

# Behind the Omar Outrage: Suppressed History of 9/11

Trump's demagogic ploy with the freshman lawmaker raises the more serious question of who and what led to the "Day of Planes," writes Max Blumenthal.

By **Max Blumenthal**

*Special to Consortium News*



As Donald Trump sharpens his re-election messaging, he has sought to make a foil out of freshman Democrat Rep. Ilhan Omar, homing in on her identity as a black Muslim immigrant and her brazen defiance of what was once a bipartisan pro-Israel consensus. Trump's most recent attack was the most inflammatory to date, implying through a characteristically dishonest Twitter video that Omar had played some role in the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Trump was referencing comments Omar made this month during a banquet of the Los Angeles chapter of the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR): "CAIR was founded after 9/11, because they recognized that some people did something and that all of us were starting to lose access to our civil liberties," Omar said during a 20-minute-long denunciation of public bullying and violent attacks against Muslims living in the West. (CAIR was founded in 1994, contrary to Omar's claim).

As innocuous as Omar's comments might have seemed, they were easily spun by a right-wing bigot-sphere seeking to portray her as not merely insensitive to the deep wound Americans

suffered on 9/11, but as a possible terror-sympathizer. As Bernard Kerik, the disgraced former NYPD commissioner and convicted felon, said of Omar on Fox News, “she’s infatuated with Al Qaeda, with Hamas, with Hezbollah.”

For Trump, the manufactured outrage offered yet another opportunity to advance his rebranded version of the Southern Strategy, painting Omar as the face of a Democratic Party overrun by socialists, Muslims, MS13 and trans radicals – as a clear and present danger to the reactionary white exurbanites commonly referred to in mainstream media as “swing voters.”

Amid an onslaught of menacing condemnations and online death threats triggered by Trump’s tweet, prominent Democrats mobilized to defend Omar. However, many were too timid to mention her by name, apparently fearing that doing so would play into Trump’s cynical strategy. Some refused to defend her at all. And among those willing to speak up, most felt compelled to lead their defense by reinforcing the quasi-theological understanding of 9/11 that leaves anti-Muslim narratives unchallenged. “The memory of 9/11 is sacred ground, and any discussion of it must be done with reverence,” insisted House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

In Washington, 9/11 is understood as an act of inexplicable evil that materialized out of a clear blue sky. “They hate us because we’re free,” Americans are still told in a semi-official drone, conveniently excising the attacks that took place on 9/11 from their historical context. This ruthlessly enforced interpretation has had the effect of displacing blame from those who bear direct or indirect responsibility for the attacks onto much more convenient scapegoats like

the Islamic faith and its diverse mass of adherents.

In my new book, "The Management of Savagery," I explain which people did what things to lay the groundwork for the worst terror attack on U.S. soil. Not all of those people were Muslim, and few have faced the kind of scrutiny Omar has for her seemingly benign comment about 9/11. As I illustrate, many of them maintained lustrous reputations well after the ash was cleared from Ground Zero. Today, some of their names – Zbigniew Brzezinski, Ronald Reagan, H.W. Bush – are prominently engraved on airports, federal offices, and library halls around the country. Others became the subject of rowdy bestsellers such as "Charlie Wilson's War," or saw their exploits dramatized in Cold War kitsch productions like "Rambo III." And then there were those who waged America's dirty wars from the shadows, and whose names will scarcely ever be known.

While these figures lay claim to the mantle of "national security," their true legacy was the callous abandonment of that concept in order to advance imperial objectives. During the Cold War, they forged partnerships with theocratic monarchies and armed Islamist militants, even distributing jihadist textbooks to children in the name of defeating the Soviet scourge. Today, as Rep. Tulsi Gabbard – the lone foreign policy dissenter within the Democratic presidential field – pointed out, they are doing it all over again through their protection of the world's largest Al Qaeda franchise in Syria's Idlib province, which came into being thanks in large part to U.S. intervention in the country.

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To effectively puncture Trump's demagogic ploys, the discussion of 9/11 must move beyond a superficial defense of Omar and into an exploration of a critical history that has been suppressed. This history begins at least 20 years before the attacks occurred, when "some people did something." Many of those people served at the highest levels of U.S. government, and the things they did led to the establishment of Al Qaeda as an international network – and ultimately, to 9/11 itself.

### **Taliban 'Unimportant'**

Back in 1979, some people initiated a multi-billion-dollar covert operation to trap the Red Army in Afghanistan and bleed the Soviet Union at its soft underbelly. They put heavy weapons in the hands of Islamist warlords such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, dispatched Salafi clerics such as "Blind Sheikh" Omar Abdel Rahman to the battlefield, and printed millions of dollars worth of textbooks for Afghan children that contained math equations encouraging them to commit acts of violent martyrdom against Soviet soldiers. They did anything they could to wreak havoc on the Soviet-backed government in Kabul.

These people were so hellbent on smashing the Soviet Union that they made common cause with the Islamist dictatorship of Pakistan's Zia-ul-Haq and the House of Saud. With direct assistance from the intelligence services of these U.S. allies, Osama bin Laden, the scion of Saudi wealth, set up his Services Bureau on the Afghan border as a waystation for foreign Islamist fighters.

These people even channeled funding to bin Laden so he could build training camps along the Afghan-Pakistan border for the so-called freedom fighters of the mujahideen. And they kept watch over a ratline that shepherded young Muslim men from the West to the front lines of the Afghan proxy war, using them as cannon fodder for a cold-blooded, imperial operation marketed by the Wahhabi clergy in Saudi Arabia as a holy obligation.

These people were in the CIA, USAID, and the National Security Council. Others, with names like Charlie Wilson, Jesse Helms, Jack Murtha, and Joe Biden, held seats on both sides of the aisle in Congress.

When they finally got what they wanted, dislodging a secular government that had provided Afghan women with unprecedented access to education, their proxies plunged Afghanistan into a war of the warlords that saw half of Kabul turned to rubble, paving the way for the rise of the Taliban. And these people remained totally unrepentant about the monster they had created.

“Can you imagine what the world would be like today if there was still a Soviet Union?” remarked Zbigniew Bzezinski, the former NSC director who sold President Jimmy Carter on the Afghan proxy war. “So yes, compared to the Soviet Union, and to its collapse, the Taliban were unimportant.”

To some in Washington, the Taliban were a historical footnote. To others, they were allies of convenience. As a top State Department diplomat commented to journalist Ahmed Rashid in February 1997, “The Taliban will probably develop like Saudi Arabia. There be [the Saudi-owned oil company]

Aramco, pipelines, an emir, no parliament and lots of Sharia law. We can live with that.”

### **CIA Cover-ups and Blowback**

Back in the U.S., some people fueled the blowback from the Afghan proxy war. The Blind Sheikh was given a special entry visa by the CIA as payback for the services he provided in Afghanistan, allowing him to take over the al-Kifah Center in New York City, which had functioned as the de facto U.S. arm of Al Qaeda’s Services Bureau. Under his watch and with help from bin Laden, some people and lots of aid were shuttled to the front lines of U.S. proxy wars in Bosnia and Chechnya while the Clinton administration generally looked the other way.

Though the Blind Sheikh was eventually convicted in a terror plot contrived by a paid informant for the FBI, some people in federal law enforcement had been reluctant to indict him. “There was a whole issue about [Abdel-Rahman] being given a visa to come into this country and what the circumstances were around that,” one of his defense lawyers, Abdeed Jabara told me. “The issue related to how much the government was involved with the jihadist enterprise when it suited their purposes in Afghanistan and whether or not they were afraid there would be exposure of that. Because there’s no question that the jihadists were using the Americans and the Americans were using the jihadists. There’s a symbiotic relationship.”

During the 1995 trial of members of the Blind Sheikh’s New York-based cell, another defense lawyer, Roger Stavis, referred to his clients before the jury as “Team America,”

emphasizing the role they had played as proxy fighters for the U.S. in Afghanistan. When Stavis attempted to summon to the witness stand a jihadist operative named Ali Abdelsauod Mohammed who had trained his clients in firearms and combat, some people ordered Mohammed to refuse his subpoena. Those people, according to journalist Peter Lance, were federal prosecutors Andrew McCarthy and Patrick Fitzgerald.

The government lawyers were apparently fretting that Mohammed would be exposed as an active asset of both the CIA and FBI, and as a former Army sergeant who had spirited training manuals out of Fort Bragg while stationed there during the 1980s. So Mohammed remained a free man, helping Al Qaeda plan attacks on American consular facilities in Tanzania and Kenya while the "Day of the Planes" plot began to take form.

In early 2000, some people gathered in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to prepare the most daring Al Qaeda operation to date. Two figures at the meeting, Saudi citizens named Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Midhar, were on their way to the United States. While in Kuala Lumpur, the duo's hotel room was broken into by CIA agents, their passports were photographed, and their communications were recorded. And yet the pair of Al Qaeda operatives was able to travel together with multiple-entry visas on a direct flight from Kuala Lumpur to Los Angeles. That's because for some reason, some people from the CIA failed to notify any people at the FBI about the terror summit that had just taken place. The "Day of Planes" plot was moving forward without a kink.

In Los Angeles, some people met Hazmi and Midhar at the airport, provided the two non-English speakers with a

personal caretaker and rented them apartments, where neighbors said they were routinely visited each night by unknown figures in expensive cars with darkened windows. Those people were Saudi Arabian intelligence agents named Omar Bayoumi and Khaled al-Thumairy.

### **Crawford, Texas**

It was not until August 2001 that Midhar was placed on a terrorist watch list. That month, some people met at a ranch in Crawford, Texas, and reviewed a classified document headlined, "Bin Laden Determined to Strike Inside the US." The bulletin was a page-and-a-half long, with detailed intelligence on the "Day of Planes" plot provided by Ali Mohammed, the Al Qaeda-FBI-CIA triple agent now registered as "John Doe" and disappeared somewhere in the federal prison system. Those people reviewed the document for a few minutes before their boss, President George W. Bush, moved on to other matters.

According to *The Washington Post*, Bush exhibited an "expansive mood" that day, taking in a round of golf. "We are going to be struck soon, many Americans are going to die, and it could be in the U.S.," CIA counterterrorism chief Cofer Black warned days later. Bush did not meet with his cabinet heads again to discuss terrorism until Sept. 4.

A week later, on Sept. 11, some people did something.

They hijacked four civilian airliners and changed the course of American history with little more than box cutter blades in their hands. Fifteen of those 19 people, including Hazmi and Midhar, were citizens of Saudi Arabia. They were products of a Wahhabi school system and a politically



stultifying society that had thrived under the protection of a special relationship with the U.S. Indeed, the U.S. had showered theocratic allies like Saudi Arabia with aid and weapons while threatening secular Arab states that resisted its hegemony with sanctions and invasion. The Saudis were the favorite Muslims of America's national security elite not because they were moderate, which they absolutely were not, but because they were useful.

In the days after 9/11, the FBI organized several flights to evacuate prominent Saudi families from the U.S., including relatives of Osama bin Laden. Meanwhile, Islamophobia erupted across the country, with even mainstream personalities such as TV news anchor Dan Rather taking to the airwaves to claim without evidence that Arab-Americans had celebrated the 9/11 attacks.

Unable to find a single operational Al Qaeda cell in the country, the FBI turned to an army of paid snitches to haul in mentally unstable Muslims, dupes and idlers like the Lackawanna 6 in manufactured plots. Desperate for a high-profile bust to reinforce the "war on terror" narrative, the bureau hounded Palestinian Muslim activists and persecuted prominent Islamic charities like the Holy Land Foundation, sending its directors to prison for decades for the crime of sending aid to NGOs in the occupied Gaza Strip.

As America's national security state cracked down on Muslim civil society at home, it turned to fanatical Islamist proxies abroad to bring down secular and politically independent Arab states. In Libya, the U.S. and UK helped arm the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, a longtime affiliate of Al Qaeda, using it as a proxy to depose and murder

Muammar Gaddafi. As that country transformed from a stable, prosperous state into an Afghanistan-style playground for rival militias, including a chapter of the Islamic State, the Obama administration moved to do the same to Damascus.

In Syria, the CIA armed an outfit of supposedly “moderate rebels” called the Free Syrian Army that turned out to be nothing more than a political front and weapons farm for an array of extremist insurgent factions including Al Qaeda’s local affiliate and the Islamic State. The latter two groups were, of course, products of the sectarian chaos of Iraq, which had been ruled by a secular government until the U.S. came knocking after 9/11.

The blowback from Iraq, Libya and Syria arrived in the form of the worst refugee crises the world has experienced since World War II. And then came the bloodiest terror attack to hit the UK in history – in Manchester. There, the son of a Libyan Islamic Fighting Group member, who traveled to Libya and Syria on an MI6 ratline, slaughtered concert-goers with a nail bomb.

Cataclysmic social disruptions like these were like steroids for right-wing Islamophobes, electrifying Trump’s victorious 2016 presidential campaign, a wing of the Brexit “Leave” campaign in the UK, and far-right parties across Europe. But as I explain in “The Management of Savagery,” these terrifying trends were byproducts of decisions undertaken by national security elites more closely aligned with the political center – figures who today attempt to position themselves as leaders of the anti-Trump resistance.

Which people did which things to drag us into the political

nightmare we're living through? For those willing to cut through the campaign season bluster, Ilhan Omar's comments dare us to name names.

Max Blumenthal is an award-winning journalist and the author of books including best-selling "[Republican Gomorrah](#)," "[Goliath](#)," "[The Fifty One Day War](#)" and "[The Management of Savagery](#)," published in March 2019 by Verso. He has also produced numerous print articles for an array of publications, many video reports and several documentaries including "[Killing Gaza](#)" and "[Je Ne Suis Pas Charlie](#)." Blumenthal founded the [Grayzone](#) in 2015 to shine a journalistic light on America's state of perpetual war and its dangerous domestic repercussions.

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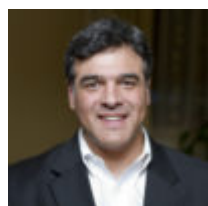
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## The FBI Came Close to Staging a Coup

Andrew McCabe, a senior bureau official, provided the alarming evidence in a "60 Minutes" interview, writes John Kiriakou.

By [John Kiriakou](#)

*Special to Consortium News*



Former FBI deputy director Andrew McCabe, in an [explosive interview](#) with CBS's "[60 Minutes](#)," said that in early 2017, in the aftermath of President Donald Trump's firing of former FBI Director James Comey, he and other FBI officials discussed

the possibility of recruiting a cabinet secretary to help push the president out of office by using the Constitution's 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment

McCabe further contended that Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein offered to wear a wire when he was around Trump in order to gather evidence against him. (Rosenstein

denies the allegation.) McCabe said that Justice Department officials believed at the

time that Trump may have obstructed justice by firing Comey, and they worried that Trump was somehow under the influence of the Russian government. In the end, nothing came of the plan. Regardless of one's feelings toward President Trump and his

policies, what McCabe is describing is nothing less than a coup attempt. It's something that happens in weak or nascent democracies, following interference by the CIA perhaps. It should never happen here.

Trump has long had an antagonistic relationship with the FBI, the CIA and other elements of the intelligence community. Indeed, in early 2017, when news of the [FISA](#) warrants and the private intelligence Steele dossier began to leak out, Trump began to tweet his disgust at news of impending investigations of him, his campaign, and his business dealings.

The "Intelligence" briefing on so-called "Russian hacking" was delayed until Friday, perhaps more time needed to build a case. Very strange!

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [January 4, 2017](#)

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer responded almost immediately, saying “(The president) is being really dumb to do this.” “This” was to take on the intelligence agencies, the so-called Deep State, in public. A few days later, Schumer went on MSNBC to sharpen his warning to Trump, saying, “Let me tell you, you take on the intelligence community—they have six ways from Sunday at getting back at you.”

But Trump was right. The intelligence community—the FBI, CIA, the NSA and other three-letter agencies—are too powerful, too entrenched and too well-funded. And they have far too little oversight. They’re a threat to our democracy, not the saviors of it. That is why it pains me to see Democrats lining up behind them to attack Trump.

### **Presidents Come and Go**

I was a member of that “Deep State” throughout my 15 years at the CIA. I can tell you from first-hand experience that the CIA doesn’t care who the president is. Neither does the FBI. Senior CIA and FBI officers are there for decades, while presidents come and go. They know that they can outwait any president they don’t like. At the very least, at the CIA, they could make administrative decisions that would hamstring a president: Perhaps they don’t carry out that risky operation. Maybe they don’t target that well-placed source. Maybe they ignore the president’s orders knowing that in four years or eight years he or she will just go away.

Even worse, these same organizations—the FBI and the CIA—are the ones that have sought to undermine our democracy over

the years. Don't forget programs like COINTELPRO, the FBI's operation to force Martin Luther King Jr. to commit suicide; the infiltration of peace groups; the CIA's efforts to control the media with Operation Mockingbird; the CIA's illegal spying on American citizens; the CIA hacking into the computers of the Senate Intelligence Committee; and the Agency's extrajudicial assassination program; to name a few.

McCabe's almost offhanded comments on "60 Minutes," that the FBI actively considered deposing a sitting president should be cause for alarm. Set partisan politics aside for a moment. We're talking about *deposing a sitting president*. We're talking about *wearing a wire* to catch a sitting president saying something because you're angry that he fired your boss. Even the idea of it is unprecedented in American history.

The FBI is perfectly free to investigate collusion. That's what they ought to be doing. But they ought not plot the overthrow of a president, no matter how quirky and offensive he may be. That's anti-democratic and illegal and it harkens back to the bad old days of the FBI under J. Edgar Hoover and the CIA before the reforms of the Church Committee.

We have a way to depose presidents. They're called "elections." The FBI should familiarize itself with them.

**John Kiriakou is a former CIA counterterrorism officer and a former senior investigator with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. John became the sixth whistleblower indicted by the Obama administration under the Espionage Act—a law designed to punish spies. He served 23 months in prison as a**

result of his attempts to oppose the Bush administration's torture program.

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## Assange Lawyers File Petition to Get US to Reveal Charges and Stop Ecuador From Extraditing Him

Lawyers for the WikiLeaks publisher want the OAS independent body to keep Assange from being sent to a courtroom in the U.S. and to end his isolation.

**By Joe Lauria**

*Special to Consortium News*

Julian Assange's lawyers have filed an urgent petition to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) to stop Ecuador from extraditing him to the United States and to pressure the U.S. to reveal its sealed charges against the WikiLeaks publisher, WikiLeaks said on Wednesday.

His lawyers also applied to the IACHR to get Ecuador to end its surveillance of Assange and "to stop the isolation imposed on him," according to the 1,172-page filing.

“The application by Mr. Assange’s lawyers identifies a raft of legal obligations that the U.S. and Ecuador are flouting in their treatment of Mr. Assange,” WikiLeaks said in a statement. “The lawyers document Trump Administration attempts to pressure Ecuador to hand over Mr. Assange, notably recent serious overt threats against Ecuador made by senior U.S. political figures, unlike the more veiled threats made in the past.”

The IACHR is an autonomous part of the Organization of American States (OAS) to promote and protect human rights. Its decisions are not legally binding on OAS member states. But it can create political embarrassment for states that are found to have committed human rights violations.

“The calls to extradite Mr. Assange to the United States, as the result of his work as a publisher and editor, is the reason Mr. Assange obtained political asylum at Ecuador’s embassy in London in August 2012,” WikiLeaks said.

Baltasar Garzón, the international coordinator of Assange’s legal team, called for “international solidarity for this case in which the right to access and impart information freely is in jeopardy,” the statement said.

A decision whether to unseal the details of an indictment against Assange is held up in a courtroom in Alexandria, Virginia. In November, Judge Leonie Brinkema delayed her decision for what she said would be a week.

The WikiLeaks petition to the IACHR also “reveals for the first time that U.S. federal prosecutors have in the last few months formally approached people in the United States, Germany and Iceland and pressed them to testify against Mr. Assange in return for immunity from prosecution,” the WikiLeaks statement said.

“Those approached are associated with WikiLeaks’ joint publications with other media about U.S. diplomacy, Guantanamo bay and the wars



in Iraq and Afghanistan,” said the statement.

The Trump administration “is clearly intent on using the prosecution of Julian Assange as an ‘icebreaker’ to set a dangerous precedent that would enable the prosecution of most serious media organizations,” according to WikiLeaks. It added that the threats against Assange have “significantly increased” since WikiLeaks published the “Vault 7” CIA documents, “the largest leak of CIA classified information in history.”

The petition points out espionage activity against Assange in the embassy by private security firms contracted by Ecuador “which, instead of being involved in protecting the asylee, have spied on Mr. Assange and his visitors.” The private firms have been acting as informants to the FBI, WikiLeaks said, citing media reports.

“Ecuador is required to end the regime of isolation imposed on Mr. Assange, suspending the application of the so-called special protocol and guaranteeing his rights as an asylee will be respected in full,” the filing said.

**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](mailto:joelauria@consortiumnews.com) and followed on Twitter [@unjoe](https://twitter.com/unjoe) .**

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## 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*



**I**n 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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## A Look Back at Clapper's Jan. 2017 'Assessment' on Russia-gate

On the 2nd anniversary of the “assessment” blaming Russia for interfering in the 2016 election there is still no evidence other than showing the media “colluded” with the spooks, says Ray McGovern.

**By Ray McGovern**

*Special to Consortium News*



The banner [headline](#) atop page one of *The New York Times* print edition two years ago today, on January 7, 2017, set the tone for two years of Dick Cheney-like chicanery: “Putin Led Scheme to Aid Trump, Report Says.”

Under a media drumbeat of anti-Russian hysteria, credulous Americans were led to believe that Donald Trump owed his election victory to the president of Russia, whose “influence campaign” according to the *Times* quoting the intelligence report, helped “President-elect Trump’s election chances when possible by discrediting Secretary Clinton.”

Hard evidence supporting the media and political rhetoric has been as elusive as proof of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq in 2002-2003. This time, though, an alarming increase in the possibility of war with nuclear-armed Russia has ensued – whether by design, hubris, or rank stupidity.

The possible consequences for the world are even more dire than 16 years of war and destruction in the Middle East.

### **If It Walks Like a Canard...**

The CIA-friendly *New York Times* two years ago led the media quacking in a campaign that wobbled like a duck, *canard* in French.

A glance at the title of the Intelligence Community Assessment (ICA) (which was not endorsed by the whole community) – “Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections” – would suffice to show that the widely respected and independently-minded State Department intelligence bureau should have been included. State intelligence had demurred on several points made in the Oct. 2002 Estimate on Iraq, and even insisted on including a footnote of dissent. James Clapper, then director of national intelligence who put together the ICA, knew that all too well. So he evidently thought it would be better not to involve troublesome dissenters, or even inform them what was afoot.

Similarly, the Defense Intelligence Agency should have been included, particularly since it has considerable expertise on the G.R.U., the Russian military intelligence agency, which has been blamed for Russian hacking of the DNC emails. But DIA, too, has an independent streak and, in fact, is capable of reaching judgments Clapper would reject as anathema. Just one year before Clapper decided to do the rump “Intelligence Community Assessment,” DIA had formally blessed the following heterodox idea in its “December 2015 National Security Strategy”:



“The Kremlin is convinced the United States is laying the groundwork for regime change in Russia, a conviction further reinforced by the events in Ukraine. Moscow views the United States as the critical driver behind the crisis in Ukraine and believes that the overthrow of former Ukrainian President Yanukovich is the latest move in a long-established pattern of U.S.-orchestrated regime change efforts.”

Any further questions as to why the Defense Intelligence Agency was kept away from the ICA drafting table?

### **Handpicked Analysts**

With help from the *Times* and other mainstream media, Clapper, mostly by his silence, was able to foster the charade that the ICA was actually a bonafide product of the entire intelligence community for as long as he could get away with it. After four months it came time to fess up that the ICA had not been prepared, as Secretary Clinton and the media kept claiming, by “all 17 intelligence agencies.”

In fact, Clapper went one better, proudly asserting – with striking naiveté – that the ICA writers were “handpicked analysts” from only the FBI, CIA, and NSA. He may have thought that this would enhance the ICA’s credibility. It is a no-brainer, however, that when you want handpicked answers, you better handpick the analysts. And so he did.

Why is no one interested in the identities of the handpicked analysts and the hand-pickers? After all, we have the names of the chief analysts/managers responsible for the fraudulent NIE of October 2002 that greased the skids for

the war on Iraq. Listed in the NIE itself are the principal analyst Robert D. Walpole and his chief assistants Paul Pillar, Lawrence K. Gershwin and Maj. Gen. John R. Landry.

### **The Overlooked Disclaimer**

Buried in an inside page of the *Times* on Jan. 7, 2017 was a cautionary paragraph in an analysis by reporter Scott Shane. It seems he had read the ICA all the way through, and had taken due note of the derriere-protecting caveats included in the strangely cobbled together report. Shane had to wade through nine pages of drivel about "Russia's Propaganda Efforts" to reach Annex B with its curious disclaimer:

"Assessments are based on collected information, which is often incomplete or fragmentary, as well as logic, argumentation, and precedents. ... High confidence in a judgment does not imply that the assessment is a fact or a certainty; such judgments might be wrong."

Small wonder, then, that Shane noted: "What is missing from the public report is what many Americans most eagerly anticipated: hard evidence to back up the agencies' claims that the Russian government engineered the election attack. That is a significant omission..."

Since then, Shane has evidently realized what side his bread is buttered on and has joined the ranks of Russia-gate aficionados. Decades ago, he did some good reporting on such issues, so it was sad to see him decide to blend in with the likes of David Sanger and promote the NYT official Russia-gate narrative. An embarrassing feature, "The Plot to Subvert an Election: Unraveling the Russia Story So Far,"

that Shane wrote with NYT colleague Mark Mazzetti in September, is full of gaping holes, picked apart in two pieces by Consortium News.

## Shades of WMD

Sanger is one of the intelligence community's favorite go-to journalists. He was second only to the disgraced Judith Miller in promoting the canard of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq before the U.S. invasion in March 2003. For example, in a July 29, 2002 article, "U.S. Exploring Baghdad Strike As Iraq Option," co-written by Sanger and Thom Shanker, the existence of WMD in Iraq was stated as flat fact no fewer than seven times.

The Sanger/Shanker article appeared just a week after then-CIA Director George Tenet confided to his British counterpart that President George W. Bush had decided "to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy." At that critical juncture, Clapper was in charge of the analysis of satellite imagery and hid the fact that the number of confirmed WMD sites in Iraq was zero.

Despite that fact and that his "assessment" has never been proven, Clapper continues to receive praise.

During a "briefing" I attended at the Carnegie Endowment in Washington several weeks ago, Clapper displayed master circular reasoning, saying in effect, that the assessment had to be correct because that's what he and other intelligence directors told President Barack Obama and President-elect Donald Trump.

I got a chance to question him at the event. His disingenuous answers brought a painful flashback to one of the most shameful episodes in the annals of U.S. intelligence analysis.

**Ray McGovern:** My name is Ray McGovern. Thanks for this book; it's very interesting [Ray holds up his copy of Clapper's memoir]. I'm part of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity. I'd like to refer to the Russia problem, but first there's an analogy that I see here. You were in charge of imagery analysis before Iraq.

**James Clapper:** Yes.

**RM:** You confess [in the book] to having been shocked that no weapons of mass destruction were found. And then, to your credit, you admit, as you say here [quotes from the book], "the blame is due to intelligence officers, including me, who were so eager to help [the administration make war on Iraq] that we found what wasn't really there."

Now fast forward to two years ago. Your superiors were hell bent on finding ways to blame Trump's victory on the Russians. Do you think that your efforts were guilty of the same sin here? Do you think that you found a lot of things that weren't really there? Because that's what our conclusion is, especially from the technical end. There was no hacking of the DNC; it was leaked, and you know that because you talked to NSA.

**JC:** Well, I have talked with NSA a lot, and I also know what we briefed to then-President Elect Trump on the 6th of January. And in my mind, uh, I spent a lot of time in the SIGINT [signals intelligence] business, the forensic

evidence was overwhelming about what the Russians had done. There's absolutely no doubt in my mind whatsoever. The Intelligence Community Assessment that we rendered that day, that was asked, tasked to us by President Obama – and uh – in early December, made no call whatsoever on whether, to what extent the Russians influenced the outcome of the election. Uh, the administration, uh, the team then, the President-Elect's team, wanted to say that – that we said that the Russian interference had no impact whatsoever on the election. And I attempted, we all did, to try to correct that misapprehension as they were writing a press release before we left the room.

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

**RM:** That's what the *New York Times* says. But let me say this: we have two former Technical Directors from NSA in our movement here, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity; we also have forensics, okay?

Now the President himself, your President, President Obama said two days before he left town: The conclusions of the intelligence community – this is ten days after you briefed him – with respect to how WikiLeaks got the DNC emails are “inconclusive” *end quote*. Now why would he say that if you had said it was conclusive?

**JC:** I can't explain what he said or why. But I can tell you

we're, we're pretty sure we know, or knew at the time, how WikiLeaks got those emails. I'm not going to go into the technical details about why we believe that.

**RM:** We are too [pretty sure we know]; and it was a leak onto a thumb drive – gotten to Julian Assange – really simple. If you knew it, and the NSA has that information, you have a duty, you have a duty to confess to that, as well as to [Iraq].

**JC:** Confess to what?

**RM:** Confess to the fact that you've been distorting the evidence.

**JC:** I don't confess to that.

**RM:** The Intelligence Community Assessment was without evidence.

**JC:** I do not confess to that. I simply do not agree with your conclusions.

**William J. Burns** (Carnegie President): Hey, Ray, I appreciate your question. I didn't want this to look like Jim Acosta in the White House grabbing microphones away. Thank you for the questioning though. Yes ma'am [Burns recognizes the next questioner].

The above exchange can be seen starting at 28:45 in this [video](#).

## **Not Worth His Salt**

Having supervised intelligence analysis, including chairing National Intelligence Estimates, for three-quarters of my

27-year career at CIA, my antennae are fine-tuned for canards. And so, at Carnegie, when Clapper focused on the rump analysis masquerading as an “Intelligence Community Assessment,” the scent of the duck came back strongly.

Intelligence analysts worth their salt give very close scrutiny to sources, their possible agendas, and their records for truthfulness. Clapper flunks on his own record, including his performance before the Iraq war – not to mention his giving sworn testimony to Congress that he had to admit was “clearly erroneous,” when documents released by Edward Snowden proved him a perjurer. At Carnegie, the questioner who followed me brought that up and asked, “How on earth did you keep your job, Sir?”

The next questioner, a former manager of State Department intelligence, posed another salient question: Why, he asked, was State Department intelligence excluded from the “Intelligence Community Assessment”?

Among the dubious reasons Clapper gave was the claim, “We only had a month, and so it wasn’t treated as a full-up National Intelligence Estimate where all 16 members of the intelligence community would pass judgment on it.” Clapper then tried to spread the blame around (“That was a deliberate decision that we made and that I agreed with”), but as director of national intelligence the decision was his.

Given the questioner’s experience in the State Department’s intelligence, he was painfully aware of how quickly a “full-up NIE” can be prepared. He knew all too well that the October 2002 NIE, “Iraq’s Continuing Programs for Weapons of

Mass Destruction,” was ginned up in less than a month, when Cheney and Bush wanted to get Congress to vote for war on Iraq. (As head of imagery analysis, Clapper signed off on that meretricious estimate, even though he knew no WMD sites had been confirmed in Iraq.)

### **It's in the Russians' DNA**

The criteria Clapper used to handpick his own assistants are not hard to divine. An Air Force general in the mold of Curtis LeMay, Clapper knows all about “the Russians.” And he does not like them, not one bit. During an [interview](#) with NBC on May 28, 2017, Clapper referred to “the historical practices of the Russians, who typically, are almost genetically driven to co-opt, penetrate, gain favor, whatever, which is a typical Russian technique.” And just before I questioned him at Carnegie, he muttered, “It’s in their DNA.”

Even those who may accept Clapper’s bizarre views about Russian genetics still lack credible proof that (as the ICA concludes “with high confidence”) Russia’s main military intelligence unit, the G.R.U., created a “persona” called Guccifer 2.0 to release the emails of the Democratic National Committee. When those disclosures received what was seen as insufficient attention, the G.R.U. “relayed material it acquired from the D.N.C. and senior Democratic officials to WikiLeaks,” the assessment said.

At Carnegie, Clapper cited “forensics.” But forensics from where? To his embarrassment, then-FBI Director James Comey, for reasons best known to him, chose not to do forensics on the “Russian hack” of the DNC computers, preferring to rely



on a computer outfit of tawdry reputation hired by the DNC. Moreover, there is zero indication that the drafters of the ICA had any reliable forensics to work with.

In contrast, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, working with independent forensic investigators, examined metadata from a July 5, 2016 DNC intrusion that was alleged to be a “hack.” However, the metadata showed a transfer speed far exceeding the capacity of the Internet at the time. Actually, all the speed turned out to be precisely what a thumb drive could accommodate, indicating that what was involved was a copy onto an external storage device and not a hack – by Russia or anyone else.

WikiLeaks had obtained the DNC emails earlier. On June 12, 2016 Julian Assange announced he had “emails relating to Hillary Clinton.” NSA appears to lack any evidence that those emails – the embarrassing ones showing that the DNC cards were stacked against Bernie Sanders – were hacked.

Since NSA’s dragnet coverage scoops up everything on the Internet, NSA or its partners can, and do trace all hacks. In the absence of evidence that the DNC was hacked, all available factual evidence indicates that earlier in the spring of 2016, an external storage device like a thumb drive was used in copying the DNC emails given to WikiLeaks.

Additional investigation has proved Guccifer 2.0 to be an out-and-out fabrication – and a faulty basis for indictments.

## **A Gaping Gap**

Clapper and the directors of the CIA, FBI, and NSA briefed President Obama on the ICA on Jan. 5, 2017, the day before they briefed President-elect Trump. At Carnegie, I asked Clapper to explain why President Obama still had serious doubts. On Jan. 18, 2017, at his final press conference,

Obama saw fit to use lawyerly language to cover his own derriere, saying: "The conclusions of the intelligence community with respect to the Russian hacking were not conclusive as to whether WikiLeaks was witting or not in being the conduit through which we heard about the DNC e-mails that were leaked."

So we end up with "inconclusive conclusions" on that admittedly crucial point. In other words, U.S. intelligence does not know how the DNC emails got to WikiLeaks. In the absence of any evidence from NSA (or from its foreign partners) of an Internet hack of the DNC emails the claim that "the Russians gave the DNC emails to WikiLeaks" rests on thin gruel. After all, these agencies collect everything that goes over the Internet.

Clapper answered: "I cannot explain what he [Obama] said or why. But I can tell you we're, we're pretty sure we know, or knew at the time, how WikiLeaks got those emails."

Really?

**Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. During his 27-year CIA career he supervised intelligence analysis as Chief of Soviet Foreign Policy Branch, as editor/briefer of the *President's Daily Brief*, as a member of the Production Review Staff, and as chair of National Intelligence Estimates. In retirement he co-founded Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).**

(Clarification: After a reader's comment, this article was amended to show that the *Times* was quoting from the ICA and that the Shane article, which the author said was buried

inside, was not the same as the paper's front page story.)

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## America's Bloody Ally

The U.S. continues to support the dictatorship of Saudi Arabia—as a key ally—even after the horrific murder of Jamal Khashoggi and the horrendous five-year bombing campaign on Yemen, writes Ann Wright.

**By Ann Wright**

**in Istanbul**

*Special to Consortium News*



Killing is not new for Saudi Arabia. While the world's media has been focused on the horrific murder and dismemberment of Saudi defector Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul the Saudi's horrendous five-year bombing campaign on Yemen has been overshadowed.

This bombing has killed over 16,000 people, destroyed water and sewage infrastructure, left one million people with cholera and created a naval blockade that has starved 13 million of the most vulnerable: children and the elderly. The United States facilitates the bombing by selling weapons to Saudi Arabia, refueling Saudi bombers and providing intelligence reportedly to decrease the number of civilian casualties, which it appears it has not done.

### **Outside the Crime Scene**

On Oct. 13, just after midnight, after the closing ceremonies of the conference I was attending in Istanbul, I travelled to the Saudi Consulate to stand in vigil for the disappearance and, believed at that time to be the probable murder of Khashoggi. I was also there to acknowledge the catastrophic Saudi war on Yemen and U.S. complicity in that war.

The barricades set up by police were shining in the lights from the street lamps and from the spotlight that the Saudi Consulate had outside its now-infamous front door.

No Istanbul police nor consulate security guards were visible. The street was eerily silent. Barricades blocked traffic. "POLIS" signs hung on the barricades. None of the daytime activity from domestic and international television crews or print journalists was happening. The Saudi consul-general's home, next door to the consulate (where it has now been reported Khashoggi's body may be buried),

was dark.

New friends from Istanbul whom I met at the conference, accompanied me. They had been to many vigils at the consulate in the past 10 days.

As we stood at the barricades, lights from a car in an alley flashed on, and several men emerged. I thought that we were going to have some sort of interaction with consulate guards or Istanbul police, but when TV cameras followed the men out of the car, we realized they were journalists. They said they have a 24-hour stakeout on the door of the consulate.

The journalists became interested that I was a former U.S. diplomat and asked my opinion of what was happening. I told them that I knew what the journalists were reporting about the disappearance of Khashoggi.

However, I mentioned violent actions have been associated with diplomatic facilities in the past. U.S. government personnel assigned to U.S. embassies, or using a U.S. embassy as diplomatic cover, had been a part of rendition, torture and deaths of people the U.S. alleged were part of terrorist activities after Sept. 11, 2001. Six days after the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush signed a covert memorandum that authorized the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to seize, detain and interrogate suspected terrorists around the world.

### **The CIA Connection**

U.S. Embassy personnel arranged for the flights of U.S. government or private aircraft to pick persons up from one country and “render” them to other countries where they were tortured in “black sites.” Recently, a citizen’s commission in North Carolina published its report, “Torture Flights: North Carolina’s Role in the CIA Rendition and Torture Program,” that documented the use of private, U.S.-government contracted jet aircraft owned by Aero Contractors. Their flights originated from small, private airports in North Carolina with destinations all over the world to deliver alleged suspects. The report says the CIA abducted and imprisoned at least 119 individuals before the practice was officially ended and repudiated by Presidential executive order in 2009 during the Obama administration.

According to the report:

Many of the prisoners were taken to CIA “black sites,” where they experienced beatings, prolonged stress positions, temperature extremes, long-term isolation, various water tortures, mock executions and sexual abuse. In violation of international law, the CIA transported some prisoners to foreign custody where they were subject to torture and abuse. Kidnapping, torture and

secret detention occurred without respect for victims' innocence or guilt and absent any legal process for them to contact their abductions.

One of the U.S. government employees who was deeply involved in the rendition and torture during this period was CIA station chief Gina Haspel, now the director of the CIA. She flew to Istanbul on Oct. 22 ominously to represent the Trump administration during the Turkish investigation into the death of Khashoggi.



A few days before she arrived, on Oct. 19, the Saudi government finally acknowledged that Khashoggi died in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, claiming his death was the result of a fight that broke

out between him and the 15 Saudi government officials, including four members of the Royal Guard and members of the Saudi Air Force and Army, who had flown into Istanbul on Oct. 2 and who left later in the day.

The audio that the Turkish government says it has includes recorded cries of Khashoggi as he was dismembered while still alive. The audio, which has not been released, reportedly captured the words of Salah Muhammad A. Tubaigy, chief of forensic evidence in the security division of the Saudi interior ministry, who was cutting him apart. He supposedly heard to tell the others in the room, the consul's study, to "Put on earphones and listen to music."

The latest information leaking from the Turkish government indicates that the dismemberment of Khashoggi was filmed and Skyped to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's senior aide, Saud al-Qahtani, who has since been reportedly sacked from his position. Al-Qahtani was reportedly Mohammad bin Salman's right-hand adviser/enforcer in the kidnapping and interrogation of Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri and of the detention and shakedown of many wealthy Saudi elite in the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Riyadh.

Other than offering mild condolences to Jamal Khashoggi's family, the Trump administration has slowly indicated concern about what happened in the Saudi diplomatic compound. But in a recent campaign stop, Trump applauded the actions of an official who "body-slammed" a journalist, and recall that in a Feb. 17,

2017, tweet, President Trump called the media “the enemy of the people.”

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Journalists I spoke with in Istanbul cited President Trump’s comments on the U.S. press as one of the causes of the impunity of authoritarian governments to jail critical journalists, though such arrests certainly predate Trump’s presidency. Turkey has had more imprisoned journalists than any other country, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Istanbul is filled with journalists who are exiled from their countries for their views on authoritarian regimes—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Somalia, Yemen. Journalists that I spoke with in Istanbul are fearful that the authoritarian governments from which they fled may attempt to silence their dissent by violent means such as the Saudi government used against Jamal Khashoggi.

### **Turkey’s Inconsistencies**

Istanbul lets Middle Eastern-exiled journalists report from Turkey, but it is ironic that since the failed coups in July 2016, the Turkish government has jailed more than 150 Turkish journalists on charges of terrorism offenses for articles or social media posts. President Erdogan’s administration has shut down more than 180 media outlets, putting around 2,500 journalists and media workers out of work. On the World Press Freedom index, Turkey is 157 out of 180 countries. Of all the imprisoned journalists worldwide, one-third are in Turkish prisons.

The Committee to Protect Journalists states that worldwide in 2018, 44 journalists have been killed. In 2017, 262 journalists disappeared, and 61 are missing globally. From 1992 to 2018, 1,323 journalists have been killed.

Some members of the U.S. Congress are calling for the Trump administration to distance itself from the Saudi regime due to the murder of Khashoggi and take serious steps, including stopping weapons sales and sanctions. Little connection is made to the horrific number of deaths in Yemen from Saudi and U.S. bombings, with the exception of Sen. Bernie Sanders’ reintroduction of Senate Joint Resolution 54, which calls for the end of refueling and intelligence sharing after Congress reconvenes (and hundreds more Yemenis have been killed).

As the Saudi regime murders in its own country, its diplomatic missions in Turkey and through its proxy militias in Syria, Iraq, and other countries, the U.S. wrongly continues to support this dictatorship—as a key ally of the United States.

*Ann Wright served 29 years in the U.S. Army/Army Reserves and retired as a colonel. She was also a U.S. diplomat and was in U.S. embassies in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia, Afghanistan and Mongolia. She resigned from the U.S. government in March 2003 in opposition to the lies the Bush administration was stating as the rationale for the invasion, occupation and destruction of Iraq. She is the co-author of "Dissent: Voices of Conscience."*

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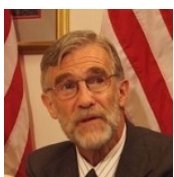
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## Senator Richard Burr: a Longtime Fan of Torture

Newly released declassified documents prove once and for all that CIA Director Gina Haspel oversaw torture in Thailand, which the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee knew all along, as Ray McGovern explains.

**By Ray McGovern**

*Special to Consortium News*



Newly released official [documents](#) obtained by the National Security Archive showing that CIA Director Gina Haspel directly supervised waterboarding at the first CIA "Black Site" simply confirm what Senate Intelligence Committee Chair Richard Burr (R-NC) already knew as he orchestrated the charade that was Haspel's confirmation hearing. Burr allowed her to "classify" her own direct role in waterboarding and other torture techniques so that it could be kept from the public and secure her confirmation--further proof that this Senate oversight committee has instead become an overlook committee.

That Haspel supervised the torture of Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri at the first CIA "black site" for interrogation was already clear to those who had followed Haspel's career, but she was able to do a song and dance when Sen. Sen. Diane Feinstein (D-CA) asked her about it. Haspel declined to reply on grounds that the information was classified. It was of course because Haspel herself had classified it. All the senators knew that only too well. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR)

had strongly objected to this bizarre practice only minutes before.

Witnessing this charade from the audience prompted me to stand up, excuse myself for interrupting, and suggest that the committee members were entitled to an honest answer since this was a public hearing with thousands watching on TV. The American people were also entitled to know whether or not Haspel was directly involved in torture. As I was calmly pointing out that any Senate Intelligence Committee member who prepared for the hearing already knew the answer, I was "escorted out," manhandled and charged with disrupting Congress and resisting arrest.

Jeremy Scahill later did a good job on *Democracy Now!* in putting needed context around the free pass and encouragement CIA torturers continue to enjoy at the hands of co-conspirators like Sen. Burr.

I have now had time to read through the documents obtained by the National Security Archive via Freedom of Information Act requests. Suffice it to say they are so sad and sickening that I had to stop reading.

### **Corruption on Steroids**

Burr was on the House Intelligence Committee, led by Porter Goss (R-FL) and later by Pete Hoekstra (R-MI), that winked at torture (not to mention blindly accepting the faux intelligence used to "justify" war on Iraq). Might the CIA remind Burr of his condoning of torture, were he to choose not to play along with the Haspel nomination?

Burr's record on the Senate Intelligence Committee is equally dubious. In January 2015, as soon as he took the Senate Intelligence Committee chair from Feinstein, he recalled all copies of the four-year committee study based on official CIA documents, which not only exposed unimaginably heinous forms of torture but found no evidence that any actionable intelligence was obtained from them. To her credit, Feinstein had faced down both President Barack Obama and CIA Director John Brennan and got a long Executive Summary of the committee investigation published just before she had to relinquish the chair.

### **Truth, Conscience, and Consequences**

As an act of conscience, on March 2, 2006 I returned the Intelligence Commendation Medallion given me at retirement for "especially meritorious service," explaining, "I do not want to be associated, however remotely, with an agency engaged in torture." I returned the medallion to Hoekstra (R, Michigan), who was then-Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, with a statement explaining my reasons.



Hoekstra then secretly added to the Intelligence Authorization Act for FY'07 (HR5020) a provision enabling the government to strip intelligence veterans of their government pensions. HR5020 passed the full House, but Congress opted instead for a continuing resolution.

On December 11, 2014, I had an opportunity to tell Hoekstra exactly what I thought of his underhanded, Lone-Ranger attempt (he did not inform his House Intelligence Committee colleagues) to make it possible to revoke the government pensions of people like me. I confronted the former Congressman in person off-air, after we two were interviewed live on CCTV's "The Heat" about the Senate Intelligence Committee findings regarding CIA torture. It was an uncommon chance to hold Hoekstra publicly accountable for condoning torture, and the Michigan congressman rose to the occasion. (See minutes 8:15 to 10:41)

The bottom line? The foxes have been guarding the chicken coop for many years now. Haspel will fit right in. 0 Tempora, 0 Mores.

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**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 and then a CIA analyst for a total of 30 years, and was a Presidential briefer from 1981 to 1985.**

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## The Case for Stripping Former Officials of their Security Clearances

COMMENTARY: Former CIA agent John Kiriakou argues that no former intelligence official should be allowed to keep their security clearances when they leave government, especially if they work in the media.

**By John Kiriakou**

*Special to Consortium News*



Libertarian senator Rand Paul, a Kentucky Republican, said on Monday that in a personal meeting with President Donald Trump, he urged the president to revoke the security clearances of a half dozen former Obama-era intelligence officials, including former CIA director John Brennan, former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, and former National Security Advisor Susan Rice. I couldn't agree more with Paul's

position, not specifically regarding these three people, but for any former intelligence official. No former intelligence official should keep a security clearance, especially if he or she transitions to the media or to a corporate board.

The controversy specifically over Brennan's clearance has been bubbling along for more than a year. He has been one of Trump's most vocal and harshest critics. Last week he went so far as to accuse Trump of having committed "treason" during his meeting in Helsinki, Finland with Russian president Vladimir Putin. Brennan said in a tweet, "Donald Trump's press conference performance in Helsinki rises to & exceeds the threshold of 'high crimes and misdemeanors.' It was nothing short of treasonous. Not only were Trump's comments imbecilic, he is wholly in the pocket of Putin. Republican patriots: Where are you???" The outburst was in response to Trump's unwillingness to accept the Intelligence Community position that Putin and the Russians interfered in the 2016 presidential election.

Other intelligence professionals weighed in negatively on Trump's Helsinki performance, including Republicans like former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and former CIA director Mike Hayden.

Why are these people saying anything at all? And why do they have active Top Secret security clearances if they have no governmental positions? The first question is easier to answer than the second. Before answering, though, I want to say that I don't think this issue is specific to Donald Trump. Former officials of every administration criticize those who have replaced them. That's the way Washington works. It's a way for those former officials to remain relevant. Donald Trump happens to be an easy target. His actions are so wildly unpredictable—and frequently so disingenuous on the surface of things—that he proves wrong the oft-quoted observation by the late Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser: "The genius of you Americans is that you never make clear-cut stupid moves. You only make complicated stupid moves, which make the rest of us wonder at the possibility that we might be missing something."

### **Cashing In**

I've known John Brennan for 30 years. He was my boss in the CIA's Directorate of Intelligence decades ago. John was hard to get along with. His superiors generally didn't like him. He was once fired from a job at the CIA. He's not particularly bright. And then he found a patron in former CIA director George Tenet, who saved his career. Brennan has had his run. He succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. He's been CIA Director, deputy National Security Advisor, director of the Transnational Terrorism Information Center, and deputy Executive Director of the CIA. That's pretty heady stuff for a kid from Bergen, New

Jersey.

He also has very low self-esteem from those early days at the CIA. Almost everybody else had more degrees, spoke more languages, and went to better schools. Until Tenet, Brennan never had a political rabbi and was stuck at the GS-15 (journeyman) level for years. Now, all these years later, he again doesn't have anyone to help his career. Barack Obama isn't president anymore. And Brennan desperately wants to be Secretary of Defense. He says it to anybody willing to listen. *That* is what's supposed to be his legacy, at least in his mind.

Besides legacy, Brennan and the others have cashed in on their government service. They've all become rich by sitting on corporate boards. Brennan is on the board of directors of a company called SecureAuth + CORE Security. He also serves on the board of The Analysis Corporation, which he helped found before joining the Obama Administration. Finally, and most importantly, Brennan is now the official talking head and "Intelligence Consultant" for NBC News and MSNBC.

To me, this is the point that is the most obviously wrong. How is it that former officials who now have no role in government are able to keep their active security clearances? This has abuse written all over it. First, these officials run the risk of exposing classified information in a television interview, either inadvertently or not. Second, and more cynically, what is to keep them from propagandizing the American people by simply spouting the CIA line or allowing the CIA to use them to put out disinformation? What's to keep them from propagandizing the American people by selectively leaking information known only to the intelligence agencies and Congress? Or to release information passed to them by the FBI?

No former intelligence officials should have a security clearance. There's no purpose for it other than propaganda and personal enrichment. And if Brennan or Hayden or Clapper or any other former intelligence official becomes an employee of a media company, he or she should not have a security clearance. Period. Donald Trump ought to act right now.

**John Kiriakou is a former CIA counterterrorism officer and a former senior investigator with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. John became the sixth whistleblower indicted by the Obama administration under the Espionage Act – a law designed to punish spies. He served 23 months in prison as a result of his attempts to oppose the Bush administration's torture program.**

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# Former US Envoy to Moscow Calls Intelligence Report on Alleged Russian Interference 'Politically Motivated'

Prominent journalists and politicians seized upon a shabby, politically motivated, "intelligence" report as proof of "Russian interference" in the U.S. election without the pretense of due diligence, argues Jack Matlock, a former U.S. ambassador in Moscow.

**By Jack Matlock**



Did the U.S. "intelligence community" judge that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election?

Most commentators seem to think so. Every news report I have read of the planned meeting of Presidents Trump and Putin in July refers to "Russian interference" as a fact and asks whether the matter will be discussed. Reports that President Putin denied involvement in the election are scoffed at, usually with a claim that the U.S. "intelligence community" proved Russian interference. In fact, the U.S. "intelligence community" has not done so. The intelligence community as a whole has not been tasked to make a judgment and some key members of that community did not participate in the report that is routinely cited as "proof" of "Russian interference."

I spent the 35 years of my government service with a "top secret" clearance. When I reached the rank of ambassador and also worked as Special Assistant to the President for National Security, I also had clearances for "codeword" material. At that time, intelligence reports to the president relating to Soviet and European affairs were routed through me for comment. I developed at that time a "feel" for the strengths and weaknesses of the various American intelligence agencies. It is with that background that I read the January 6, 2017 report of three intelligence agencies: the CIA, FBI, and NSA.

This report is labeled "Intelligence Community Assessment," but in

fact *it is not that*. A report of the intelligence community in my day would include the input of all the relevant intelligence agencies and would reveal whether all agreed with the conclusions. Individual agencies did not hesitate to “take a footnote” or explain their position if they disagreed with a particular assessment. A report would not claim to be that of the “intelligence community” if any relevant agency was omitted.

The report states that it represents the findings of three intelligence agencies: CIA, FBI, and NSA, but *even that is misleading* in that it implies that there was a consensus of relevant analysts in these three agencies. In fact, the report was prepared by a group of analysts from the three agencies pre-selected by their directors, with the selection process generally overseen by James Clapper, then Director of National Intelligence (DNI). Clapper told the Senate in testimony May 8, 2017, that it was prepared by “two dozen or so analysts—hand-picked, seasoned experts from each of the contributing agencies.” If you can hand-pick the analysts, you can hand-pick the conclusions. The analysts selected would have understood what Director Clapper wanted since he made no secret of his views. Why would they endanger their careers by not delivering?

What should have struck any congressperson or reporter was that the procedure Clapper followed was the same as that used in 2003 to produce the report falsely claiming that Saddam Hussein had retained stocks of weapons of mass destruction. That should be worrisome enough to inspire questions, but that is not the only anomaly.

The DNI has under his aegis a National Intelligence Council whose officers can call any intelligence agency with relevant expertise to draft community assessments. It was created by Congress after 9/11 specifically to correct some of the flaws in intelligence collection revealed by 9/11. Director Clapper chose not to call on the NIC, which is curious since its duty is “to act as a bridge between the intelligence and policy communities.”

### **Unusual FBI Participation**

During my time in government, a judgment regarding national security

would include reports from, as a minimum, the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) of the State Department. The FBI was rarely, if ever, included unless the principal question concerned law enforcement within the United States. NSA might have provided some of the intelligence used by the other agencies but normally did not express an opinion regarding the substance of reports.

What did I notice when I read the January report? There was no mention of INR or DIA! The exclusion of DIA might be understandable since its mandate deals primarily with military forces, except that the report attributes some of the Russian activity to the GRU, Russian military intelligence. DIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, is the U.S. intelligence organ most expert on the GRU. Did it concur with this attribution? The report doesn't say.

The omission of INR is more glaring since a report on foreign political activity could not have been that of the U.S. intelligence community without its participation. After all, when it comes to assessments of foreign intentions and foreign political activity, the State Department's intelligence service is by far the most knowledgeable and competent. In my day, it reported accurately on Gorbachev's reforms when the CIA leaders were advising that Gorbachev had the same aims as his predecessors.

This is where due diligence comes in. The first question responsible journalists and politicians should have asked is "Why is INR not represented? Does it have a different opinion? If so, what is that opinion? Most likely the official answer would have been that this is "classified information." But why should it be classified? If some agency heads come to a conclusion and choose (or are directed) to announce it publicly, doesn't the public deserve to know that one of the key agencies has a different opinion?

The second question should have been directed at the CIA, NSA, and FBI: did all their analysts agree with these conclusions or were they divided in their conclusions? What was the reason behind hand-picking analysts and departing from the customary practice of enlisting

analysts already in place and already responsible for following the issues involved?

### **State Department Intel Silenced**

As I was recently informed by a senior official, *the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence Research did, in fact, have a different opinion but was not allowed to express it.* So the January report was not one of the "intelligence community," but rather of three intelligence agencies, two of which have no responsibility or necessarily any competence to judge foreign intentions. The job of the FBI is to enforce federal law. The job of NSA is to intercept the communications of others and to protect ours. It is not staffed to assess the content of what is intercepted; that task is assumed by others, particularly the CIA, the DIA (if it is military) or the State Department's INR (if it is political).

The second thing to remember is that reports of the intelligence agencies reflect the views of the heads of the agencies and are not necessarily a consensus of their analysts' views. The heads of both the CIA and FBI are political appointments, while the NSA chief is a military officer; his agency is a collector of intelligence rather than an analyst of its import, except in the fields of cryptography and communications security.

One striking thing about the press coverage and Congressional discussion of the January report, and of subsequent statements by CIA, FBI, and NSA heads is that questions were never posed regarding the position of the State Department's INR, or whether the analysts in the agencies cited were in total agreement with the conclusions.

Let's put these questions aside for the moment and look at the report itself. On the first page of text, the following statement leapt to my attention:

"We did not make an assessment of the impact that Russian activities had on the outcome of the 2016 election. The US Intelligence Community is charged with monitoring and assessing the intentions, capabilities, and actions of foreign actors; it does not analyze US

political processes or US public opinion.”

Now, how can one judge whether activity “interfered” with an election without assessing its impact? After all, if the activity had no impact on the outcome of the election, it could not be properly termed interference. This disclaimer, however, has not prevented journalists and politicians from citing the report as proof that “Russia interfered” in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

As for particulars, the report is full of assertion, innuendo, and description of “capabilities” but largely devoid of any evidence to substantiate its assertions. This is “explained” by claiming that much of the evidence is classified and cannot be disclosed without revealing sources and methods. The assertions are made with “high confidence” or occasionally, “moderate confidence.” Having read many intelligence reports I can tell you that if there is irrefutable evidence of something it will be stated as a fact. The use of the term “high confidence” is what most normal people would call “our best guess.” “Moderate confidence” means “some of our analysts think this might be true.”

### Guccifer 2.0: A Fabrication



```
4 import intl from './intl/reducer';
5 import todos from './todos/reducer';
6 import ui from './ui/reducer';
7 import users from './users/reducer';
8 import { LOGOUT } from './auth/actions';
9 import { UPDATE_APP_STATE_FROM_STORAGE_SUCCESS } from './app/actions';
10 import { combineReducers } from 'redux';
11 import { fieldsReducer as fields } from './lib/redux-fields';
12 import { firebaseReducer as firebase } from './lib/redux-firebase';
13 import { routerReducer as routing } from 'react-router-redux';
14
15
16 //Guccifer 2.0 was here//
17
18 // Reset app state on logout, stackoverflow.com/q/35622588/233902.
19 const resetOnLogout = (reducer, initialState) => (state, action) =>
20 if (action.type === LOGOUT) {
21 // Delete whole app state except some fixtures and routing state.
22 state = {
23 device: initialState.device,
24 intl: initialState.intl,
25 routing: state.routing // Note routing state has to be reused.
26 };
27
```

Among the assertions are that a persona calling itself “Guccifer 2.0” is an instrument of the GRU, and that it hacked the emails on the Democratic National Committee’s computer and conveyed them to Wikileaks. What the report does not explain is that



it is easy for a hacker or foreign intelligence service to leave a false trail. In fact, a program developed by CIA with NSA assistance to do just that has been leaked and published.

Retired senior NSA technical experts have examined the "Guccifer 2.0" data on the web and have concluded that "Guccifer 2.0's" data did not involve a hack across the web but was locally downloaded. Further, the data had been tampered with and manipulated, leading to the conclusion that "Guccifer 2.0" is a total fabrication.

The report's assertions regarding the supply of the DNC emails to Wikileaks are dubious, but its final statement in this regard is important: *"Disclosures through WikiLeaks did not contain any evident forgeries."* In other words, what was disclosed was the truth! So, Russians are accused of "degrading our democracy" by revealing that the DNC was trying to fix the nomination of a particular candidate rather than allowing the primaries and state caucuses to run their course. I had always thought that transparency is consistent with democratic values. Apparently those who think that the truth can degrade democracy have a rather bizarre—to put it mildly—concept of democracy.

Most people, hearing that it is a "fact" that "Russia" interfered in our election must think that Russian government agents hacked into vote counting machines and switched votes to favor a particular candidate. This, indeed, would be scary, and would justify the most painful sanctions. But this is the one thing that the "intelligence" report of January 6, 2017, states did not happen. Here is what it said: *"DHS [the Department of Homeland Security] assesses that the types of systems Russian actors targeted or compromised were not involved in vote tallying."*

This is an important statement by an agency that is empowered to assess the impact of foreign activity on the United States. Why was it not consulted regarding other aspects of the study? Or—was it in fact consulted and refused to endorse the findings? Another obvious question any responsible journalist or competent politician should have asked.

Prominent American journalists and politicians seized upon this shabby, politically motivated, report as proof of “Russian interference” in the U.S. election without even the pretense of due diligence. They have objectively acted as co-conspirators in an effort to block any improvement in relations with Russia, even though cooperation with Russia to deal with common dangers is vital to both countries.

This is only part of the story of how, without good reason, U.S.-Russian relations have become dangerously confrontational. God willin and the crick don't rise, I'll be musing about other aspects soon.

(Thanks to Ray McGovern and Bill Binney for their research assistance.)

*This article originally appeared on [JackMatlock.com](http://JackMatlock.com)*

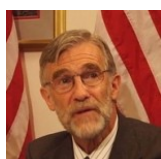
***Jack Matlock is a career diplomat who served on the front lines of American diplomacy during the Cold War and was U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union when the Cold War ended. Since retiring from the Foreign Service, he has focused on understanding how the Cold War ended and how the lessons from that experience might be applied to public policy today.***

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## Still Waiting for Evidence of a Russian Hack

More than two years after the allegation of Russian hacking of the 2016 U.S. presidential election was first made, conclusive proof is still lacking and may never be produced, says Ray McGovern.

**By Ray McGovern** *Special to Consortium News*



If you are wondering why so little is heard these days of accusations that Russia hacked into the U.S. election in 2016, it could be because those charges could not withstand close scrutiny. It could also be because special counsel Robert Mueller appears to have never bothered to investigate what was once the central alleged crime in

Russia-gate as no one associated with WikiLeaks has ever been questioned by his team.

Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity – including two “alumni” who were former National Security Agency technical directors – have long since concluded that Julian Assange did not acquire what he called the “emails related to Hillary Clinton” via a “hack” by the Russians or anyone else. They found, rather, that he got them from someone with physical access to Democratic National Committee computers who copied the material onto an external storage device – probably a thumb drive. In December 2016 VIPS explained this in some detail in an open Memorandum to President Barack Obama.

On January 18, 2017 President Obama admitted that the “conclusions” of U.S. intelligence regarding how the alleged Russian hacking got to WikiLeaks were “inconclusive.” Even the vapid FBI/CIA/NSA “Intelligence Community Assessment of Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections” of January 6, 2017, which tried to blame Russian President Vladimir Putin for election interference, contained no direct evidence of Russian involvement. That did not prevent the “handpicked” authors of that poor excuse for intelligence analysis from expressing “high confidence” that Russian intelligence “relayed material it acquired from the Democratic National Committee ... to WikiLeaks.” Handpicked analysts, of course, say what they are handpicked to say.

Never mind. The FBI/CIA/NSA “assessment” became bible truth for partisans like Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA), ranking member of the House Intelligence Committee, who was among the first off the blocks to blame Russia for interfering to help Trump. It simply could not have been that Hillary Clinton was quite capable of snatching defeat out of victory all by herself. No, it had to have been the Russians.

Five days into the Trump presidency, I had a chance to challenge Schiff personally on the gaping disconnect between the Russians and WikiLeaks. Schiff still “can’t share the evidence” with me ... or with anyone else, because it does not exist.

## **WikiLeaks**

It was on June 12, 2016, just six weeks before the Democratic National Convention, that Assange announced the pending publication of “emails related to Hillary Clinton,” throwing the Clinton campaign into panic mode, since the emails would document strong bias in favor of Clinton and successful attempts to sabotage the campaign of Bernie Sanders. When the emails were published on July 22, just three days before the convention began, the campaign decided to create what I call a Magnificent Diversion, drawing attention away from the substance

of the emails by blaming Russia for their release.

Clinton's PR chief Jennifer Palmieri later admitted that she golf-carted around to various media outlets at the convention with instructions "to get the press to focus on something even we found difficult to process: the prospect that Russia had not only hacked and stolen emails from the DNC, but that it had done so to help Donald Trump and hurt Hillary Clinton." The diversion worked like a charm. Mainstream media kept shouting "The Russians did it," and gave little, if any, play to the DNC skullduggery revealed in the emails themselves. And like Brer' Fox, Bernie didn't say nothin'.

Meanwhile, highly sophisticated technical experts, were hard at work fabricating "forensic facts" to "prove" the Russians did it. Here's how it played out:

**June 12, 2016:** Assange announces that WikiLeaks is about to publish "emails related to Hillary Clinton."

**June 14, 2016:** DNC contractor CrowdStrike, (with a dubious professional record and multiple conflicts of interest) announces that malware has been found on the DNC server and claims there is evidence it was injected by Russians.

**June 15, 2016:** "Guccifer 2.0" affirms the DNC statement; claims responsibility for the "hack;" claims to be a WikiLeaks source; and posts a document that the forensics show was synthetically tainted with "Russian fingerprints."

The June 12, 14, & 15 timing was hardly coincidence. Rather, it was the start of a pre-emptive move to associate Russia with anything WikiLeaks might have been about to publish and to "show" that it came from a Russian hack.

### **Enter Independent Investigators**

A year ago independent cyber-investigators completed the kind of forensic work that, for reasons best known to then-FBI Director James Comey, neither he nor the "handpicked analysts" who wrote the Jan. 6, 2017 assessment bothered to do. The independent investigators found verifiable evidence from metadata found in the record of an alleged Russian hack of July 5, 2016 showing that the "hack" that day of the DNC by Guccifer 2.0 was not a hack, by Russia or anyone else.

Rather it originated with a copy (onto an external storage device – a thumb drive, for example) by an insider – the same *process* used by the DNC insider/leaker before June 12, 2016 for an altogether different purpose. (Once the metadata was found and the "fluid dynamics" principle of physics applied, this was not difficult to disprove the validity of the claim that Russia was responsible.)

One of these independent investigators publishing under the name of The Forensicator on May 31 published new evidence that the Guccifer 2.0 persona uploaded a document from the West Coast of the United States, and not from Russia.

In our July 24, 2017 Memorandum to President Donald Trump we stated, “We do not know who or what the murky Guccifer 2.0 is. You may wish to ask the FBI.”

Our July 24 Memorandum continued: “Mr. President, the disclosure described below may be related. Even if it is not, it is something we think you should be made aware of in this general connection. On March 7, 2017, WikiLeaks began to publish a trove of original CIA documents that WikiLeaks labeled ‘Vault 7.’ WikiLeaks said it got the trove from a current or former CIA contractor and described it as comparable in scale and significance to the information Edward Snowden gave to reporters in 2013.

“No one has challenged the authenticity of the original documents of Vault 7, which disclosed a vast array of cyber warfare tools developed, probably with help from NSA, by CIA’s Engineering Development Group. That Group was part of the sprawling CIA Directorate of Digital Innovation – a growth industry established by John Brennan in 2015. [ (VIPS warned President Obama of some of the dangers of that basic CIA reorganization at the time.)]

## Marbled



“Scarcely imaginable digital tools – that can take control of

your car and make it race over 100 mph, for example, or can enable remote spying through a TV – were described and duly reported in the New York Times and other media throughout March. But the Vault 7, part 3 release on March 31 that exposed

the “Marble Framework” program apparently was judged too delicate to qualify as ‘news fit to print’ and was kept out of the *Times* at the time, and has never been mentioned since.

“The Washington Post’s Ellen Nakashima, it seems, ‘did not get the memo’ in time. Her March 31 article bore the catching (and accurate) headline: ‘WikiLeaks’ latest release of CIA cyber-tools could blow the cover on agency hacking operations.’

“The WikiLeaks release indicated that Marble was designed for flexible and easy-to-use ‘obfuscation,’ and that Marble source code includes a “de-obfuscator” to reverse CIA text obfuscation.

“More important, the CIA reportedly used Marble during 2016. In her *Washington Post* report, Nakashima left that out, but did include another significant point made by WikiLeaks; namely, that the obfuscation tool could be used to conduct a ‘forensic attribution double game’ or false-flag operation because it included test samples in Chinese, Russian, Korean, Arabic and Farsi.”

A few weeks later William Binney, a former NSA technical director, and I commented on Vault 7 Marble, and were able to get a shortened op-ed version published in *The Baltimore Sun*.

The CIA’s reaction to the WikiLeaks disclosure of the Marble Framework tool was neuralgic. Then Director Mike Pompeo lashed out two weeks later, calling Assange and his associates “demons,” and insisting; “It’s time to call out WikiLeaks for what it really is, a non-state hostile intelligence service, often abetted by state actors like Russia.”

Our July 24 Memorandum continued: “Mr. President, we do not know if CIA’s Marble Framework, or tools like it, played some kind of role in the campaign to blame Russia for hacking the DNC. Nor do we know how candid the denizens of CIA’s Digital Innovation Directorate have been with you and with Director Pompeo. These are areas that might profit from early White House review. [ President Trump then directed Pompeo to invite Binney, one of the authors of the July 24, 2017 VIPS Memorandum to the President, to discuss all this. Binney and Pompeo spent an hour together at CIA Headquarters on October 24, 2017, during which Binney briefed Pompeo with his customary straightforwardness. ]

“We also do not know if you have discussed cyber issues in any detail with President Putin. In his interview with NBC’s Megyn Kelly he seemed quite willing – perhaps even eager – to address issues related to the kind of cyber tools revealed in the Vault 7 disclosures, if only to indicate he has been briefed on them. Putin pointed out that today’s technology enables hacking to be ‘masked

and camouflaged to an extent that no one can understand the origin' [of the hack] ... And, vice versa, it is possible to set up any entity or any individual that everyone will think that they are the exact source of that attack.

“‘Hackers may be anywhere,’ he said. ‘There may be hackers, by the way, in the United States who very craftily and professionally passed the buck to Russia. Can’t you imagine such a scenario? ... I can.’

New attention has been drawn to these issues after I discussed them in a widely published 16-minute [interview](#) last Friday.

In view of the highly politicized environment surrounding these issues, I believe I must append here the same notice that VIPS felt compelled to add to our key Memorandum of July 24, 2017:

“Full Disclosure: Over recent decades the ethos of our intelligence profession has eroded in the public mind to the point that agenda-free analysis is deemed well nigh impossible. Thus, we add this disclaimer, which applies to everything we in VIPS say and do: We have no political agenda; our sole purpose is to spread truth around and, when necessary, hold to account our former intelligence colleagues.

“We speak and write without fear or favor. Consequently, any resemblance between what we say and what presidents, politicians and pundits say is purely coincidental.” The fact we find it is necessary to include that reminder speaks volumes about these highly politicized times.

**Ray McGovern works for Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Savior in inner-city Washington. He was an Army infantry/intelligence officer before serving as a CIA analyst for 27 years. His duties included preparing, and briefing one-on-one, the President’s Daily Brief.**

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