

With Beto O'Rourke as Lightning Rod, Corporate Democrats Aim to Stifle Criticism

When a legitimate review of a politician's voting record draws charges of "doing Trump's bidding" that's demagogic, writes Norman Solomon.

By Norman Solomon

NormanSolomon.com



Well-informed public discussion is a major hazard for Democratic Party elites now eager to prevent Bernie Sanders from winning the 2020 presidential nomination. A clear focus on key issues can bring to light the big political differences between Sanders and the party's corporate-friendly candidates. One way to muddy the waters is to condemn people for pointing out facts that make those candidates look bad.

National polling shows that the U.S. public strongly favors bold policy proposals that Sanders has been championing for a long time. On issues ranging from climate change to Medicare for All to tuition-free public college to Wall Street power, the party's base has been moving leftward, largely propelled by an upsurge of engagement from progressive young people. This momentum is a threat to the forces accustomed to dominating the Democratic Party.

In recent weeks, Texas Congressman Beto O'Rourke has become a lightning rod in a gathering political storm— largely because of the vast hype about him from mass media and Democratic power brokers. At such times, when spin goes into overdrive, we need incisive factual information.

Investigative journalist David Sirota provided it in a deeply researched Dec. 20 article, which *The Guardian* published under the headline "[Beto O'Rourke Frequently Voted for Republican Legislation, Analysis Reveals.](#)"

Originating from the nonprofit *Capital & Main* news organization, the piece reported that "even as O'Rourke represented one of the most solidly Democratic congressional districts in the United States, he has frequently voted against the majority of House Democrats in support of Republican bills and [Trump administration priorities.](#)"

Voting with the Opposition

Progressives have good reasons to like some of O'Rourke's positions. But Sirota's reporting drilled down into his voting record, reviewing "[the 167 votes](#) O'Rourke has cast in the House in opposition to the majority of his own party during his six-year tenure in Congress. Many of those votes were not progressive dissents alongside other left-leaning lawmakers, but instead votes to help pass Republican-sponsored legislation."

But it's better to learn revealing political facts sooner rather than later. Thanks to Sirota's coverage, for instance, we now know "O'Rourke has voted for GOP bills that his fellow Democratic lawmakers said reinforced Republicans' anti-tax ideology, chipped away at the Affordable Care Act, weakened Wall Street regulations, boosted the fossil fuel industry and bolstered Donald Trump's immigration policy."

The backlash to Sirota's news article was in keeping with a tweet two weeks earlier from Neera Tanden, the president of

the influential and lavishly funded Center for American Progress, who has long been a major ally of Bill and Hillary Clinton. On Dec. 6, Tanden went over-the-top in response to a tweet from Sirota simply mentioning the fact that O'Rourke "is the #2 recipient of oil/gas industry campaign cash in the entire Congress."

Tanden Lashed Out on Twitter

Tanden lashed out via Twitter, writing: "Oh look. A supporter of Bernie Sanders attacking a Democrat. This is seriously dangerous. We know Trump is in the White House and attacking Dems is doing Trump's bidding. I hope Senator Sanders repudiates these attacks in 2019."

Such calculated nonsense indicates just how panicky some powerful corporate Democrats are about Bernie's likely presidential campaign—and just how anxious they are to protect corporate-oriented candidates from public scrutiny. The quest is to smother meaningful discussions of vital issues that should be center stage during the presidential campaign.

Corporate Democrats are gearing up to equate principled, fact-based critiques of their favored candidates with—in Tanden's words—"seriously dangerous" attacks that are "doing Trump's bidding." Such demagogic rhetoric should be thrown in the political trash cans where it belongs.

This is not only about Beto O'Rourke—it's about the parade of Democratic contenders lined up to run for president. Should the candidates that mass media and party elites put forward as "progressive" be quickly embraced or carefully scrutinized? The question must be asked and answered.

Norman Solomon is co-founder and national coordinator of RootsAction.org. He is the author of a dozen books including "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death."

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

Sam Hussein 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 SamHussein

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.

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

Casper 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.



Associated Press
Former Defense Secretary Casper 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.

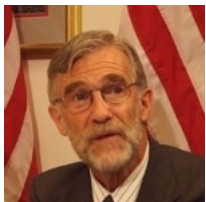
Sam Hussein is an independent journalist, senior analyst at the Institute for Public Accuracy, and founder of VotePact.org, which encourages disenchanted Democrats and Republicans to pair up. Follow him on Twitter [@samhusseini](https://twitter.com/samhusseini).

Ray McGovern: Russia-gate Evidence, Please

Was former FBI Director James Comey pulling a Hoover on Trump to keep him in line? asks Ray McGovern.

By Ray McGovern

Special to Consortium News



For those interested in evidence – or the lack of it– regarding collusion between Russia and the presidential campaign of Donald Trump, we can thank the usual Russia-gate [promoters](#) at *The New York Times* and [CNN](#) for inadvertently filling in some gaps in recent days.

Stooping to a new low, Friday's *Times* headline screamed: "F.B.I. Opened Inquiry Into Whether Trump Was Secretly Working on Behalf of Russia." The second paragraph noted that FBI agents "sought to determine whether Mr. Trump was knowingly working for Russia or had unwittingly fallen under Moscow's influence."

Trump had been calling for better relations with Russia during his presidential campaign. As journalist Michael

Tracy tweeted on Sunday, the *Times* report made it “not a stretch to say: the FBI criminally investigating Trump on the basis of the ‘national security threat’ he allegedly poses, with the ‘threat’ being his perceived policy preferences re: Russia, could constitute literal criminalization of deviation from foreign policy consensus.”

On Monday night CNN talking heads, like former House Intelligence Committee chair Mike Rogers, were expressing wistful hope that the FBI had more tangible evidence than Trump’s public statements to justify such an investigation. Meanwhile, they would withhold judgment regarding the Bureau’s highly unusual step.

Evidence?

NYT readers had to get down to paragraph 9 to read: “No evidence has emerged publicly that Mr. Trump was secretly in contact with or took direction from Russian government officials.” Four paragraphs later, the *Times*’ writers noted that, “A vigorous debate has taken shape among former law enforcement officials ... over whether FBI investigators overreacted.”

That was what Republican Rep. Trey Gowdy was wondering when he grilled former CIA director John Brennan on May 23, 2017 on what evidence he had provided to the FBI to catalyze its investigation of Trump-Russia collusion.

Brennan replied: “I don’t do evidence.”

The best Brennan could do was repeat the substance of a clearly well-rehearsed statement: “I encountered and am aware of information and intelligence that revealed contacts

and interactions between Russian officials and U.S. persons involved in the Trump campaign ... that required further investigation by the Bureau to determine whether or not U.S. persons were actively conspiring, colluding with Russian officials.”

That was it.

CNN joined the piling on Monday, quoting former FBI General Counsel James Baker in closed-door Congressional testimony to the effect that FBI officials were weighing “whether Trump was acting at the behest of [the Russians] and somehow following directions, somehow executing their will.” The problem is CNN also noted that Lisa Page, counsel to then FBI Acting Director Andrew McCabe, testified that there had been “indecision in the Bureau as to whether there was sufficient predication to open [the investigation].” “Predication” is another word for evidence.

Within hours of Comey’s firing on May 9, 2017, Page’s boyfriend and a top FBI counterintelligence official, Peter Strzok texted her: “We need to open the case we’ve been waiting on now while Andy [McCabe] is acting [director].” After all, if Trump were bold enough, he could have appointed a new FBI director and who knew what might happen then. When Page appeared before Congress, she was reportedly asked what McCabe meant. She confirmed that his text was related to the Russia investigation into potential collusion.

Comey v. Trump Goes Back to Jan. 6, 2017

The *Times* and CNN, however unintentionally, have shed light on what ensued after Trump finally fired Comey. Apparently,

it finally dawned on Trump that, on Jan. 6, 2017, Comey had treated him to the time-honored initiation-rite-for-presidents-elect – with rubrics designed by former FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover.

It seems then-FBI Director James Comey rendered a good impersonation of Hoover that day when he briefed President-elect Trump on the scurrilous “Steele dossier” that the FBI had assembled on Trump. Excerpts from an interview Trump gave to the *Times* (below) after the firing throw light on what Trump says was at least part of his motivation to dump Comey.

To dramatize the sensitivity of the dossier, Comey asked then-National Intelligence Director James Clapper and the heads of the CIA and NSA to depart the room at the Trump Tower, leaving Comey alone with the President-elect. The Gang of Four had already briefed Trump on the evidence-impooverished “Intelligence Community Assessment.” That “assessment” alleged that Putin himself ordered his minions to help Trump win. The dossier had been leaked to the media, which withheld it but *Buzzfeed* [published it](#) on Jan. 10.?

‘This Russia Thing’

Evidently, it took Trump four months to fully realize he was being played, and that he couldn’t expect the “loyalty” he is said to have asked of Comey. So Trump fired Comey on May 9. Two days later he [told](#) NBC’s Lester Holt:

“When I decided to just do it, I said to myself, I said, ‘You know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made-up story, it’s an excuse by the Democrats for having lost an election that they should’ve won.’”

The mainstream media and other Russia-gater aficionados immediately seized on “this Russian thing” as proof that Trump was trying to obstruct the investigation of alleged Russian collusion with the Trump campaign. However, in the Holt interview Trump appeared to be reflecting on Comey’s J. Edgar Hoover-style, one-on-one gambit alone in the room with Trump.

Would Comey really do a thing like that? Was the former FBI director protesting too much in his June 2017 testimony to the Senate Intelligence Committee when he insisted he’d tried to make it clear to Trump that briefing him on the unverified but scurrilous information in the dossier wasn’t intended to be threatening. It took a few months but it seems Trump figured out what he thought Comey was up to.

Trump to NYT: ‘Leverage’ (aka Blackmail)

In a long Oval Office [interview](#) with the *Times* on July 19, 2017, Trump said he thought Comey was trying to hold the dossier over his head.

“...Look what they did to me with Russia, and it was totally phony stuff. ... the dossier ... Now, that was totally made-up stuff,” Trump said. “I went there [to Moscow] for one day for the Miss Universe contest, I turned around, I went back. It was so disgraceful. It was so disgraceful.

“When he [James B. Comey] brought it [the dossier] to me, I said this is really made-up junk. I didn’t think about anything. I just thought about, man, this is such a phony deal. ... I said, this is – honestly, it was so wrong, and they didn’t know I was just there for a very short period of time. It was so wrong, and I was with groups of people. It

was so wrong that I really didn't, I didn't think about motive. I didn't know what to think other than, this is really phony stuff."

The dossier, paid for by the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton campaign and compiled by former British spy Christopher Steele, relates a tale of Trump allegedly cavorting with prostitutes, who supposedly urinated on each other before the same bed the Obamas had slept in at the Moscow Ritz-Carlton hotel. [On February 6, 2018, *The Washington Post* [reported](#) that that part of the dossier was written Cody Shearer, a long-time Clinton operative and passed it along to Steele. Shearer ignored a request for comment from **Consortium News**. [Shearer had been a Consortium advisory board member who was asked to resign and left the board.]

Trump told the *Times*: "I think [Comey] shared it so that I would – because the other three people [Clapper, Brennan, and Rogers] left, and he showed it to me. ... So anyway, in my opinion, he shared it so that I would think he had it out there. ... As leverage.

"Yeah, I think so. In retrospect. In retrospect. You know, when he wrote me the letter, he said, 'You have every right to fire me,' blah blah blah. Right? He said, 'You have every right to fire me.' I said, that's a very strange – you know, over the years, I've hired a lot of people, I've fired a lot of people. Nobody has ever written me a letter back that you have every right to fire me."

McGovern lays out more details during a 12-minute [interview](#) on Jan. 10 with Tyrel Ventura of "Watching the

Hawks.”

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. A CIA analyst for 27 years and Washington area resident for 56 years, he has been attuned to these machinations. He is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).

For Hollywood, ‘Vice’ Is Remarkably Astute About Politics

Adam McKay’s movie may be flawed, but it’s still must-see for his depiction of how Cheney amassed power by exploiting Watergate, an inexperienced president and 9/11, writes James DiEugenio.

By James DiEugenio

Special to Consortium News



In 2015, director Adam McKay did something unusual in Hollywood. He made a good film out of a good book. In fact, one could argue that McKay’s movie “The Big Short” is even better than Michael Lewis’ book. It is funnier, has a faster pace and is much more innovative stylistically.

McKay has now done something even more unusual for Hollywood. He has made a good film about an unattractive and unlikeable character, former Vice-President Dick Cheney. Appropriately, the film is called “Vice.” I am going to say some critical things about “Vice.” But let me start

by recommending that everyone who reads this website see this film. It's not often that Hollywood produces a film this honest, ambitious and intelligent about the contemporary American political scene.

Early in his life, Cheney flunked out of Yale and was tagged with two DUI's. His wife Lynne—who later became a prolific author—helped straighten him out and put him on a path toward a political career. From that point on, McKay, who also wrote the script, frames Cheney with the following epigraph, which is written across the screen at one point:

“Beware the quiet man. For while others speak, he watched. And while others act, he plans. And when they finally rest, he strikes.”

The warning applies to three key sections covered by the film.

Watergate Power Vacuum

During the Watergate scandal, Cheney believed that any Republican not touched by the scandal should be valued like gold. So he and Donald Rumsfeld schemed to fill a power vacuum in the Gerald Ford White House. In order to compensate for the laws sapping executive power after Watergate, he met with a young up-and-coming lawyer named Antonin Scalia. The future U.S. Supreme Court justice supplied Cheney with the unified executive theory, a doctrine Scalia drew from article two of the U.S. Constitution that vests “executive power” in the president. Cheney tried to utilize this doctrine as chief of staff under Ford.

George W's Search for VP

The dangerous quiet man reappears during the presidential campaign of George W. Bush. As the film depicts, due to an agreement he'd made with his wife, Cheney was only supposed to lead Bush's search for a vice president. But sensing that W was tentative and unsure of himself on the national stage of foreign policy, Cheney made an agreement with George W. that would make him the most powerful vice-president in history. Through this pact, Cheney achieved something that Lyndon Johnson had tried for but failed to attain with John Kennedy: a co-presidency. He set up offices for himself at both the House of Representatives and the Senate. He also had virtual offices at the CIA and the State Department.

Post 9/11

These arrangements put him in a propitious position during the 9/11 attacks. Cheney advised President Bush to stay in the air for safety purposes while he—without clearance from Bush—issued a shoot-down order to Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. And that was just the beginning of the Cheney domination of the War on Terror.

As McKay shows in the film, it was Cheney who almost unilaterally chose the suspects that he wanted the CIA to pick up and deport for rendition purposes to foreign black sites, or secret prisons. It was Cheney, aided by neoconservative lawyer David Addington and State Department analyst Doug Feith, who constructed the "stove piping" of intelligence in order to avoid any rigorous review of sources and methods for intelligence reports.

Like the Plan B neocons of the 1970s, who overrode the CIA's

estimates of the Soviet military threat, Cheney descended into the spy agency's headquarters in Langley, Virginia, and rode herd on its officers and analysts. The vice-president demanded access to *all* the information, no matter how dubious the source or how much duress had been applied in attaining it. It was this imperiousness that allowed disinformation by the likes of German-born informer Rafid Ahmed Alwan al-Janabi, also known by his CIA moniker of Curveball, to lay the false foundations for the invasion of Iraq.

And Cheney made sure that as much duress as possible was applied to the suspects he had chosen. Through Addington, Cheney recruited John Yoo, a Yale-educated lawyer at work in the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel. Yoo agreed with Scalia's unitary executive theory. He wrote legal memoranda that stated that, in the War on Terror, America could discard the Geneva Convention's guidelines on the treatment of prisoners. Yoo's memos infamously stated that the CIA should only ban physical pain equivalent to organ failure or death. It was Yoo's almost complete denial of international law that set America on the path to Abu Ghraib, the Iraq prison where the CIA and U.S. Army infamously oversaw the extreme abuse and torture of prisoners.

Still Incomplete

It is remarkable that McKay managed to get all this information about Cheney into a film that runs only slightly over two hours.

But the trail of perfidy is incomplete. For example, as

chronicled by the late Bob Parry, it was Cheney who led the counter attack to the Iran/Contra affair from Congress. Cheney was at a meeting at the home of Evan Thomas where it was suggested that National Security Advisor John Poindexter commit perjury to protect President Reagan.

But all of the above tells you little about the experience of watching the film. As with "The Big Short," the exceptional thing about "Vice" is McKay's cinematic approach. Once again, he uses a battery of visual devices that are unprecedented in contemporary film. About halfway through the film, for instance, before Cheney becomes vice president, the film appears to reach an abrupt ending. The credits roll, with cornily cheerful music on the soundtrack. Meaning we all would have been better off if Cheney had not become co-president.

In "Vice," however, such clever innovations don't necessarily help the overall storyline. "The Big Short" was about an event, namely the economic meltdown of 2007-08. "Vice" is about a man's life and career.

Had McKay lessened, rather than increased, his visual inventiveness he might have done a better job explaining how Cheney ended up as a character worthy of Shakespeare's treacherous Iago. (A spoofy bedroom scene written and performed in Shakespeare's iambic pentameter—which happens—does not solve the riddle of character explication.) A bit more straightforward story telling would have also given the actors—Christian Bale as Cheney and Amy Adams as his wife—more to work with. They are quite adequate here, but because of McKay's attention to other matters, neither can be really good.

None of this makes me any less enthusiastic about the film or about McKay. How can someone not admire a millionaire film director who identifies himself as a social democrat? And makes films like this? More power to him.

James DiEugenio is a researcher and writer on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and other mysteries of that era. His most recent book is “*The JFK Assassination : The Evidence Today.*”

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Alger Hiss and Russia-gate

Jeremy Kuzmarov argues the Cold War case has enduring relevance to American political culture and provides clues to the motives and machinations underlying the new Russophobia.

By Jeremy Kuzmarov



In January 1950, Alger Hiss, a former State Department employee and director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was convicted of perjury and sentenced to five years in a federal penitentiary. The sentence, of which Hiss served 44

months, culminated a frenzied political trial that catapulted Richard Nixon to fame, undergirded the advent of McCarthyism and heated up the Cold War.

Today, it is worth looking back at the Hiss case because it offers important clues to the motives and machinations underlying the similarly politicized Russia-gate investigations. In both cases, powerful political players appear to have attempted to deflect acts of malfeasance by falsely accusing political adversaries of treasonous behavior while igniting anti-Russia hysteria and paranoid fears of subversion that threatened war between the major nuclear powers.

Hiss was the embodiment of the liberal, New Deal establishment, which had promoted a major expansion of domestic social welfare programs. Educated at Harvard Law School, Hiss clerked for Supreme Court Justices Felix Frankfurter and Oliver Wendell Holmes, and worked for the State Department before moving on to head the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Supportive of President Franklin Roosevelt's policy of accommodation towards the Soviets, Hiss had been present at the 1945 Yalta conference, which resulted in a spheres of influence agreement.

Hiss had also worked as a legal assistant for the Nye Committee in the 1930s, a congressional investigation into war profiteering led by Gerald Nye, a Republican senator from North Dakota. The investigation exposed high-level corruption and connections between American companies and the growth of the Nazi war machine.

For instance, it revealed how United Aircraft sold

commercial airplane engines to Germany for use in Luftwaffe fighter planes. It showed how Nazi troops were armed with American guns, and how Union Banking Corporation had engaged in a cartel agreement with the German chemical conglomerate, I.G. Farben, soon to be gas maker for Holocaust gas chambers.

Because of his work on the committee, Hiss made many powerful enemies. The Republican Party at the time was looking to revive its fortunes through red-baiting tactics that would deflect attention from their anti-labor program. The Justice Department also had begun to investigate alleged treasonous activities by GOP power brokers.

Among them was Thomas McKittrick, a former agent of the Office of Strategic Services (predecessor of the CIA) who was the wartime president of the Bank for International Settlements in Basel, Switzerland. He was also an executive with Chase Manhattan Bank and a Marshall Plan administrator who allegedly conspired with his friend, the future CIA Director Allen Dulles, to move looted Nazi gold to Argentina.

Another official under DOJ investigation was Sen. Prescott Bush, a managing director of the Union Banking Corporation, which helped provide financing to Nazi industrialists in violation of the Trading with the Enemy Act during World War II. Bush was the father of President George H.W. Bush and grandfather of President George W. Bush.

The Dulles' Diversion'

The origins of McCarthyism predate McCarthy. In order to bury the war profiteering investigation and undermine a wartime plan adopted by FDR's Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau to deindustrialize Germany and break the power of its banking cartel, Dulles and his associates began accusing New Deal Democrats of being spies.

The first was Harry Dexter White, liberal postwar director of the International Monetary Fund, who had pushed the German deindustrialization plan, and then came Hiss.

The GOP's accusations of treason were part of a political counter-offensive designed to protect the real traitors while bolstering the party's political fortune. Hiss' alleged treason provided the "proof" that the Roosevelt and Truman administrations were "dyed pink in Moscow." Hiss' trial was in turn politicized as much as the Soviet show trials.

John Foster Dulles, President Dwight Eisenhower's secretary of state, and his brother Allen had worked as attorneys for Sullivan & Cromwell, which according to journalist Stephen Kinzer, "thrived on its cartels and ties to the Nazi regime," and kept its business with its clients all the way through the war.

After supporting Nixon's campaign in California's 12th Congressional district against Democrat Jerry Voorhis in 1946, the Dulles brothers began to accuse their enemies of communist subversion in order to bury investigation into their nefarious war-time activities and to undermine Morgenthau's plan to deindustrialize Germany and break the power of its banking cartel.

The first target of their accusations was Harry Dexter White, liberal postwar executive director of the IMF and an assistant to Morgenthau who championed the German deindustrialization plan. President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill adopted the plan at the second Quebec Conference in September 1944. Truman replaced it in 1947 with the Marshall Plan, a robust program of economic aid that benefited U.S. business.

Hiss was the second major target to fall victim to Dulles' plot. Like Russia-gate, which has deflected attention from the Democratic Party failings, Hiss' case became a media sensation that derailed critical scrutiny into treasonous wartime activity by plutocratic interests and provided "proof" for GOP voters that the Roosevelt and Truman administrations were "dyed pink in Moscow"—much as Donald Trump is portrayed as a Moscow puppet.

Like the allegations against Trump, Hiss' actual connection to Soviet espionage remains unproven. He never left any traces of even being a socialist. The documents Hiss is alleged to have smuggled were mundane and would have done nothing to harm national security. They included blank and illegible microfilms along with synopses about economic conditions in Manchuria, German trade policy in Brazil, unclassified manuals for operating naval rafts, parachutes and fire extinguishers; information that could have been found in the New York public library.

The Hiss case was marred by prosecutorial misconduct and illegalities. Hiss was entrapped by prosecutors who benefited from FBI surveillance of his witnesses and the

sharing of that information with the prosecution's leading witness, Whittaker Chambers, a *Time* magazine editor who said he had known Hiss in the mid-1930s. Allegations of biased FBI misconduct against Trump are similarly rife.

Like proponents of Russia-gate, Chambers had questionable credibility. His credibility was undermined by contradictory statements, dubious claims about the spy-craft trade and false testimony. William A. Reuben, who spent four decades researching the Hiss case, found that "the first thing to note about Whittaker Chambers' confessions of communist underground work is that it has never been corroborated, either by documentary evidence or by the word of any other human being."

KGB: Hiss Never an Asset

Years after the case, Oleg Kalugin, a former KGB general and longtime chief of Russia's foreign intelligence operations, stated that "Russian intelligence service has no documents proving that Alger Hiss cooperated with our service somewhere or anywhere," while retired KGB Maj. Gen. Julius Kobyakov said Hiss "never had any relationship with Soviet intelligence."

Hede Massing, an Austrian actress and confessed former Soviet spy inside the U.S., was another key witness for the prosecution who was threatened with deportation if she did not testify against Hiss. The government claimed that Hiss was part of an underground spy cell called the "Ware Group."

However, Lee Pressman, a labor attorney who was a law school classmate of Hiss and a member of the group, testified that this was a Marxist study group in the 1930s and that Hiss

was not a member. Pressman was later accused of being a Russian spy.

It was claimed that Chambers and Hiss had been introduced by Josef Peters, alleged brain of the entire communist underground. But there is no record of this, and Peters was mysteriously deported to Hungary on the eve of the trial, so he could not testify and said he never met Chambers, except possibly once in the 1930s.

Hiss' wife, Priscilla, allegedly typed some of the smuggled State Department documents on a typewriter that was traced back to the Hiss family. However, later it was found that the FBI had suppressed a lab report showing **she could not have typed the documents**. The Woodcock typewriter, serving as key government evidence, was also possibly reproduced by the CIA or U.S. military intelligence, echoing the way the CIA has been alleged to be behind Guccifer 2 in the alleged Russian hack of the DNC computers.

Nixon alluded to this when he told aide Charles Colson, as recorded in White House tapes: "The typewriters are always key. We built one in the Hiss case."

Hiss' opponents believed they had their smoking gun years after the trial when **encrypted Soviet cables**, released following the opening of the Soviet archives in 1991 (known as the **Venona files**), exposed a State Department spy code-named Ales, whom they believed to mean Alger.

However, a **2007 American Scholar article** by Kai Bird and Svetlana Chervonnaya argued that a more likely candidate was Hiss' colleague, Wilder Foote, because a KGB operative placed Ales in Mexico City when Hiss was known to be in the

U.S and the information came from someone inside the Office of the Lend- Lease Administration, where Hiss never worked.

The Soviets showed little interest in the political information Hiss could provide, since the Cambridge Five (famed British spies) leaked the major secret documents related to Yalta. Ales hence does not appear to have violated the Espionage Act, which requires specific injury to U.S. national interest.

More Parallels With 2016

The Hiss case exemplifies the abuse of the judicial system and manipulation of public opinion by opportunists such as Richard Nixon and elements of the Deep State during the Cold War. One can see parallels with Russia-gate here too, with opportunists such as Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) and his uncorroborated leaks coming from intelligence sources.

These resemblances to current events are unfortunately salient. The Deep State always has wanted Russia as an enemy so huge military-defense budgets can be maintained, and so Russia does not control Central Asia's oil and gas wealth. The main target of its political machinations today, farcically, is a Republican president who is an arch-imperialist and embodiment of the American dream in its valorization of wealth accumulation.

During the 2016 election, the party of Roosevelt ran a divisive candidate in Hillary Clinton who undermined the progressive insurgent, Bernie Sanders, through undemocratic methods. Instead of looking in the mirror, party power-brokers sought to blame Russia for its embarrassing defeat and divert the public's attention. They spread rumors of

Russian electoral manipulation, which, as in the Hiss case, have never been corroborated and probably never could be.

The Russia-gate investigation so far has many of the footprints of a politicized disinformation campaign, an amateur one at that, given that the January 2017 "assessment" by only three intelligence agencies—released to try to prove the charge of election hacking—was bereft of any evidence and focused mainly on attacking English-language Russian television as an alleged propaganda outlet.

Gross inconsistencies also have been apparent; in the refusal by Democratic National Committee to allow the FBI to examine its computer server where the alleged hack took place and in Special Counsel Robert Mueller's refusal to interview WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange or witnesses such as British diplomat Craig Murray who met with the alleged leaker. Mueller also refuses to engage with a study carried out by the Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, or VIPS, that determined the DNC data was leaked, not hacked, and that the data copying was performed on the East Coast of the United States and exceeded internet capability for a remote hack.

Liberals as Rightists

The timing of the indictment of 12 Russian spies by Mueller on the eve of a summit between Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump was also suspicious, along with the indictment being presented as proof when it is unlikely the case would ever be prosecuted.

Businessmen with ties to the Democratic Party, such as William F. Browder, meanwhile have replaced the old Wall

Street Republicans in pushing the anti-Russia hysteria. They too aim to deflect attention from their commission of white-collar crime. In Browder's case it was tax evasion, for which Putin prosecuted him. The methods of the New Cold Warriors are generally reminiscent of the old GOP in the levying of baseless accusations and adoption of methods of clandestine surveillance and attempted entrapment to discredit or prosecute Americans suspected of collusion with Russia, as had been the case with Hiss.

The Democrats and liberal media pundits on CNN and MSNBC and in journals like *The New Yorker* appear to be oddly in sync with the extremist John Birch society, which accused Eisenhower in the 1950s of leading a communist sleeper cell.

As Establishment Democrats and their fellow travelers drive much of the Russophobic hysteria in an effort to undermine Trump, it has been important for them to promote a useable past and distort the original history of the Cold War. As a case in point, Seth Ackerman wrote a piece in the supposedly left *Jacobin* magazine denouncing Roosevelt's vice president, Henry Wallace, who had advocated for détente with the Russians, as a communist dupe.

Ackerman then asserted in a July essay, which was at least somewhat critical of the Democrats' current Russophobia, that "Hiss was a Soviet spy" who was "reportedly awarded secret Soviet decorations in honor of his service to Moscow." However, even serious scholarship of an anti-Hiss bent has acknowledged that Hiss' guilt remains speculative, and the opening of the Soviet archives has not revealed any smoking-gun evidence apart from the Venona files whose meaning is contested.

Joan Brady, in an [important recent study](#) of Hiss, “America’s Dreyfuss,” notes that the “red scare whipped up around the case became for America what antisemitism had been to Germany [in the 1930s], a force to unify the people and deflect attention from an economic re-arrangement that could not function freely without chipping away at their rights.”

Decades after the case against Hiss, he remains a “bogeyman” who continues to serve as the embodiment what happens when we let our guard down.

These words resonate in our political climate where the Russian threat is again being invoked as a force to unify the people against false enemies and to steer attention from pernicious economic arrangements and criminal malfeasance by political donors.

Spooked by insurgencies on both the right and the left in the 2016, the Establishment is worried about growing social unrest, both of which have been smeared as being influenced by Russia. New bogeymen are again being created to sustain a [dangerous confrontationist policy](#) toward Russia whose consequences [may be even worse](#) than the first Cold War.

Jeremy Kuzmarov is an historian and author, with John Marciano, of [“The Russians are Coming, Again: The First Cold War as Tragedy, the Second as Farce.”](#)

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Elizabeth Warren Nails Economy, Muddles Foreign Policy

It's imperative to criticize presumable progressive politicians and parse their words carefully. It might open the door to actual improvements in policy, writes Sam Hussein.

By Sam Hussein

Post Haven



In her New Year's Eve announcement about forming an exploratory committee for the presidency, Sen. Elizabeth Warren made a great point: "Right now, Washington works great for the wealthy and the well-connected. It's just not working for anyone else."

In case you missed that, she did not say "the economy isn't working well" or such, as we've all heard numerous politicians say countless times.

She rather said the opposite of that; repeatedly: "The way I see it right now, Washington works great for giant drug companies, but just not for people who are trying to get a prescription filled. Washington works great for for-profit colleges and student loan outfits, but not for young people who are getting crushed by student loan debt. And you could keep going through the list. The problem we have got right now in Washington is that it works great for those who've got money to buy influence."

And in case anyone missed the point, she said it yet again: "We want a government that works not just for the rich and

the powerful. We want a government that works for everyone.”

It’s laudatory that Warren is using her perch and analytical skills to avoid a common rhetorical trap and is articulating the truism that the political establishment largely does the bidding of the wealthy and connected when it comes to the economy.

Silent on War Profiteers

The problem is that she doesn’t articulate that in the same manner when it comes to bloody wars. Quite the contrary. Her list of problems—drug companies, for-profit colleges and student loan outfits—omits those who have an interest in continuing horrific wars.

When asked on Wednesday night by Rachel Maddow about Trump’s recent announcement on pulling troops from Syria, Warren said the U.S.’s wars are “not working.”

She didn’t say: “The wars are working great for military contractors, just not for regular people in the U.S. or Syria or anywhere else.”

Warren—who is on the Senate Armed Services Committee—did not say: “The wars are great for the wealthy profiting off of them, they’re just terrible for the people getting killed in them.”

Instead, Warren actually swallowed some of the rhetoric about U.S. wars having as their alleged goals stability or humanitarianism or security. The profits of military contractors or geopolitical elites went unexamined.

She said it was “right” to pull U.S. troops out of Syria and

Afghanistan, an arguably positive position, but added: "It is not working and pretending that somehow, in the future, it is going to work...it's a form of fantasy that we simply can't afford to continue to engage in."

Ignoring War Mongering

But part of the fantasy is ignoring that the wars are indeed working great for some. Indeed, if Warren heard someone else say that "it is not working" about the economy, she'd likely correct them.

Warren did at least raise the question of what "success" in the perpetual wars might be, which is certainly better than most of official Washington. Advocates of perpetual war "need to explain what they think winning in those wars look like and where the metrics are," she said.

But, like most of the U.S. political establishment, Warren doesn't actually scrutinize the underlying motives: "When you withdraw, you got to withdraw as part of a plan, you got to know what you're trying to accomplish throughout the Middle East and the pieces need to be coordinated," Warren said, adding, "this is why we need allies."

What allies? France, Britain and Turkey—the traditional colonial power in the region? Or the ever-aggressive, oppressive Israel? Or the tyrannical Saudi Arabia?

And that's rather the point. U.S. foreign policy appears as a muddle—without any clear statement of what is supposed to be accomplished—because its stated goals obscure actual goals.

The idea that the U.S. establishment gets the country into

wars for ulterior financial or geopolitical reasons should be regarded as banal. Instead, it's barely articulated at all.

Most obviously, the military contractors benefit from wars.

Weapons Versus Drugs

Indeed, the power of the euphemistically called "[defense sector](#)" would seem to be substantially larger than the drug companies Warren focuses on. According to OpenSecrets.org, the top five military contractors – Northrop Grumman, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics and Raytheon—more than doubled the top five companies in the [pharmaceutical manufacturing sector](#) (\$14.4 million vs. \$7.7 million) in their outlays to politicians. For more, see the writings of William Hartung, such as "[Corporate Patriots or War Profiteers?](#)"

Even more critically, the U.S. establishment's geopolitical aims frequently thrive on war. Dahlia Wasfi argued in 2015 in "[Battling ISIS: Iran-Iraq war redux](#)" that "Obama's unofficial strategy to fight ISIS may be that of former President Ronald Reagan's for Iran and Iraq in the 1980s: a long, drawn-out war to strengthen U.S.-Israeli hegemony in the region." Also, see Robert Naiman's "[WikiLeaks Reveals How the U.S. Aggressively Pursued Regime Change in Syria, Igniting a Bloodbath](#)" and my own "[Is U.S. Policy to Prolong the Syrian War?](#)"

In 2015, Sen. Bernie Sanders was actually calling for more Saudi intervention in the Mideast. Said Sanders: The Saudis have "got to get their hands dirty." He was criticized for this by [Margaret Kimberley](#), [David Swanson](#) and [myself](#).

Now, Sanders has taken the lead in Congress in criticizing the Saudi war in Yemen, opening the door to some alleviation of massive suffering. I wish he would be much better still on foreign policy, but this may be serious progress, though the [ACLU has criticized the congressional resolution](#).

It's imperative to criticize presumable progressive politicians and parse their words carefully. It might open the door to actual improvements in policy, as in the case of Sanders. And in the case of Elizabeth Warren, it's simply asking her to cease obscuring war as she clarifies economic issues.

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

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Has Trump Been Outmaneuvered on Syria Troop Withdrawal?

Trump's possible backtracking on withdrawal from Syria means he may have been once again outmaneuvered by the Deep State,

says Virginia State Senator Dick Black.

Following the outcry after President Donald Trump's announcement that he was pulling U.S. troops from Syria, it appears that Trump may be succumbing to political pressure. U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) visited the White House on Dec. 30 and afterward told reporters: "We talked about Syria. He told me some things I didn't know that made me feel a lot better about where we're headed in Syria," Graham said. Trump's withdrawal plans are "slowing down in a smart way," Graham said, according to NBC News.

The Washington Post added: " 'Graham described Trump's decision as 'a pause situation' rather than a withdrawal, telling reporters, "I think the president's taking this really seriously." Graham said: "He promised to destroy ISIS. He's going to keep that promise. We're not there yet. But as I said today, we're inside the 10-yard line, and the president understands the need to finish the job."

By Senator Dick Black

Virginia State Senate, 13th District



The mainstream media refuses to acknowledge that the hardest fighting against ISIS and al Qaeda has been done by Syria and its allies. Indeed, we label Iran's fight against Syrian terrorists as "malign activity," ignoring the fact that al Qaeda in Syria [al Nusra] is the progeny of the al Qaeda force that hijacked jets and flew them into the Twin Towers and Pentagon, killing 3,000 Americans on 9-11.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Seymour Hersh, wrote that a Defense Intelligence Agency review of Syrian policy in 2013

revealed that clandestine CIA Program Timber Sycamore, had degenerated into a program that armed all terrorists indiscriminately, specifically including ISIS and al Qaeda. I seriously doubt that this was merely a program failure. There is strong evidence that the U.S. planned to overthrow Syria in 2001; the U.S. Embassy in Damascus issued a detailed strategy to destabilize Syria in 2006—long before the so-called “Arab Spring;” and that our focus has consistently been on toppling the duly elected, constitutional and UN-recognized government of Syria.

It’s sickening to hear these clowns repeatedly claim that “Assad murdered 500,000 of his people,” as though the U.S.-backed terrorists have played no role in the killings. I’ve viewed hundreds of beheadings and crucifixions online but none committed by Syria troops—all were proudly posted by the hellish filth that we’ve recruited, armed and trained for the past eight years. Major war crimes, like beheading 250 Syrian soldiers after running them across the desert in their underpants, were scarcely mentioned by the MSM.

During a five-hour drive across liberated Syria this September, I spoke with many people, from desert shepherds, to nuns and Muslim religious. There were palpable expressions of joy that the Syrian armed forces had liberated them from the terrorists. That was coupled with broad-based, unequivocal support for President Bashar al Assad and the Syrian Armed Forces.

This disastrous war would never have occurred without American planning and execution. And it would have ended years and hundreds of thousands of casualties ago had we closed our training and logistics bases in Jordan, Turkey,

Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The Syrian War had little to do with the “Arab Spring” and much to do with clandestine actions of CIA, MI-6, Mossad, Turkish MIT, French DGSE, Saudi GID and others, working with the savage Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. We trained and recruited far more terrorists than we killed, and we will encounter those survivors again, at other times and places.

It is instructive that, despite President Donald Trump’s strong directive on a rapid Syrian pull-out, apparently not one soldier or Marine has departed Syria. And the argument that they’re tied up with fighting ISIS doesn’t hold water. On Syria’s southern border, across from Jordan, lies the U.S. base at al Tanf. ISIS is nowhere around. Al Tanf’s sole purpose is to hold and defend the sovereign territory of Syria (using a 55 km no-fly zone). It denies Syria the right to restore order and provide aid to starving Syrians trapped in the American zone.

Al Tanf is the canary in the Syrian coal mine. If Trump’s pullout has any credibility, the 800 or so troops and equipment assigned there could be withdrawn across the Jordanian border within 24 hours. Their failure to do so suggests duplicity by our foreign policy shadow government. The Pentagon seems unresponsive to the Commander-in-Chief, and he has surrounded himself with advisors whose allegiance does not lie with him—or with the American people.

Republican Senator Richard H. Black represents the 13th district of Virginia, encompassing parts of both Loudoun and Prince Williams Counties in northern Virginia.

Giuliani Says Assange Should Not Be Prosecuted

Donald Trump's lawyer said on Monday that WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange should not be prosecuted and he compared WikiLeaks publications to the Pentagon Papers.

By Joe Lauria

Special to Consortium News

Rudy Giuliani, a lawyer for President Donald Trump, said Monday that WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange had not done "anything wrong" and should not go to jail for disseminating stolen information just as major media does.

"Let's take the Pentagon Papers," Giuliani told Fox News. "The Pentagon Papers were stolen property, weren't they? It was in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Nobody went to jail at *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*."

Giuliani said there were "revelations during the Bush administration" such as Abu Ghraib. "All of that is stolen property taken from the government, it's against the law. But once it gets to a media publication, they can publish it," Giuliani said, "for the purpose of informing people."

"You can't put Assange in a different position," he said. "He was a guy who communicated."

Giuliani said, "We may not like what [Assange] communicates, but he was a media facility. He was putting that information out," he said. "Every newspaper and station grabbed it, and published it."

The U.S. government has admitted that it has indicted Assange for publishing classified information, but it is battling in court to keep the details of the indictment secret. As a lawyer and close advisor to Trump, Giuliani could have influence on the president's and the Justice Department's thinking on Assange.

Giuliani also said there was no coordination between the Trump campaign and WikiLeaks. "I was with Donald Trump day in and day out during the last four months of the campaign," he said. "He was as surprised as I was about the WikiLeaks disclosures. Sometimes surprised to the extent of 'Oh my god, did they really say that?' We were wondering if it was true. They [the Clinton campaign] never denied it."

Giuliani said: "The thing that really got Hillary is not so much that it was revealed, but they were true. They actually had people as bad as that and she really was cheating on the debates. She really was getting from Donna Brazile the questions before hand. She really did completely screw Bernie Sanders."

"Every bit of that was true," he went on. "Just like the Pentagon Papers put a different view on Vietnam, this put a different view on Hillary Clinton."

Giuliani said, "It was not right to hack. People who did it should go to jail, but no press person or person disseminating that for the purpose of informing did anything wrong."

Assange has been holed up as a refugee in the Ecuador embassy in London for the past six years fearing that if he were to leave British authorities would arrest him and

extradite him to the U.S. for prosecution.

You can watch the entire Fox News interview with Giuliani here:

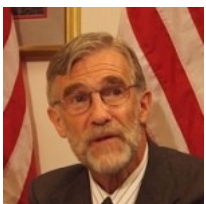
Joe Lauria is editor-in-chief of Consortium News and a former correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, *Sunday Times* of London and numerous other newspapers. He can be reached at joelauria@consortiumnews.com and followed on Twitter [@unjoe](https://twitter.com/unjoe) .

COMMENTARY: Send the Mad Dog to the Corporate Kennel

“Mad Dog” Mattis was famous for quipping, “It’s fun to shoot some people.” It remains a supreme irony that Mattis was widely considered the only “adult in the room” in the Trump administration, argues Ray McGovern.

By Ray McGovern

Special to Consortium News



Outgoing Defense Secretary Gen. James “Mad Dog” Mattis was famous for quipping, “It’s fun to shoot some people.” It remains a supreme irony that Mattis was widely considered the only “adult in the room” in the Trump administration. Compared to whom? John Bolton, the rabid neocon serving as national security adviser? That would be the epitome of “condemning with faint praise.”

With his ramrod-straight image, not to mention his warrior/scholar reputation extolled in the media, Mattis was able to disguise the reality that he was, as Col. Andrew Bacevich put it on Democracy Now! this morning, “totally unimaginative.” Meaning that Mattis was simply incapable of acknowledging the self-destructive, mindless nature of U.S. “endless war” in the Middle East, which candidate-Trump had correctly called “stupid.” In his resignation letter, Mattis also peddled the usual cant about the indispensable nation’s aggression being good for the world.

Mattis was an obstacle to Trump’s desire to pull troops out of Syria and Afghanistan (and remains in position to spike Trump’s orders). Granted, the abrupt way Trump announced his apparently one-man decision was equally stupid. But withdrawal of ground troops is supremely sane, and Mattis was and is a large problem. And, for good or ill, Trump – not Mattis – was elected president.

Marine Wisdom

Historically, Marines are the last place to turn for sound advice. Marine Gen. Smedley Butler (1881-1940), twice winner of the Medal of Honor, was brutally candid about this, after he paused long enough to realize, and write, “War is a Racket”:

“I suspected I was just part of a racket at the time. Now I am sure of it. Like all members of the military profession I never had an original thought until I left the service. My mental faculties remained in suspended animation while I obeyed the orders of the higher- ups. ...”

Shortly after another Marine general, former CENTCOM commander Anthony Zinni, retired, he stood by silently as he personally watched then-Vice President Dick Cheney give his most important speech ever (on August 26, 2002). Cheney blatantly lied about Iraq's (non-existent) WMD, in order to grease the skids for the war of aggression against Iraq. Zinni had kept his clearances and was "back on contract." He was well read-in on Iraq, and knew immediately that Cheney was lying.

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A few years later, Zinni admitted that he decided that his lips would be sealed. Far be it for a Marine to play skunk at the picnic. And, after all, he was being honored that day at the same Veterans of Foreign Wars convention where Cheney spoke. As seems clear now, Zinni was also lusting after the lucrative spoils of war given to erstwhile generals who offer themselves for membership on the corporate Boards of the arms makers/merchants that profiteer on war.

(For an earlier critique of senior Marines, see: ["Attacking Syria: Thumbing Noses at Constitution and Law."](#))

Marine officer, now Sen. Pat Roberts, R, Kansas, merits "dishonorable mention" in this connection. He never rose to general, but did become Chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee at an auspicious time for Cheney and Bush. Roberts kowtowed, like a "good Marine," to their crass deceit, when a dollop of honesty on his part could have prevented the 2003 attack on Iraq and the killing, maiming, destruction,

and chaos that continues to this day. Roberts knew all about the fraudulent intelligence, and covered it up – together with other lies – for as long as he remained Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman

Scott Ritter on Pat Roberts

Roberts's unconscionable dereliction of duty enraged one honest Marine, Maj. Scott Ritter, who believes "Semper Fi" includes an obligation to tell the truth on matters of war and peace. Ritter, former UN chief weapons inspector for Iraq, wrote in April 2005 "Semper Fraud, Senator Roberts," based partly on his own experience with that complicit Marine.

Needless to say, higher ranking, more malleable Marines aped Zinni in impersonating Uncle Remus's Tar Baby – not saying nuttin'.

It is conceivable that yet another sharply-saluting Marine, departing Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford, may be tapped by Trump to take Mattis's job. If that happens, it will add to President Trump's bizarre penchant for picking advisers hell bent on frustrating the objectives he espoused when he was running for office, some of which – it is becoming quite clear – he genuinely wants to achieve.

Trump ought to unleash Mattis now, and make sure Mattis keeps his distance from the Pentagon and the Military-Industrial Complex, before he is asked to lead an insurrection against a highly vulnerable president – as Gen. Smedley Butler was asked to do back in the day. Butler said no.

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He was an Army Infantry/Intelligence officer before working as a CIA analyst for the next 27 years. Ray admits to a modicum of bias against Marine officers, but not those with whom he worked back in the day. He is co-creator of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, which includes Marines who remember what Semper Fi means.

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Watch New Julian Assange Vigil Featuring Whistleblower Dan Ellsberg and Former US Senator Mike Gravel

An online vigil for WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange was broadcast live on **Consortium News** on Friday night. If you missed it, watch the replay here.

Among the featured guests were famed whistleblower Dan Ellsberg, former U.S. Senator Mike Gravel, CIA whistleblower John Kiriakou, columnist Caitlin Johnstone, former CIA analyst Ray McGovern and more:
