and Red Team, FAA Security (ret.) (associate VIPS)

**Philip Giraldi**, CIA, Operations Officer (ret.) (@infangenetheof)

**Larry C. Johnson**, former CIA and State Department Counterterrorism Officer (ret.)

**Michael S. Kearns**, Captain, USAF (ret.); Wing Commander, RAAF (ret.); former intelligence officer and master SERE instructor (@msk6793)

**John Kiriakou**, former CIA Counterterrorism Officer and former senior investigator, Senate Foreign Relations Committee (@johnkiriakou)

**Karen Kwiatkowski**, former Lt. Col., US Air Force (ret.), at Office of Secretary of Defense watching the manufacture of lies on Iraq, 2001-2003

**Linda Lewis**, WMD preparedness policy analyst, USDA (ret.) (associate VIPS) (@usalinda)

**Edward Loomis**, NSA, cryptologic computer scientist (ret.)

**David MacMichael**, National Intelligence Council (ret.)

**Ray McGovern**, former US Army infantry/intelligence officer & CIA analyst (ret.) (@raymcgovern)

**Annie Machon**, former intelligence officer in the UK's MI5 domestic security service (affiliate VIPS) (@anniemachon)

**Elizabeth Murray**, Deputy National Intelligence Officer for the Near East, CIA and National Intelligence Council (ret.) (@elizabethmurra)

**Todd E. Pierce**, Maj, US Army Judge Advocate (ret.) (@ToddEPierce)

**Scott Ritter**, former Maj., USMC; former UN weapons inspector, Iraq (@RealScottRitter)

**Coleen Rowley**, FBI Special Agent and former Minneapolis Division Legal Counsel (ret.) (@coleenrowley)

**J. Kirk Wiebe**, former Senior Analyst, SIGINT Automation Research Center, NSA (ret.) (@kirkwiebe)

**Sarah Wilton**, Commander, US Naval Reserve (ret.) and Defense Intelligence Agency (ret.)

**Robert Wing**, former Foreign Service Officer (associate VIPS)

**Ann Wright**, US Army Reserve Colonel (Ret) and former US Diplomat

**Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)** is made up of former intelligence officers, diplomats, military officers and congressional staffers. The organization, founded in 2002, was among the first critics of Washington's justifications for launching a war against Iraq. VIPS advocates a US foreign and national security policy based on genuine national interests rather than contrived threats promoted for largely political reasons. An archive of VIPS memoranda is available at [Consortiumnews.com](http://Consortiumnews.com).

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## Pilger Excoriates Media on Assange Silence

Emmy Award-winning filmmaker and investigative reporter John Pilger takes the gloves off on the continuing attempts to upend WikiLeaks and arrest its founding publisher, Julian Assange, in this interview with Dennis Bernstein and Randy

Credico.

*Pilger talks about Assange's deteriorating health and the physical dangers he faces during this period of virtual isolation. Pilger also excoriates the western media for their silence and pro-government stand on the marginalizing and potential prosecution of Assange, even after they collaborated with WikiLeaks and major high-profile breaking stories. The interview is part of a continuing national radio series—Assange: Countdown to Freedom. Pilger was interviewed on August 3rd, 2018.*

**By Dennis J. Bernstein and Randy Credico**



**DB:** John, what is the latest we know about how Julian Assange is being treated and his current state?

**John Pilger:** His state of health is just about the same, as I understand it. He needs medical attention, the kind of treatment you get only in a hospital. But it has been made clear to him that if he attempts to go to a hospital he will not be given free passage and he will be arrested. Since he was arrested in 2010, Assange has not been charged with a single crime. His treatment amounts to the most unprecedented persecution. Julian could leave the embassy if his own government, the government of his homeland, Australia, applied legitimate diplomatic pressure on behalf of its citizen. We must ask ourselves why this hasn't happened.

My own feeling is that there is a great deal of collusion between the Australian, the British and the US governments—meant to close down WikiLeaks completely and/or deliver Julian Assange to the Americans. Recently the Australian foreign minister, Julie Bishop, traveled with senior officials to London and to Washington and raised the whole matter of Julian. But they raised it in a way that didn't support the idea that a government should represent its citizens. These people listened to the more powerful governments. In Washington they met Mr. Pompeo, who refused to discuss Assange altogether. I think there is collusion which amounts to an attempt to try to do a deal with Assange whereby he *might* be allowed free passage of return to Australia if he shuts down WikiLeaks. I think that is very, very likely.

As I understand Julian, this is something he would not even contemplate. But that might be one of the so-called "wretched deals" that are being offered Assange. Some very strange things are being said by senior members of these two

governments. The new foreign secretary of the United Kingdom, Jeremy Hunt, said sarcastically that the British police would offer Julian “a warm welcome” when he came out, when he would face serious charges. There are no serious charges. He hasn’t been charged with anything.

Was Hunt referring to a deal which has already been done with the United States on extradition? I don’t know. But this is the milieu of machination around someone who has the right of natural justice concerning his freedom. Putting aside freedom of speech, the persecution of this man has been something that should horrify all free-thinking people. If it doesn’t horrify us, then we have surrendered something very valuable.

**DB:** Among those who should be especially horrified are those of us in the journalistic community. John, I would like you to explain once again why Julian Assange is such a significant journalist, why so many journalistic institutions have collaborated with him based on the information he provided. We are talking about a publisher and reporter who has changed history.

**JP:** Nothing in my time as a journalist has equaled the rise of WikiLeaks and its extraordinary impact on journalism. It is probably the only journalistic organization that has a 100% record of accuracy and authenticity! All of WikiLeaks’ revelations have been authentic. And it has been done “without fear or favor.” Although there has been a concentration on, say, the release of the Hillary Clinton/Podesta emails, or the Iraq and Afghan war logs, WikiLeaks has released information that people have a right to know across the spectrum. It has released something like 800,000 documents from Russia, and now WikiLeaks is accused of being an agent of Russia!

WikiLeaks’ journalism has covered a universal space and that is the first time this has happened. In Tunisia, the release of WikiLeaks documents foretold the Arab Spring. The people at the forefront of the uprising in Tunisia credit WikiLeaks for informing them of what their repressive government was doing behind their backs. In Venezuela, WikiLeaks released cables which described in great detail how the United States intended to subvert the government of Hugo Chavez. Some of this was published in the mainstream media, when there was still a collaboration with WikiLeaks.

The Clinton/Podesta emails, which appear to have made a number of people resentful, were published in the *New York Times*. These emails showed the close role that Hillary Clinton and the Clinton Foundation played in support of extreme jihadism in the Middle East. That was a very important piece of information for people to know and understand. By doing that, WikiLeaks performed an extraordinary public service, while at the same time making some very serious enemies.

**Randy Credico:** People sometimes forget that, apart from being a journalist, Julian Assange is a human being. You have known him a long time. Could you give us a feel for the kind of person Julian Assange is?

**JP:** Julian is a very principled individual. He feels very strongly about the moral basis of WikiLeaks. When he first put up WikiLeaks, he wrote that the whole idea of transparency, honoring people's right to know, was the central aim of the website. He feels that very strongly. Any attempt to do a deal with Julian to shut down WikiLeaks will no doubt be resisted. As a person, Julian is an extremely interesting man. He is very well read. He studied physics. He has a very good sense of humor, and I have often laughed out loud with him about situations that others might consider too bleak to discuss. His black humor is a part of his survival kit. Obviously, he is incredibly resilient. Personally, I could never endure what he has, especially in recent years. But this comes with a cost and his health is continuing to deteriorate. Those close to him are extremely worried.

In a letter to the Australian prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, Julian's father, John Shipton, wrote: "I ask the prime minister to do all within his power to return Julian home before Julian's situation becomes an irreversible tragedy." That is why this is such an urgent case of justice toward a single human being as well as a case of a journalistic organization's right to function and *our* right to have the information it provides. Only seven years ago, the current prime minister said that when an Australian citizen is threatened in this way the prime minister should respond. That was Turnbull before he became prime minister. Now the government is playing its usual role of being the fifty-first state of the United States. It is a true disgrace.

**RC:** What about Theresa May and the British government? Are they getting pressure from the United States or are there internal reasons why they want to keep Julian Assange quiet?

**JP:** Everything comes down to the relationship with the United States. Australia has an almost totally servile relationship with America, in which its national security structure, much of its academic life and certainly much of its media is integrated into the US system. That is not entirely the case in Britain. Since the loss of its empire after the Second World War, Britain has been eager to play a secondary role to the new imperial power. In many parts of the world, Britain is still the biggest corporate investor. But it does move in lockstep with the US on much of its foreign policy. It is interesting to see the corruption that this kind of relationship produces. Information has come out that the Crown Prosecution Service tried to prevent the Swedes from giving up the case against Julian on bogus sexual assault charges. The pressure was on

from London to keep it going.

Julian is also seen as defying a system and that is just not acceptable. There is a real element of vindictiveness here. The Crown Prosecution Service kept this case going when otherwise the European warrant put out by the Swedes would have been abandoned in 2013. When Julian came up to a bail hearing last year, it was an absolute disgrace. The judge described Julian's circumstances as if he were on some sort of extended vacation. What didn't emerge was the whole conflict of interest in this hearing. The judge's husband is a figure deep within the national security establishment in Britain who was named in WikiLeaks documents. Because there is no serious media examining the whole WikiLeaks witch hunt, virtually none of this emerges.

**DB:** The corporate press has a major responsibility if Julian Assange goes down, don't you agree?

**JP:** As you know, Dennis, governments do respond to pressure from powerful media interests. It rarely happens but when it does governments do change their tune. There has been no pressure from media in the United States, Britain, Australia or pretty much anywhere except in programs like yours outside the mainstream. You are absolutely right in that the responsibility of journalists for what has happened to Julian Assange and what *might* happen to WikiLeaks is undeniable.



I was looking this morning at a report by Media Lens in Britain describing how the British press has reported on Julian Assange. It describes the tsunami of vindictive personal abuse that has been heaped upon Julian from well-known journalists, many claiming liberal credentials. The *Guardian*, which used to consider itself the most enlightened newspaper in the country, has probably been the worst. The frontal attacks have been coming not from governments but from journalists. I described this recently as "Vichy journalism," a term which now fits so much of the mainstream media. It collaborates in the same way that the Vichy government in France collaborated with the Nazis.

There used to be spaces within the so-called mainstream for unbiased discussion,

for the airing of real grievances and injustices. These spaces have closed completely. The attacks on Julian Assange illustrate what has happened to the so-called free media in the West. I have been a journalist for a very long time and I have always worked within the mainstream, but the journalism I see now is part of a rapacious establishment and one of its prime targets is Julian Assange and WikiLeaks. This is precisely because WikiLeaks is producing the kind of journalism that *they* ought to be doing. WikiLeaks has in fact shamed journalists, which might help to explain the deeply personal abuse he has suffered. WikiLeaks has revealed what journalists should have revealed a long time ago.

**DB:** Even the attorney for the *New York Times* happened to mention that if Julian Assange gets prosecuted, the *Times* could get prosecuted under the same laws.

**JP:** It could but I don't believe it would be, because power respects power. The *New York Times* is part of the establishment. The difference with WikiLeaks is that it is outside of the establishment and is truly independent.

**DB:** What would be your strongest plea for Julian Assange?

**JP:** It's very simple. This is about justice. In a famous speech given in the 1930's by Parson Martin Niemoller, he said that first the Nazis came for socialists, but he didn't speak up because that didn't concern him. Then they came for trade unionists, but he didn't speak up because that didn't concern him. He didn't speak up when they came for the Jews because he wasn't a Jew. And, of course, finally they came for him. That might not be a precise parallel, but if Julian Assange is allowed to literally go under, it represents the conquest of all of us. It means that we have kept quiet. Keeping quiet has allowed the great atrocities of histories to take place. If Julian is allowed to be spirited away to some super-max hellhole, it will be a great atrocity.

**DB:** In the library, silence is golden. In the world of human rights, silence equals mass murder. They say you shouldn't yell fire in a crowded theater just to get a reaction. But if you know the theater *is* in fact on fire and you do not shout out, what happens after is your responsibility.

**Dennis J. Bernstein is a host of "Flashpoints" on the Pacifica radio network and the author of *Special Ed: Voices from a Hidden Classroom*. You can access the audio archives at [www.flashpoints.net](http://www.flashpoints.net). You can get in touch with the author at [dbernstein@igc.org](mailto:dbernstein@igc.org).**

**Randy Credico is an American perennial political candidate, comedian, radio host, activist and the former Director of the William Moses Kunstler Fund for Racial Justice**



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# VIPS Plead for Humanitarian Asylum for Julian Assange

**Memorandum for:** The US Embassies of Ecuador and the United Kingdom, and the U.S. State Department

**From:** Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity

**Subject:** Humanitarian Asylum for Julian Assange

For six years, WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange has been effectively imprisoned without charges at Ecuador's London embassy. In that time, two international courts and dozens of respected legal and human rights organizations have decried actions of the UK, US and Swedish governments that confine the journalist in what now amounts to torturous isolation, deprived of space, sunlight, visitors, communication with the outside and necessary medical care.

The catalyst was an arcane effort by the Swedish government to extradite Assange for questioning about claims of sexual improprieties.<sup>1</sup> The UK government subsequently arrested Assange and released him on bail.<sup>2</sup> Ecuador granted Assange asylum at its embassy based on concerns he could be extradited to the US where he would not receive a fair trial and could receive a death sentence.<sup>3</sup> (Former Obama DOJ spokesperson Matthew Miller has acknowledged that US officials intended to arrest Julian Assange but decided against it because of the expected impacts on press freedom.)<sup>4</sup>

The UK government threatens to arrest Assange if he leaves the embassy for "not surrendering at bail" and refuses to rule out extradition to the US.<sup>5</sup> Under a new president, Ecuador has cut off Assange's communications with the outside world.

## **Experts Criticize Treatment of Assange**

In June, 2014, The National Lawyers Guild and 59 human rights and legal organizations petitioned the United Nations to act on violations of Assange's "fundamental human rights." In addition, "33 union, human rights, media and civil society organizations" petitioned the Human Rights Commission in Geneva on behalf of freedom for Assange. Reports submitted by the groups identified "numerous systematic deficiencies in Swedish pre-trial procedures like the routine placement of persons who have not been charged with any crime in

indefinite, isolated, or unexplained pre-charge detention.”<sup>6</sup>

In February 2016, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) concluded that Assange’s situation constitutes “arbitrary detention” and violates both the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.<sup>7</sup> Assange’s Swedish lawyer, Per Samuelson, told The Guardian, 4 Feb 2016, “If he is regarded as detained, that means he has served his time, so I see no other option for Sweden but to close the case.”<sup>8</sup>

Another year would pass, however, before Sweden dropped its investigation, after finally consenting to interview Assange at the embassy.<sup>9</sup> Recently obtained emails show that Sweden would have dropped the case years earlier but for pressure from UK authorities.<sup>10</sup> In summary, Assange has been confined for six years over allegations that never resulted in charges, much less a criminal conviction.

On July 12, 2018, the Organization of American States’ (OAS) Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) sent out a ruling<sup>11</sup> that was virtually unnoticed by US news media. The IACHR found “it is the duty of nations to allow for the passage of successful asylum seekers from embassies to the mainland territory of the state that has granted an individual asylum.”

For Julian Assange, this would mean that, according to the Court’s decision, Britain has a legal obligation to allow Julian Assange to exit the Ecuadorian Embassy in London in peace and allow for his safe transit to an airport from which he would be able to fly to Ecuador, the country that has granted Assange asylum and where he now also holds formal citizenship<sup>12</sup>

“[I]t is imperative,” the ruling states, “that Assange is allowed to make the safe passage to Ecuador demanded by the Court as his physical and mental health conditions have been described as deteriorating rapidly. If, nevertheless, UK authorities insist on arresting Assange, “the British government will have wantonly failed to uphold Assange’s rights as a legitimate receiver of asylum by Ecuador.”<sup>13</sup>

The IACHR ruling suggests further that outright abuses occurred when Ecuador removed security assigned for Assange;<sup>14</sup> when the UK rejected Ecuador’s request for safe passage of Assange to Ecuador<sup>15</sup>; and when the US obstructed efforts to end Assange’s virtual imprisonment.<sup>16</sup>

### **Mistaken Assumptions Underlie Government Policies**

President Trump’s Attorney General Jeff Sessions hinted at a crackdown on the press.<sup>17</sup> Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called Wikileaks a “non-state, hostile intelligence service” that is often “abetted by state actors like Russia.”<sup>18</sup> Pompeo laments the “hero worship” of NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden and

suggests harsh measures would prevent future “leaks” of classified information. But, it is government persecution, not the lack of it, that gives truth-tellers hero status. Also, what truly upsets senior intelligence officials is not (frequently condoned) “leaking” but blowing the whistle on government wrongdoing.

Harsh measures do not deter individuals with strong moral convictions from whistleblowing. Instead, these motivate potential whistleblowers to find more creative avenues for disclosure. Edward Snowden, for example, was well aware of the US government’s brutality toward Thomas Drake, who used “official channels” to express concerns about the legality of NSA surveillance activities. Drake’s experience, Snowden says, were his inspiration. “It’s fair to say,” Snowden said, “if there hadn’t been a Thomas Drake, there couldn’t have been an Edward Snowden.”<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, despite the bullying of Julian Assange, new websites have appeared that draw inspiration from WikiLeaks.<sup>20</sup> Should the US take custody of Assange and prosecute him like Drake, they could find success elusive in the opinion of Harvard Law professor Jack Goldsmith.

“The most relevant law, the Espionage Act, is famously overbroad and thus an uncertain basis for prosecution,” observed Goldsmith. “This is one reason the government has never successfully prosecuted a member of the media for soliciting or publishing classified information. Nor has the government ever successfully prosecuted a non-media organization for solicitation or receipt of classified information.”<sup>21</sup>

“Failing in the effort would make the United States look even more ineffectual than it does as a result of the leaks,” Goldsmith concluded.

A successful prosecution could have worse consequences. With little that distinguishes Wikileaks’ activities from those of mainstream news gatherers<sup>22</sup>, a dangerous legal precedent would be established. Journalists employed by major newspapers that also published government secrets, including some of the same secrets published by Wikileaks, could be imprisoned by any administration with animosity toward the press. The impacts of prosecuting Assange would ripple around the world as officials in other governments followed the most powerful nation’s example. With no means of holding governments accountable, despotism would proliferate, triggering cascading crises and worldwide disruption.

UN human rights expert Alfred de Zayas observes that “Order depends on the consistent and uniform application of international law.”<sup>23</sup>

Governments could simply ignore the court directives on Assange’s asylum rights;

but that too carries risks, undermining efforts by those countries to support dissidents of their choosing. Potentially, in the future, the diplomatic privileges of UK, US and Ecuadorian diplomats could also come under assault.

### **A Fork in the Road**

Collectively, the governments of Sweden, the UK, the US, Ecuador (recently) and, through its silence, Assange's home country of Australia have imposed six years of suffering on Assange and possibly life-long damage to his health. With their proxies, they pound Assange with threats, ad hominem attacks and misleading statements. He cannot defend himself because the government of Ecuador terminated his access to communications systems. This may have a temporary effect of confusing the public; but as more legal experts and human rights authorities hazard coming to his defense, the public may recognize these assaults as the desperate flailings of governments that lack credible defenses for their actions.

Public dissatisfaction with governments worldwide is currently high, as evidenced by numerous massive street protests, passages of referendums against centralized power, and wide-spread elections of anti-establishment candidates. Any additional erosion of public support risks a tipping point with unforeseeable consequences. Brutality against Julian Assange, particularly as his health declines, can only increase his stature as a journalist, enshrine his popular global status as a martyr for freedom, and effectively undermine support for his persecutors.

The involved governments have arrived at a fork in the road. They can continue the persecution of Assange, risking catastrophe for diminishing returns. Or, they can let Assange proceed to Ecuador, or home to Australia if it provides suitable guarantees,<sup>24</sup> and boost their public standing as self-described supporters of human rights, the rule of law, and a free press.

We the undersigned members of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity urge all governments to honor the OHCHR and IACHR directives with respect to Julian Assange and other asylum seekers.

*For the Steering Group, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)*

**William Binney**, Technical Director, NSA; co-founder, SIGINT Automation Research Center (ret.)

**Richard H. Black**, Senator of Virginia, 13th District; Colonel US Army (ret.); Former Chief, Criminal Law Division, Office of the Judge Advocate General, the Pentagon (associate VIPS)

**Marshall Carter-Tripp**, Foreign Service Officer (ret.) and Division Director, State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research

**Bogdan Dzakovic**, former Team Leader of Federal Air Marshals and Red Team, FAA Security (ret.) (associate VIPS)

**Philip Giraldi**, CIA, Operations Officer (ret.)

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**Larry C. Johnson**, former CIA and State Department Counter Terrorism officer.

**Michael S. Kearns**, Captain, USAF (ret); Wing Commander, RAAF (ret); Intelligence Officer and Master SERE Instructor

**John Kiriakou**, Former CIA Counterterrorism Officer and former senior investigator, Senate Foreign Relations Committee

**Karen Kwiatkowski**, former Lt. Col., US Air Force (ret.), at Office of Secretary of Defense watching the manufacture of lies on Iraq, 2001-2003?

**Linda Lewis**, WMD preparedness policy analyst, USDA (ret.) (associate VIPS)

**Edward Loomis**, NSA, Cryptologic Computer Scientist (ret.)

**Ray McGovern**, former US Army infantry/intelligence officer & CIA analyst (ret.)

**Elizabeth Murray**, Deputy National Intelligence Officer for Near East, CIA and National Intelligence Council (ret.)

**Todd E. Pierce**, MAJ, US Army Judge Advocate (ret.)

**Coleen Rowley**, FBI Special Agent and former Minneapolis Division Legal Counsel (ret.)

**Kirk Wiebe**, former Senior Analyst, SIGINT Automation Research Center, NSA

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**Robert Wing**, former Foreign Service Officer (associate VIPS)

**Ann Wright**, Col., US Army (ret.); Foreign Service Officer (resigned)

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<sup>21</sup> Goldsmith, Jack. "Why the U.S. shouldn't try Julian Assange." *Washington Post*, 11 Feb 2011.

<sup>22</sup> "Quite simply, our motive is identical to that claimed by the New York Times and The Post – to publish newsworthy content," Assange wrote in a recent op-ed in The Washington Post. "Consistent with the U.S. Constitution, we publish material that we can confirm to be true irrespective of whether sources came by that truth legally or have the right to release it to the media. And we strive to mitigate legitimate concerns, for example by using redaction to protect the identities of at-risk intelligence agents" (*CNN*, 21 May 2017).

<sup>23</sup> UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. "UN rights expert urges the UK and Sweden to give good example to the world and implement the Assange ruling." 15 Feb 2016. Retrieved on 1 Aug 2018 from [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org).

<sup>24</sup> Murdock, Jason. WikiLeaks: Australia has 'obligation' to protect Julian Assange, Lawyer says." *Newsweek*. 1 Aug 2018.

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## Journalists Are All Julian Assange

As Ecuador threatens to expel Julian Assange, CN Ed. Joe Lauria will speak in a 50-hr. [online vigil](#) for Assange on Sat., 8pm EDT. In 2010, Bob Parry, late CN founder & editor, wrote this incisive essay on Assange's vital work.

**By Robert Parry**

*Originally published Dec. 16, 2010.*



Whatever the unusual aspects of the case, the Obama administration's reported plan to indict WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange for conspiring with Army Pvt. Bradley Manning to obtain U.S. secrets strikes at the heart of investigative journalism on national security scandals.

That's because the process for reporters obtaining classified information about crimes of state most often involves a journalist persuading some government official to break the law either by turning over classified documents or at least by talking about the secret information. There is almost always some level of "conspiracy" between reporter and source.

Contrary to what some outsiders might believe, it's actually quite uncommon for sensitive material to simply arrive "over the transom" unsolicited. Indeed, during three decades of reporting on these kinds of stories, I can only recall a few secret documents arriving that way to me.

In most cases, I played some role – either large or small – in locating the classified information or convincing some government official to divulge some secrets. More often than not, I was the instigator of these "conspiracies."

My "co-conspirators" typically were well-meaning government officials who were aware of some wrongdoing committed under the cloak of national security, but they were never eager to put their careers at risk by talking about these offenses. I usually had to persuade them, whether by appealing to their consciences or by constructing some reasonable justification for them to help.

Other times, I was sneaky in liberating some newsworthy classified information from government control. Indeed, in 1995, Consortiumnews.com was started as a way to publish secret and top-secret information that I had discovered in the files of a closed congressional inquiry during the chaotic period between the Republicans winning the 1994 elections and their actual takeover of Congress in early 1995.

In December 1994, I asked for and was granted access to supposedly unclassified records left behind by a task force that had looked into allegations that Ronald Reagan's campaign had sabotaged President Jimmy Carter's hostage negotiations with Iran in 1980.

To my surprise, I discovered that the investigators, apparently in their haste to wrap up their work, had failed to purge the files of all classified material. So, while my "minder" wasn't paying attention to me, I ran some of the classified material through a copier and left with it in a folder. I later wrote



articles about these documents and posted some on the Internet.

Such behavior – whether cajoling a nervous government official to expose a secret or exploiting some unauthorized access to classified material – is part of what an investigative journalist does in covering national security abuses. The traditional rule of thumb has been that it's the government's job to hide the secrets and a reporter's job to uncover them.

In the aftermath of significant leaks, the government often tries to convince news executives to spike or water down the stories “for the good of the country.” But it is the news organization's ultimate decision whether to comply or to publish.

Historically, most of these leaks have caused the government some short-term embarrassment (although usually accompanied by exaggerated howls of protests). In the long run, however, the public has been served by knowing about some government abuse. Reforms often follow as they did during the Iran-Contra scandal that I was involved in exposing in the 1980s.

### **A Nixon Precedent**

Yet, in the WikiLeaks case – instead of simply complaining and moving on – the Obama administration appears to be heading in a direction not seen since the Nixon administration sought to block the publication of the Pentagon Papers secret history of the Vietnam War in 1971.

In doing so, the Obama administration, which came to power vowing a new era of openness, is contemplating a novel strategy for criminalizing traditional journalistic practices, while trying to assure major U.S. news outlets that they won't be swept up in the Assange-Manning dragnet.

*The New York Times* reported on Thursday that federal prosecutors were reviewing the possibility of indicting Assange on conspiracy charges for allegedly encouraging or assisting Manning in extracting “classified military and State Department files from a government computer system.”

The *Times* article by Charlie Savage notes that if prosecutors determine that Assange provided some help in the process, “they believe they could charge him as a conspirator in the leak, not just as a passive recipient of the documents who then published them.

“Among materials prosecutors are studying is an online chat log in which Private Manning is said to claim that he had been directly communicating with Mr. Assange using an encrypted Internet conferencing service as the soldier was downloading government files. Private Manning is also said to have claimed that

Mr. Assange gave him access to a dedicated server for uploading some of them to WikiLeaks.

“Adrian Lamo, an ex-hacker in whom Private Manning confided and who eventually turned him in, said Private Manning detailed those interactions in instant-message conversations with him. He said the special server’s purpose was to allow Private Manning’s submissions to ‘be bumped to the top of the queue for review.’ By Mr. Lamo’s account, Private Manning bragged about this ‘as evidence of his status as the high-profile source for WikiLeaks.’”

Though some elements of this suspected Assange-Manning collaboration may be technically unique because of the Internet’s role – and that may be a relief to more traditional news organizations like the *Times*, which has published some of the WikiLeaks documents – the underlying reality is that what WikiLeaks has done is essentially “the same wine” of investigative journalism in “a new bottle” of the Internet.

By shunning WikiLeaks as some deviant journalistic hybrid, mainstream U.S. news outlets may breathe easier now but may find themselves caught up in a new legal precedent that could be applied to them later.

As for the Obama administration, its sudden aggressiveness in divining new “crimes” in the publication of truthful information is especially stunning when contrasted with its “see no evil” approach toward openly acknowledged crimes committed by President George W. Bush and his subordinates, including major offenses such as torture, kidnapping and aggressive war.

### **Holder’s Move**

The possibility of an indictment of Assange no longer seems to me like rampant paranoia. Initially, I didn’t believe that the Obama administration was serious in stretching the law to find ways to prosecute Assange and to shut down WikiLeaks.

But then there was the pressure on WikiLeaks’ vendors such as Amazon.com and PayPal along with threats from prominent U.S. political figures, spouting rhetoric about Assange as a “terrorist” comparable to Osama bin Laden and a worthy target of assassination.

Normally, when people engage in such talk of violence, they are the ones who attract the attention of police and prosecutors. In this case, however, the Obama administration appears to be bowing to those who talk loosely about murdering a truth-teller.

Attorney General Eric Holder announced last week that he has taken “significant”

steps in the investigation, a possible reference to what an Assange lawyer said he had learned from Swedish authorities about a secret grand jury meeting in Northern Virginia.

The Times reported, "Justice Department officials have declined to discuss any grand jury activity. But in interviews, people familiar with the case said the department appeared to be attracted to the possibility of prosecuting Mr. Assange as a co-conspirator to the leaking because it is under intense pressure to make an example of him as a deterrent to further mass leaking of electronic documents over the Internet.

"By bringing a case against Mr. Assange as a conspirator to Private Manning's leak, the government would not have to confront awkward questions about why it is not also prosecuting traditional news organizations or investigative journalists who also disclose information the government says should be kept secret – including *The New York Times*, which also published some documents originally obtained by WikiLeaks."

In other words, the Obama administration appears to be singling out Assange as an outlier in the journalistic community who is already regarded as something of a pariah. In that way, mainstream media personalities can be invited to join in his persecution without thinking that they might be next.

Though American journalists may understandably want to find some protective cover by pretending that Julian Assange is not like us, the reality is – whether we like it or not – we are all Julian Assange.

**Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. He founded Consortiumnews in 1995.**

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## GOP and Corporate Dems Gain When Democrats Run Against Putin

Hammering on Russia is a losing strategy for progressives as most Americans care about economic issues and it is the Republicans and corporate Democrats who stand to gain, argues Norman Solomon.

By Norman Solomon



Progressives should figure it out. Amplifying the anti-Russia din helps to drown out the left's core messages for economic fairness, equal rights, environmental protection, diplomacy and so much more. Echoing the racket of blaming Russia for the USA's severe shortages of democracy plays into the hands of Republicans and corporate Democrats eager to block progressive momentum.

When riding on the "Russiagate" bandwagon, progressives unwittingly aid political forces that are eager to sideline progressive messages. And with the midterm elections now scarcely 100 days away, the torrents of hyperbolic and hypocritical claims about Russia keep diverting attention from why it's so important to defeat Republicans.

As a practical matter, devoting massive amounts of time and resources to focusing on Russia has reduced capacities to effectively challenge the domestic forces that are assaulting democratic possibilities at home – with such tactics as state voter ID laws, purging of voter rolls, and numerous barriers to suppress turnout by people of color.

Instead of keeping eyes on the prize, some of the Democratic base has been watching and trusting media outlets like MSNBC. An extreme Russia obsession at the network has left precious little airtime to expose and challenge the vast quantity of terrible domestic-policy measures being advanced by the Trump administration every day.

Likewise with the U.S. government's militarism. While some Democrats and Republicans in Congress have put forward legislation to end the active U.S. role in Saudi Arabia's mass-murderous war on Yemen, those efforts face a steeper uphill climb because of MSNBC.

This week, under the headline "It's Been Over a Year Since MSNBC Has Mentioned U.S. War in Yemen," journalist Adam Johnson reported for the media watchdog group FAIR about the collapse of journalistic decency at MSNBC, under the weight of the network's Russia Russia Russia obsession. Johnson's article asks a big-type question: "Why is the No. 1 outlet of alleged anti-Trump #resistance completely ignoring his most devastating war?"

The FAIR report says: "What seems most likely is MSNBC has found that attacking Russia from the right on matters of foreign policy is the most elegant way to preserve its 'progressive' image while still serving traditional centers of power – namely, the Democratic Party establishment, corporate sponsors, and their own revolving door of ex-spook and military contractor-funded talking

heads.”

## **Russia Doesn't Concern Americans**

Corporate media have been exerting enormous pressure on Democratic officeholders and candidates to follow a thin blue party line on Russia. Yet polling shows that few Americans see Russia as a threat to their well-being; they're far more concerned about such matters as healthcare, education, housing and overall economic security.

The gap between most Americans and media elites is clear in a nationwide poll taken after the Trump-Putin summit in Helsinki, which was fiercely condemned by the punditocracy. As *The Hill* newspaper reported this week under the headline “Most Americans Back Trump's Call for Follow-Up Summit With Putin,” 54 percent of respondents favored plans for a second summit. “The survey also found that 61 percent of Americans say better relations with Russia are in the best interest of the United States.”

Yet most Democratic Party leaders have very different priorities. After investing so much political capital in portraying Putin's government as an implacable enemy of the United States, top Democrats on Capitol Hill are hardly inclined to help thaw relations between the world's two nuclear superpowers.

It would be easy for news watchers to see that the Democratic Party is much more committed to a hard line against Russia than a hard line against the corporate forces imposing extreme economic inequality here at home.

National polling underscores just how out of whack and out of touch the party's top dogs are. Last month, the Gallup organization asked: “What do you think is the most important problem facing the country today?” The results were telling. “Situation with Russia” came in at below one-half of 1 percent.

The day after the Helsinki summit, *The Washington Post* reported: “Citing polls and focus groups that have put Trump and Russia far down the list of voter priorities, Democratic strategists have counseled candidates and party leaders for months to discuss ‘kitchen table’ issues. Now, after a remarkable 46-minute news conference on foreign soil where Trump stood side by side with a former KGB agent to praise his ‘strong’ denials of election interference and criticize the FBI, those strategists believe the ground may have shifted.”

Prominent corporate Democrats who want to beat back the current progressive groundswell inside their party are leading the charge. Jim Kessler, a senior vice president at the “centrist” Third Way organization, was quick to proclaim after the summit: “It got simple real fast. I've talked to a lot of Democrats that are running in purple and red states and districts who have said

that Russia rarely comes up back home, and I think that has now changed.”

The Democratic National Committee and other official arms of the party keep sending out Russia-bashing emails to millions of people on a nearly daily basis. At times the goals seem to involve generating and exploiting manic panic.

At the end of last week, as soon as the White House announced plans (later postponed) for Vladimir Putin to meet with President Trump in Washington this fall, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee fired off a mass email – from “RUSSIA ALERT (via DCCC)” – declaring that the Russian president “must NOT be allowed to set foot in our country.” The email strained to conflate a summit with Russian interference in U.S. elections. “We cannot overstate how dangerous this is,” the DCCC gravely warned. And: “We need to stop him at all costs.”

For Democrats who move in elite circles, running against Putin might seem like a smart election move. But for voters worried about economic insecurity and many other social ills, a political party obsessed with Russia is likely to seem aloof and irrelevant to their lives.

**Norman Solomon is the national coordinator of the online activist group RootsAction.org and the executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. He is the author of a dozen books including “War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death.”**

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