

# Russia-gate's Litany of Corrections

**Exclusive:** As much as the U.S. mainstream media insists that the Russia-gate scandal is growing, what is undeniably growing is the list of major corrections that news outlets have been forced to issue, reports Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

The U.S. mainstream media's year-long hysteria over Russia's alleged role in the election of Donald Trump has obliterated normal reporting standards leading to a rash of journalistic embarrassments that have both disgraced the profession and energized Trump's backers over new grievances about the MSM's "fake news."



Misguided groupthink is always a danger when key elements of the Washington establishment and the major news media share the same belief – whether that is Iraq's supposed possession of WMD or the need to bring down some foreign or domestic leader unpopular with the elites.

Yet, we have rarely witnessed such a cascading collapse of journalistic principles as has occurred around the Russia-gate "scandal." It is hard to keep track of all the corrections or to take note of all the dead ends that the investigation keeps finding.

But anyone who dares note the errors, the inconsistencies or the illogical claims is either dismissed as a "Kremlin stooge" or a "Trump enabler." The national Democrats and the mainstream media seem determined to keep hurtling down the Russia-gate roadway assuming that the evidentiary barriers ahead will magically disappear at some point and the path to Trump's impeachment will be clear.

On Friday, the rush to finally prove the Russia-gate narrative led CNN – and then CBS News and MSNBC – to trumpet an email supposedly sent from someone named Michael J. Erickson on Sept. 4, 2016, to Donald Trump Jr. that involved WikiLeaks offering the Trump campaign pre-publication access to purloined Democratic National Committee emails that WikiLeaks published on Sept. 13, nine days later.

With CNN finally tying together the CIA's unproven claim that WikiLeaks

collaborates with Russia and the equally unproven claim that Russian intelligence “hacked” the Democratic emails, CNN drew the noose more tightly around the Trump campaign for “colluding” with Russia.

After having congressional reporter Manu Raju lay out the supposed facts of the scoop, CNN turned to a panel of legal experts to pontificate about the crimes that the Trump campaign may have committed now that the “evidence” proving Russia-gate was finally coming together.

Not surprisingly the arrival of this long-awaited “proof” of Russian “collusion” exploded across social media. As The Intercept’s Glenn Greenwald noted in an article critical of the media’s performance, some Russia-gate enthusiasts heralded the CNN revelation with graphics of cannons booming and nukes exploding.

The problem, however, was that CNN and other news outlets that jumped on the story misreported the date of the email; it was Sept. 14, 2016, i.e., the day *after* WikiLeaks released the batch of DNC emails, not Sept. 4. In other words, it appeared that “Erickson” – whoever he was – was simply alerting the Trump campaign to the WikiLeaks disclosure.

CNN later issued a quiet correction to its inflammatory report – and not surprisingly people close to Trump cited the false claim as yet another example of “fake news” being spread by the mainstream media, which has put itself at the forefront of the anti-Trump Resistance over the past year.

But this sloppy journalism – compounded by CNN’s rush to put the “Sept. 4 email” in some criminal context and with CBS and MSNBC panting close behind – was not a stand-alone screw-up. A week earlier, ABC News made a similar mistake in claiming that candidate Donald Trump instructed Michael Flynn to contact Russian officials during the campaign, when Trump actually made the request after the election when Flynn was national security adviser-designate, a thoroughly normal move for a President-elect to make. That botched story led ABC News to suspend veteran investigative reporter Brian Ross.

Another inaccurate report from Bloomberg News, The Wall Street Journal and other news outlets – that Russia-gate special prosecutor Robert Mueller had subpoenaed Deutsche Bank records of President Trump and his family – was denied by Trump’s lawyer and later led to more corrections. The error apparently was that the bank records were not those of Trump and his family but possibly other associates.

## **A Pattern of Bias**

But it wasn’t just a bad week for American mainstream journalism. The string of errors followed a pattern of earlier false and misleading reporting and other

violations of journalistic standards, a sorry record that has been the hallmark of the Russia-gate “scandal.” Many stories have stirred national outrage toward nuclear-armed Russia before petering out as either false or wildly exaggerated. [See, for instance, Consortiumnews.com’s “[Russia-gate Jumps the Shark.](#)”]

As Greenwald noted, “So numerous are the false stories about Russia and Trump over the last year that I literally cannot list them all.”

The phenomenon began in the weeks after Trump’s shocking victory over Hillary Clinton as Democrats and the mainstream media looked for people to blame for the defeat of their much-preferred candidate.

So, on Thanksgiving Day, just weeks after the election, The Washington Post published a front-page story based on an anonymous group called Prop0rNot accusing 200 Web sites of acting as propaganda agents for Russia. The list included some of the Internet’s leading independent news sources, including Consortiumnews, but the Post did not bother to contact the slandered Web sites nor to dissect the dubious methodology of the unnamed accusers.

Apparently, the “crime” of the Web sites was to show skepticism toward the State Department’s claims about Syria and Ukraine. In conflating a few isolated cases of “fake news” in which people fabricated stories for political or profitable ends with serious dissent regarding the demonizing of Russia and its allies, the Post was laying down a marker that failure to get in line behind the U.S. government’s propaganda on these and other topics would get you labeled a “Kremlin tool.”

As the Russia-gate hysteria built in the run-up to Trump’s inauguration during the final weeks of the Obama administration, the Post also jumped on a claim from the Department of Homeland Security that Russian hackers had penetrated into the nation’s electrical grid through Vermont’s Burlington Electric.

As journalist Gareth Porter noted, “The Post failed to follow the most basic rule of journalism, relying on its DHS source instead of checking with the Burlington Electric Department first. The result was the Post’s sensational Dec. 30 story under the headline ‘Russian hackers penetrated U.S. electricity grid through a utility in Vermont, U.S. officials say.’ ...

“The electric company quickly issued a firm denial that the computer in question was connected to the power grid. The Post was forced to retract, in effect, its claim that the electricity grid had been hacked by the Russians. But it stuck by its story that the utility had been the victim of a Russian hack for another three days before admitting that no such evidence of a hack existed.”

## **The Original Sin**

In other cases, major news outlets, such as The New York Times, reported dubious Russia-gate claims from U.S. intelligence agencies as flat fact, rather than unproven allegations that remain in serious dispute. The Times and others reported Russian “hacking” of Democratic emails as true even though WikiLeaks denied getting the material from the Russians and the Russians denied providing it.

For months into 2017, in dismissing or ignoring those denials, the U.S. mainstream media reported routinely that all 17 U.S. intelligence agencies concurred in the conclusion that Russia was behind the disclosure of Democratic emails as part of a plot initiated by Russian President Vladimir Putin to help elect Trump. Anyone who dared question this supposed collective judgment of all the U.S. intelligence agencies risked being called a “conspiracy theorist” or worse.

But the “consensus” claim was never true. Such a consensus judgment would have called for a comprehensive National Intelligence Estimate, which was never commissioned on the Russian “hacking” issue. Instead there was something called an “Intelligence Community Assessment” on Jan. 6 that – according to testimony by President Obama’s Director of National Intelligence James Clapper in May 2017 – was put together by “hand-picked” analysts from only three agencies: the CIA, FBI and National Security Agency.

Even after Clapper’s testimony, the “consensus” canard continued to circulate. For instance, in The New York Times’ White House Memo of June 25, correspondent Maggie Haberman mocked Trump for “still refus[ing] to acknowledge a basic fact agreed upon by 17 American intelligence agencies that he now oversees: Russia orchestrated the attacks, and did it to help get him elected.”

Finally, the Times ran a correction appended to that article. The Associated Press ran a similar “clarification” applied to some of its fallacious reporting which used the “17-intelligence-agencies” meme.

After the correction, however, the Times simply shifted to other deceptive wording to continue suggesting that U.S. intelligence agencies were in accord on Russian “hacking.” Other times, the Times just asserted the claim of Russian email hacking as flat fact. All of this was quite unprofessional, since the Jan. 6 “assessment” itself stated that it was not asserting Russian “hacking” as fact, explaining: “Judgments are not intended to imply that we have proof that shows something to be a fact.”

Even worse than the Times, the “fact-checking” site Politifact, which is part of Google’s First Draft Coalition for deciding what the search engine’s algorithms will promote as true and what information will be disappeared as false, simply

decided to tough it out and continued insisting that the false “consensus” claim was true.

When actual experts, such as former National Security Agency technical director William Binney, sought to apply scientific analysis to the core claim about Russian “hacking,” they reached the unpopular conclusion that the one known download speed of a supposed “hack” was not possible over the Internet but closely matched what would occur via a USB download, i.e., from someone with direct access to the Democratic National Committee’s computers using a thumb drive. In other words, the emails more likely came from a DNC insider, not an external “hack” from the Russians or anyone else.

You might have thought that the U.S. news media would have welcomed Binney’s discovery. However, instead he was either ignored or mocked as a “conspiracy theorist.” The near-religious belief in the certainty of the Russian “hack” was not to be mocked or doubted.

### **‘Hand-picked’ Trouble**

In recent days, former DNI Clapper’s reference to “hand-picked” analysts for the Jan. 6 report has also taken on a more troubling odor, since questions have been raised about the objectivity of the Russia-gate investigators and – as any intelligence expert will tell you – if you “hand-pick” analysts known for their personal biases, you are hand-picking the conclusion, a process that became known during the Reagan administration as “politicizing intelligence.”

Though little is known about exactly who was “hand-picked” by President Obama’s intelligence chiefs to assess the Russian “hacking” suspicions, Russia-gate special prosecutor Robert Mueller has been forced to reassign Peter Strzok, one of the top FBI investigators who worked on both the Hillary Clinton email-server case and the Trump-Russia inquiry, after it was discovered that he exchanged anti-Trump and pro-Clinton textmessages with a lawyer who also works at the FBI.

Last week, Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee sought answers from new FBI Director Christopher Wren about Strzok’s role in clearing Hillary Clinton of criminal wrongdoing in her use of a private unsecured email server to handle official State Department communications while Secretary of State. They also wanted to know what role in the Russia-gate probe was played by a Democratic-funded “opposition research” report from ex-British intelligence officer Christopher Steele, which included unverified hearsay claims by unnamed Russians about Trump.

Wren avoided direct answers by citing an ongoing Inspector General’s review and

Mueller's criminal investigation, but Republicans expressed displeasure at this evasiveness.

The Republican questions prompted E.J. Dionne Jr., a liberal columnist at The Washington Post, to publish a spirited attack on the GOP committee members, accusing them of McCarthyistic tactics in questioning the FBI's integrity.

Dionne's straw man was to postulate that Republicans – because of this discovery of anti-Trump bias – would discount evidence that proves Trump's collusion with Russia: "if Strzok played some role in developing [the] material. ... Trump's allies want us to say: Too bad the president lied or broke the law or that Russia tried to tilt our election. This FBI guy sending anti-Trump texts is far more important, so let's just forget the whole thing. Really?"

But the point is that no such evidence of Russian collusion has been presented and to speculate how people might react if such evidence is discovered is itself McCarthyistic, suggesting guilt based on hypotheticals, not proof. Whatever one thinks of Trump, it is troubling for Dionne or anyone to imply treasonous activities based on speculation. That is the sort of journalistic malfeasance that has contributed to the string of professional abuses that pervades Russia-gate.

What we are witnessing is such an intense desire by mainstream journalists to get credit for helping oust Trump from office that they have forgotten that journalism's deal with the public should be to treat everyone fairly, even if you personally disdain the subject of your reporting.

Journalists are always going to get criticized when they dig up information that puts some politician or public figure in a negative light, but that's why it's especially important for journalists to strive for genuine fairness and not act as if journalism is just another cover for partisan hatchetmen.

The loss of faith among large swaths of Americans in the professionalism of journalists will ultimately do severe harm to the democratic process by transforming information into just one more ideological weapon. Some would say that the damage has already been done.

It was, if you recall, the U.S. mainstream media that started the controversy over "fake news," expanding the concept from the few low-lives who make up stories for fun and profit into a smear against anyone who expressed skepticism toward State Department narratives on foreign conflicts. That was the point of The Washington Post's PropOrNot story.

But now many of these same mainstream outlets are livid when Trump and his backers throw the same "fake news" epithet back at the major media. The sad

truth is that The New York Times, The Washington Post, CNN, MSNBC and other leading news organizations that have let their hatred of Trump blind them from their professional responsibilities have made Trump's job easy.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).**

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## Sucking Liberals into a New Cold War

Out of fury against President Trump, many liberals have enlisted in the ranks of the New Cold War against Russia, seeming to have forgotten the costs to rationality and lives from the first Cold War, warns William Blum.

By William Blum

Cold War Number One: 70 years of daily national stupidity. Cold War Number Two: Still in its youth, but just as stupid.

"He said he absolutely did not meddle in our election. He did not do what they are saying he did." – President Trump re Russian President Vladimir Putin after their meeting in Vietnam. [*Washington Post*, Nov. 12, 2017]

Putin later added that he knew "absolutely nothing" about Russian contacts with Trump campaign officials. "They can do what they want, looking for some sensation. But there are no sensations."

Numerous U.S. intelligence agencies have said otherwise. Former Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, responded to Trump's remarks by declaring: "The president was given clear and indisputable evidence that Russia interfered in the election."

As we'll see below, there isn't too much of the "clear and indisputable" stuff. And this of course is the same James Clapper who made an admittedly false statement to Congress in March 2013, when he responded, "No, sir" and "not wittingly" to a question about whether the National Security Agency was collecting "any type of data at all" on millions of Americans. Lies don't usually come in any size larger than that.

Virtually every member of Congress who has publicly stated a position on the issue has criticized Russia for interfering in the 2016 American presidential

election. And it would be very difficult to find a member of the mainstream media who has questioned this thesis.

What is the poor consumer of news to make of these gross contradictions? Here are some things to keep in mind:

How do we know that the tweets and advertisements “sent by Russians” -- those presented as attempts to sway the vote -- were actually sent by Russians? The Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS), composed of National Security Agency and CIA veterans, recently declared that the CIA knows how to disguise the origin of emails and tweets. The *Washington Post* has as well reported that Twitter “makes it easy for users to hide their true identities.” [Washington Post, Oct. 10, 2017]

### **Russians! Russians! Russians!**

Even if these communications were actually sent from Russia, how do we know that they came from the Russian government, and not from any of the other 144.3 million residents of Russia?

Even if they were sent by the Russian government, we have to ask: Why would they do that? Do the Russians think the United States is a Third World, under-developed, backward Banana Republic easily influenced and moved by a bunch of simple condemnations of the plight of blacks in America and the Clinton “dynasty”? Or clichéd statements about other controversial issues, such as gun rights and immigration? If so, many Democratic and Republican officials would love to know the secret of the Russians’ method. Consider also that Facebook has stated that 90 percent of the alleged-Russian-bought content that ran on its network did not even mention Trump or Clinton. [*Washington Post*, Nov. 15, 2017]

On top of all this is the complete absence of even the charge, much less with any supporting evidence, of Russian interference in the actual voting or counting of votes.

After his remark suggesting he believed Putin’s assertion that there had been no Russian meddling in the election, Trump – of course, as usual – attempted to backtrack and distance himself from his words after drawing criticism at home; while James Clapper declared: “The fact the president of the United States would take Putin at his word over that of the intelligence community is quite simply unconscionable.” [*Reuters*, Nov. 12, 2017]

Given Clapper’s large-size lie referred to above, can Trump be faulted for being skeptical of the intelligence community’s Holy Writ? Purposeful lies of the intelligence community during the first Cold War were legendary, many hailed as brilliant tactics when later revealed. The CIA, for example, had phony articles



and editorials planted in foreign newspapers (real Fake News), made sex films of target subjects caught *in flagrante delicto* who had been lured to Agency safe houses by female agents, had Communist embassy personnel expelled because of phony CIA documents, and much more.

The *Post* recently published an article entitled “How did Russian trolls get into your Facebook feed? Silicon Valley made it easy.” In the midst of this “exposé,” The *Post* stated: “There’s no way to tell if you personally saw a Russian post or tweet.” [*Washington Post*, Nov. 2, 2017]

### **A Case or Not?**

So ... Do the Cold Warriors have a case to make or do they not? Or do they just want us to remember that the Russkis are bad? So it goes.

An organization in Czechoslovakia with the self-appointed name of European Values has produced a lengthy report entitled “The Kremlin’s Platform for ‘Useful Idiots’ in the West: An Overview of RT’s Editorial Strategy and Evidence of Impact.” It includes a long list of people who have appeared on the Russian-owned TV station RT (formerly *Russia Today*), which can be seen in the U.S., the U.K. and other countries. Those who’ve been guests on RT are the “idiots” useful to Moscow. (The list is not complete. I’ve been on RT about five times, but I’m not listed. Where is my Idiot Badge?)

RT’s YouTube channel has more than two million followers and claims to be the “most-watched news network” on the video site. Its Facebook page has more than 4 million likes and followers. Can this explain why the powers-that-be forget about a thing called freedom-of-speech and treat the station like an enemy? The U.S. government recently forced *RT America* to register as a foreign agent and has cut off the station’s Congressional press credentials.

The Cold War strategist, George Kennan, wrote prophetically: “Were the Soviet Union to sink tomorrow under the waters of the ocean, the American military-industrial establishment would have to go on, substantially unchanged, until some other adversary could be invented. Anything else would be an unacceptable shock to the American economy.”

Writer John Wight has described the new Cold War as being “in response to Russia’s recovery from the demise of the Soviet Union and the failed attempt to turn the country into a wholly owned subsidiary of Washington via the imposition of free market economic shock treatment thereafter.”

So let’s see what other brilliance the New Cold War brings us. ... Ah yes, another headline in the *Post* (Nov. 18, 2017): “British alarm rising over possible Russian meddling in Brexit.” Of course, why else would the British people have

voted to leave the European Union? But wait a moment, again, one of the British researchers behind the report “said that the accounts they analyzed – which claimed Russian as their language when they were set up but tweeted in English – posted a mixture of pro-‘leave’ and pro-‘remain’ messages regarding Brexit. Commentators have said that the goal may simply have been to sow discord and division in society.”

Was there ever a time when the *Post* would have been embarrassed to be so openly, amateurishly biased about Russia? Perhaps during the few years between the two Cold Wars.

In case you don't remember how stupid Cold War Number One was ...

- 1948: The *Pittsburgh Press* published the names, addresses, and places of employment of about 1,000 citizens who had signed presidential-nominating petitions for former Vice President Henry Wallace, running under the Progressive Party. This, and a number of other lists of “communists,” published in the mainstream media, resulted in people losing their jobs, being expelled from unions, having their children abused, being denied state welfare benefits, and suffering various other punishments.
- Around 1950: The House Committee on Un-American Activities published a pamphlet, “100 Things You Should Know About Communism in the U.S.A.” This included information about what a communist takeover of the United States would mean: ?Q: What would happen to my insurance?? A: It would go to the Communists.? Q: Would communism give me something better than I have now?? A: Not unless you are in a penitentiary serving a life sentence at hard labor.
- 1950s: Mrs. Ada White, member of the Indiana State Textbook Commission, believed that Robin Hood was a Communist and urged that books that told the Robin Hood story be banned from Indiana schools.
- As evidence that anti-communist mania was not limited to the lunatic fringe or conservative newspaper publishers, here is Clark Kerr, president of the University of California at Berkeley in a 1959 speech: “Perhaps 2 or even 20 million people have been killed in China by the new [communist] regime.” One person wrote to Kerr: “I am wondering how you would judge a person who estimates the age of a passerby on the street as being ‘perhaps 2 or even 20 years old.’ Or what would you think of a physician who tells you to take ‘perhaps 2 or even twenty teaspoonsful of a remedy’?”
- Throughout the cold war, traffic in phony Lenin quotes was brisk, each one passed around from one publication or speaker to another for years. Here's *S. News and World Report* in 1958 demonstrating communist duplicity by quoting Lenin: “Promises are like pie crusts, made to be broken.” Secretary of State John Foster Dulles used it in a speech shortly afterward, one of

many to do so during the cold war. Lenin actually did use a very similar line, but he explicitly stated that he was quoting an English proverb (it comes from Jonathan Swift) and his purpose was to show the unreliability of the bourgeoisie, not of communists. "First we will take Eastern Europe, then the masses of Asia, then we will encircle the United States, which will be the last bastion of capitalism. We will not have to attack. It will fall like an overripe fruit into our hands." This Lenin "quotation" had the usual wide circulation, even winding up in the *Congressional Record* in 1962. This was not simply a careless attribution; this was an out-and-out fabrication; an extensive search, including by the Library of Congress and the United States Information Agency failed to find its origin.

- A favorite theme of the anti-communists was that a principal force behind drug trafficking was a communist plot to demoralize the United States. Here's a small sample: Don Keller, District Attorney for San Diego County, California in 1953: "We know that more heroin is being produced south of the border than ever before and we are beginning to hear stories of financial backing by big shot Communists operating out of Mexico City." Henry Giordano, Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 1964, interviewed in the *American Legion Magazine*: Interviewer: "I've been told that the communists are trying to flood our country with narcotics to weaken our moral and physical stamina. Is that true?" Giordano: "As far as the drugs are concerned, it's true. There's a terrific flow of drugs coming out of Yunnan Province of China. ... There's no question that in that particular area this is the aim of the Red Chinese. It should be apparent that if you could addict a population you would degrade a nation's moral fiber." Fulton Lewis, Jr., prominent conservative radio broadcaster and newspaper columnist, 1965: "Narcotics of Cuban origin – marijuana, cocaine, opium, and heroin – are now peddled in big cities and tiny hamlets throughout this country. Several Cubans arrested by the Los Angeles police have boasted they are communists." We were also told that along with drugs another tool of the commies to undermine America's spirit was fluoridation of the water.
- Mickey Spillane was one of the most successful writers of the 1950s, selling millions of his anti-communist thriller mysteries. Here is his hero, Mike Hammer, in "One Lonely Night," boasting of his delight in the grisly murders he commits, all in the name of destroying a communist plot to steal atomic secrets. After a night of carnage, the triumphant Hammer gloats, "I shot them in cold blood and enjoyed every minute of it. I pumped slugs into the nastiest bunch of bastards you ever saw. ... They were Commies. ... Pretty soon what's left of Russia and the slime that breeds there won't be worth mentioning and I'm glad because I had a part in the killing. God, but it was fun!"

- 1952: A campaign against the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) because it was tainted with “atheism and communism,” and was “subversive” because it preached internationalism. Any attempt to introduce an international point of view in the schools was seen as undermining patriotism and loyalty to the United States. A bill in the U.S. Senate, clearly aimed at UNESCO, called for a ban on the funding of “any international agency that directly or indirectly promoted one-world government or world citizenship.” There was also opposition to UNESCO’s association with the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights on the grounds that it was trying to replace the American Bill of Rights with a less liberty-giving covenant of human rights.
- 1955: A U.S. Army 6-page pamphlet, “How to Spot a Communist,” informed us that a communist could be spotted by his predisposition to discuss civil rights, racial and religious discrimination, the immigration laws, anti-subversive legislation, curbs on unions, and peace. Good Americans were advised to keep their ears stretched for such give-away terms as “chauvinism,” “book-burning,” “colonialism,” “demagogy,” “witch hunt,” “reactionary,” “progressive,” and “exploitation.” Another “distinguishing mark” of “Communist language” was a “preference for long sentences.” After some ridicule, the Army rescinded the pamphlet.
- 1958: The noted sportscaster Bill Stern (one of the heroes of my innocent youth) observed on the radio that the lack of interest in “big time” football at New York University, City College of New York, Chicago, and Harvard “is due to the widespread acceptance of Communism at the universities.”
- 1960: U.S. General Thomas Power speaking about nuclear war or a first strike by the U.S.: “The whole idea is to *kill* the bastards! At the end of the war, if there are two Americans and one Russian, we win!” The response from one of those present was: “Well, you’d better make sure that they’re a man and a woman.”
- 1966: The Boys Club of America is of course wholesome and patriotic. Imagine their horror when they were confused with the DuBois Clubs. (W.E.B. Du Bois had been a very prominent civil rights activist.) When the Justice Department required the DuBois Clubs to register as a Communist front group, good loyal Americans knew what to do. They called up the Boys Club to announce that they would no longer contribute any money, or to threaten violence against them; and sure enough an explosion damaged the national headquarters of the youth group in San Francisco. Then former Vice President Richard Nixon, who was national board chairman of the Boys Club, declared: “This is an almost classic example of Communist deception and duplicity. The ‘DuBois Clubs’ are not unaware of the confusion they are causing among our supporters and among many other good citizens.”

- 1966: "Rhythm, Riots and Revolution: An Analysis of the Communist Use of Music, The Communist Master Music Plan," by David A. Noebel, published by Christian Crusade Publications, (expanded version of 1965 pamphlet: "Communism, Hypnotism and the Beatles"). Some chapters: Communist Use of Mind Warfare ... Nature of Red Record Companies ... Destructive Nature of Beatle Music ... Communist Subversion of Folk Music ... Folk Music and the Negro Revolution ... Folk Music and the College Revolution
- 1968: William Calley, U.S. Army Lieutenant, charged with overseeing the massacre of more than 100 Vietnamese civilians in My Lai in 1968, said some years later: "In all my years in the Army I was never taught that communists were human beings. We were there to kill ideology carried by – I don't know – pawns, blobs, pieces of flesh. I was there to destroy communism. We never conceived of old people, men, women, children, babies."
- 1977: Scientists theorized that the earth's protective ozone layer was being damaged by synthetic chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons. The manufacturers and users of CFCs were not happy. They made life difficult for the lead scientist. The president of one aerosol manufacturing firm suggested that criticism of CFCs was "orchestrated by the Ministry of Disinformation of the KGB."
- 1978: Life inside a California youth camp of the ultra anti-communist John Birch Society: Five hours each day of lectures on communism, Americanism and "The Conspiracy"; campers learned that the Soviet government had created a famine and spread a virus to kill a large number of citizens and make the rest of them more manageable; the famine led starving adults to eat their children; communist guerrillas in Southeast Asia jammed chopsticks into children's ears, piercing their eardrums; American movies are all under the control of the Communists; the theme is always that capitalism is no better than communism; you can't find a dictionary now that isn't under communist influence; the communists are also taking over the Bibles.
- The Reagan administration declared that the Russians were spraying toxic chemicals over Laos, Cambodia and Afghanistan – the so-called "yellow rain" – and had caused more than ten thousand deaths by 1982 alone, (including, in Afghanistan, 3,042 deaths attributed to 47 separate incidents between the summer of 1979 and the summer of 1981, so precise was the information). Secretary of State Alexander Haig was a prime dispenser of such stories, and President Reagan himself denounced the Soviet Union thusly more than 15 times in documents and speeches. The "yellow rain," it turned out, was pollen-laden feces dropped by huge swarms of honeybees flying far overhead.
- 1982: In commenting about sexual harassment in the Army, General John Crosby stated that the Army doesn't care about soldiers' social lives – "The basic purpose of the United States Army is to kill Russians," he said.

- 1983: The U.S. invasion of Grenada, the home of the Cuban ambassador is damaged and looted by American soldiers; on one wall is written "AA," symbol of the 82nd Airborne Division; beside it the message: "Eat shit, commie faggot." ... "I want to fuck communism out of this little island," says a marine, "and fuck it right back to Moscow."
- 1984: During a sound check just before his weekly broadcast, President Reagan spoke these words into the microphone: "My fellow Americans, I am pleased to tell you I have signed legislation to outlaw Russia, forever. We begin bombing in five minutes." His words were picked up by at least two radio networks.
- 1985: October 29 BBC interview with Ronald Reagan: asked about the differences he saw between the U.S. and Russia, the President replied: "I'm no linguist, but I've been told that in the Russian language there isn't even a word for freedom." (The word is "svoboda.")
- 1986: Soviet artists and cultural officials criticized Rambo-like American films as an expression of "anti-Russian phobia even more pathological than in the days of McCarthyism." Russian filmmaker Stanislav Rostofsky claimed that on one visit to an American school "a young girl trembled with fury when she heard I was from the Soviet Union, and said she hated Russians."
- 1986: Roy Cohn, who achieved considerable fame and notoriety in the 1950s as an assistant to the communist-witch-hunting Sen. Joseph McCarthy, died, reportedly of AIDS. Cohn, though homosexual, had denied that he was and had denounced such rumors as communist smears.
- 1986: After American journalist Nicholas Daniloff was arrested in Moscow for "spying" and held in custody for two weeks, New York Mayor Edward Koch sent a group of 10 visiting Soviet students storming out of City Hall in fury. "The Soviet government is the pits," said Koch, visibly shocking the students, ranging in age from 10 to 18 years. One 14-year-old student was so outraged he declared: "I don't want to stay in this house. I want to go to the bus and go far away from this place. The mayor is very rude. We never had a worse welcome anywhere." As matters turned out, it appeared that Daniloff had not been completely pure when it came to his newsgathering.
- 1989: After the infamous Chinese crackdown on dissenters in Tiananmen Square in June, the U.S. news media was replete with reports that the governments of Nicaragua, Vietnam and Cuba had expressed their support of the Chinese leadership. Said the *Wall Street Journal*: "Nicaragua, with Cuba and Vietnam, constituted the only countries in the world to approve the Chinese Communists' slaughter of the students in Tiananmen Square." But it was all someone's fabrication; no such support had been expressed by any of the three governments. At that time, as now, there were few, if any, organizations other than the CIA which could manipulate major Western media

in such a manner. [Sources for almost all of this section can be found in William Blum, *Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire* (2005), chapter 12; or the author can be queried at [bblum6@aol.com](mailto:bblum6@aol.com) ]

NOTE: It should be remembered that the worst consequences of anti-communism were not those discussed above. The worst consequences, the ultra-criminal consequences, were the abominable death, destruction, and violation of human rights that we know under various names: Vietnam, Chile, Korea, Guatemala, Cambodia, Indonesia, Brazil, Greece, Afghanistan, El Salvador, and many others.

**William Blum is an author, historian, and renowned critic of U.S. foreign policy. He is the author of *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* and *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*, among others. [This article originally appeared at the Anti-Empire Report, <https://williamblum.org/> .]**

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## The Tangled Threads of Russia-gate

**Exclusive:** Once a Washington groupthink takes hold, as it has in the fervent belief about Russia-gate, respect for facts and logic fly out the window since all these important people can't be wrong, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

A curious feature about the Russia-gate "scandal" is that its proponents ignore the growing number of moments when their evidence undercuts their narrative. Instead, they press ahead toward a predetermined destination in much the way that true-believing conspiracy theorists are known to do.

For instance, The New York Times ran a story on Monday, entitled "Operative Offered Trump Campaign Access to Putin," detailing how a conservative operative "told a Trump adviser that he could arrange a back-channel meeting between Donald J. Trump and Vladimir V. Putin, the Russian president, according to an email sent to the Trump campaign" – and apparently described to the Times by a helpful source on Capitol Hill.

The Times quoted the email from National Rifle Association member Paul Erickson to Trump campaign adviser Rick Dearborn as saying, "Putin is deadly serious about building a good relationship with Mr. Trump. ... [Putin] wants to extend an invitation to Mr. Trump to visit him in the Kremlin before the election."

An NRA conference in Louisville, Kentucky, was supposed to be the location for the “first contact” between the Russians and the Trump campaign, according to the email.

The Times treated its new information as further confirmation of nefarious connections between the Trump campaign and the Russian government. Immediately after introducing this May 2016 email, which had the subject line, “Kremlin Connection,” the Times reprised the background of former FBI Director Robert Mueller conducting a special-prosecutor investigation into “Russian interference in the election and possible collusion with the Trump campaign.”

Note how the Times’ reference to “Russian interference” was treated as flat fact although the Times still hedges on “possible collusion” between the Kremlin and the Trump campaign. Like much of the U.S. mainstream media, the Times no longer bothers to use “alleged” in front of “Russian interference” even though no solid evidence of a coordinated Kremlin effort has been presented.

But there is a bigger problem with this “scoop”: If the Russia-gate narrative were correct – that the Kremlin had identified Trump years earlier as a likely U.S. president and undertook a multi-year campaign to bribe and blackmail him to be Moscow’s Manchurian candidate or Putin’s “puppet” as Hillary Clinton charged – the Russians wouldn’t need some little-known “conservative operative” to serve as an intermediary in May 2016 to set up a back-channel meeting.

### **The Contradiction**

In other words, assuming that the Times’ story is correct, the email suggests the opposite of the impression that the Times wants its readers to get. The email is either meaningless in that it led to no actual meeting or it contradicts the storyline about a longstanding Russian operation to plant a patsy in the White House.

Times reporter Nicholas Fandos noted that it was unclear what Dearborn did in response to this overture, although the Times reported that Dearborn had forwarded a similar proposal by Christian conservative activist Rick Clay to Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner, who rebuffed the offer.

On Monday, I read the rest of the Times email story looking for some acknowledgement of the problems with its implied scenario, but found none. Fandos made references to other low-level efforts by Russians to make contact with Trump’s advisers (without noticeable success, I might add), but again these examples actually run counter to the image of Trump as the Kremlin’s prized chump.

If Putin had several years ago foreseen what no one else did – that Trump would



become the U.S. president – then these ad hoc contacts with members of Trump’s entourage in 2016 would not have been needed.

The Times’ scoop parallels the story of the plea deal that Russia-gate prosecutors struck with low-level Trump foreign policy adviser George Papadopoulos who admitted lying about his contacts with an obscure academic in Stirling, Scotland, who supposedly offered to be another intermediary between Trump’s team and the Kremlin.

According to court documents, Papadopoulos, a 30-year-old campaign aide, got to know a professor of international relations who claimed to have “substantial connections with Russian government officials,” with the professor identified in press reports as Joseph Mifsud, who is associated with the University of Stirling.

The first contact between Mifsud and Papadopoulos supposedly occurred in mid-March 2016 in Italy, with a second meeting in London on March 24 when the professor purportedly introduced Papadopoulos to a Russian woman whom the young campaign aide believed to be Putin’s niece, an assertion that Mueller’s investigators determined wasn’t true.

Trump, who then was under pressure for not having a foreign policy team, included Papadopoulos as part of a list drawn up to fill that gap, and Papadopoulos participated in a campaign meeting on March 31 in Washington at which he suggested a meeting between Trump and Putin, a prospect that other senior aides reportedly slapped down.

In other words, at least based on the reporting about the Dearborn email and the Papadopoulos overture, there is no reason to believe that Trump was colluding with Moscow or had any significant relationship at all.

If these developments point to anything, it is to the opposite; that Russia was fishing for some contacts with what – however implausibly – was starting to look like a possible future U.S. president, but with whom they were not well-connected.

### **Gotcha Moments**

There have been similar problems with other Russia-gate “gotcha” moments, such as disclosures of a possible Trump hotel deal in Moscow with Mikhail Fridman of Russia’s Alfa Bank. Though Trump’s presumed financial tie-ins to Russian oligarchs close to Putin were supposed to be fundamental to the Russia-gate narrative, the outcome of the hotel deal turned out to be a big nothing.

One source knowledgeable about the proposed deal told me it fell apart because

Trump was willing to put little on the table beyond the branding value of the Trump name. However, if Putin were actually trying to buy Trump's loyalty, money presumably would have been no obstacle. Indeed, you would think that the more money used to line Trump's pockets the better. But the hotel deal collapsed; there is no Trump hotel in Moscow.

Other Russia-gate cases are equally disconnected from what had been the original narrative about senior Russians spending years cultivating Trump as their Manchurian candidate.

The accusations against Trump's onetime campaign chief Paul Manafort focus on his alleged failure to report income from – and pay taxes on – work that he did for the elected government of Ukraine before any involvement in the Trump campaign.

Last week's guilty plea from former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn related to purportedly false statements and omissions that he made when questioned by FBI agents about calls to Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak during the transition, i.e., after Trump had been elected.

Despite the breathless coverage on MSNBC and the Times' excited headlines about how the "inquiry grows," there remain other core problems for the narrative. No matter how often the U.S. mainstream media asserts the suspicion of Russian "hacking" of Democratic emails as flat fact, no solid proof has yet been presented – and the claim has been denied by both the Russian government and WikiLeaks, which published the key emails.

### **Sleight of Hand**

The Times and other mainstream media outlets play their sleight of hand on this key point by asserting that "U.S. intelligence agencies" have "concluded" that Russian intelligence services "hacked" the emails from the Democratic National Committee and Clinton's campaign chief John Podesta, but that summary ignores the specifics.

First of all, by using this summary of the facts, the Times and other outlets continue to give the false impression that all 17 U.S. intelligence agencies concurred in the conclusion, a false claim that Hillary Clinton and the mainstream press have asserted over and over, although it is now clear that no such consensus ever existed.

Former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper testified that the Jan. 6 report on alleged Russian interference was produced by "hand-picked" analysts from only three organizations: the FBI, CIA and National Security Agency.

And, even those “hand-picked” analysts stipulated that they were not asserting Russian guilt as fact but only as their best guess. They included the disclaimer: “Judgments are not intended to imply that we have proof that shows something to be a fact. Assessments are based on collected information, which is often incomplete or fragmentary, as well as logic, argumentation, and precedents.”

Even New York Times reporter Scott Shane initially noted the absence of evidence, writing: “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. ... Instead, the message from the agencies essentially amounts to ‘trust us.’”

Former senior U.S. intelligence officials, including the NSA’s ex-technical director William Binney, have raised further doubts about whether a “hack” occurred. Binney conducted tests on download speeds and determined that the extraction of one known batch of Democratic emails was not possible over the Internet, but did match the speed of a USB download onto a thumb drive, suggesting a leak from a Democratic insider.

So, rather than the many disparate strings of Russia-gate coming neatly together more than a year after last year’s election, the various threads either are becoming hopelessly tangled or flying off in different directions.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in print here or as an e-book (from Amazon and barnesandnoble.com).**

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## Edward R. Murrow’s Timeless Warnings

As the Russia-gate hysteria expands, it is coming to resemble the McCarthyism of the 1950s, except this time liberals and progressives are promoting the insidious “guilt by association,” as Michael Milillo describes.

By Michael Milillo

Does the American government requiring “RT America” – a Russian news organization – to register as a foreign agent under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) constitute censorship by the government?

If registration in this context is NOT censorship as many latter-day “liberal” McCarthyites contend, then Americans should NOT be afraid to appear on “RT America” as commentators presenting their opinions which may be different from the current narratives that are being propagated by the mainstream media across the United States.

But Americans will be afraid to appear due to “Guilt by Association,” which in its current form is being used to suggest that any Russian who happens to be attending the same social event as President Trump is therefore proof that Trump is a Russian collaborator. Thus, by extrapolation, “Guilt by Association” will be used to denounce any American who appears on “RT America” and presents a narrative that conflicts with the narrative being broadcast by the mainstream media.

The mainstream media will immediately indict that American commentator as a “Russian agent” – or at least that will be the reasonable fear – and thus other Americans will be prevented from listening to and/or reading these alternative opinions – and that amounts to censorship.

Some mainstream media outlets have already censored stories when the analyses conflict with the current liberal narrative for what caused Hillary Clinton to lose to Donald Trump in the November 2016 elections. That narrative is that Hillary Clinton was defeated due to the Russian government hacking into the computer servers at the Democratic National Committee, i.e., “Russia-gate.”

Some liberal web sites now are censoring material that conflicts with this Russia-gate narrative. Case in point is an article written by HuffPost’s contributor Joe Lauria entitled [“On The Origins of Russia-gate.”](#)

One day after Lauria posted his article on the “HuffPost” web site, the “HuffPost” editorial staff deleted – censored – the article, citing supposed factual errors. However, the editors did not attempt to contact Lauria before the deletion or to discuss with Lauria what facts he used in his article that were deemed false or misleading. His real offense appears to have been that the story raised doubts about the current narrative accepting the certainty of Russian “meddling” in the 2016 election.

Although some have argued that “HuffPost” has the right to censor material published on its web site, the “HuffPost” readers should NOT be involved in that determination (without at least the author getting a chance to provide a defense). That is censorship by “Mob Rule.”

### **McCarthyite Blacklists**

To further explain what censorship looks like, watch the [“70th Year](#)

Commemoration of the Hollywood Blacklist" on C-Span. The commemoration cites the statements or the testimonies of the "Blacklisted" entertainers who appeared before the "House Un-American Activities Committee" [HUAC] in 1947.

If today's liberals are infuriated by the 1947 proceedings of HUAC and the McCarthyism that challenged the patriotism of Americans, then these liberals should NOT be in favor of today's censorship either. What HUAC and McCarthyism did was to make Americans fearful of being called "Un-American" just because their opinions or politics were different from what either HUAC or Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy said they should be.

Beyond that, Americans came to shun neighbors, fellow workers, and acquaintances – in order to protect themselves from ending up on the "Blacklist" – because you didn't know who might be accused or might be pressured to make accusations, such as the case of director Elia Kazan.

As "RT America" has been accused by the American government to "speak in the U.S. on behalf of a foreign government" – Russia, therefore "RT America" must register under FARA. But the BBC "speaks in the U.S. on behalf of a foreign government" – the United Kingdom. Then why hasn't the American government requested that the BBC register as well under NARA as "RT America" was forced to do under protest?

Is it because the BBC has accepted without question the dominant narratives of the U.S. mainstream media in the BBC's reporting of the news? Unlike the BBC, "RT America" has allowed alternative opinions to be heard by its audience rather than stringently following the mainstream media's narratives.

There are some liberals who argue that "RT America" is a tool used by the Russian government to disseminate Russian propaganda. But Americans who have appeared on "RT America" present their own alternative opinions, NOT the opinions of the Russian government.

If you think the U.S. government requiring "RT America" to register as a foreign agent is NOT censorship, then you have NOT heard of "The Case of Milo Radulovich." When Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy was looking for communists employed by the U.S. government, he supposedly found one such person in Milo Radulovich, a Lieutenant in the Air Force Reserve.

In 1953, Air Force regulation 35-62 stated, "A man may be regarded as a security risk if he has close and continuing associations with communists or people believed to have communist sympathies."

When Lieutenant Radulovich refused to resign from the Air Force as he did nothing wrong, a special Board "recommended that Radulovich be severed from the

Air Force” despite the fact that the board never questioned the loyalty of Lieutenant Radulovich.

Radulovich was an easy target because his father “subscribed to several Serbian newspapers, one of which was classified as Communist by the US government.” And as his sister supported liberal causes, she was declared to be a communist sympathizer.

With this “Guilt By Association” in mind, CBS correspondent Edward R. Murrow said, “We believe that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, even though that iniquity be proved, and in this case it was not.”

As an archive of Edward R. Murrow’s work noted, “Not only were the witch hunts affecting the military, Hollywood, government, and academia, this case proved that the average guy can be targeted.”

### **Murrow’s Lament**

During the broadcast of “See It Now” on March 9, 1954 by CBS TV, Edward R. Murrow said: “We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We must remember always that accusation is not proof and that conviction depends upon evidence and due process of law. We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason, if we dig deep in our history and our doctrine, and remember that we are not descended from fearful men – not from men who feared to write, to speak, to associate and to defend causes that were, for the moment, unpopular.

“We can deny our heritage and our history, but we cannot escape responsibility for the result. There is no way for a citizen of a republic to abdicate his responsibilities. As a nation we have come into our full inheritance at a tender age. We proclaim ourselves, as indeed we are, the defenders of freedom, wherever it continues to exist in the world, but we cannot defend freedom abroad by deserting it at home.”

Putting what Murrow said into perspective as it relates to “RT America,” both the U.S. government and many liberals are now using the same tactic of “Guilt By Association” by insinuating that “RT America” is a Russian news organization and thus must be a puppet of the Russian government without providing any proof to support that accusation.

Murrow’s comment is just as relevant today as it was back in 1954. Perhaps even more so because liberals are supposed to be the good guys.

[For more on this topic, see Consortiumnews.com’s “Russia-gate Breeds Establishment McCarthyism.”]

Michael Milillo, who lives in Pennsylvania, is a retiree with a background in accounting and finance.

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## The Scalp-Taking of Gen. Flynn

**Exclusive:** The Russia-gate prosecutors have taken the scalp of ex- National Security Adviser (and retired Lt. Gen.) Flynn for lying to the FBI. But this case shows how dangerously far afield this “scandal” has gone, reports Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Russia-gate enthusiasts are thrilled over the guilty plea of President Trump’s former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn for lying to the FBI about pre-inauguration conversations with the Russian ambassador, but the case should alarm true civil libertarians.

What is arguably most disturbing about this case is that then-National Security Adviser Flynn was pushed into a perjury trap by Obama administration holdovers at the Justice Department who concocted an unorthodox legal rationale for subjecting Flynn to an FBI interrogation four days after he took office, testing Flynn’s recollection of the conversations while the FBI agents had transcripts of the calls intercepted by the National Security Agency.

In other words, the Justice Department wasn’t seeking information about what Flynn said to Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak – the intelligence agencies already had that information. Instead, Flynn was being quizzed on his precise recollection of the conversations and nailed for lying when his recollections deviated from the transcripts.

For Americans who worry about how the pervasive surveillance powers of the U.S. government could be put to use criminalizing otherwise constitutionally protected speech and political associations, Flynn’s prosecution represents a troubling precedent.

Though Flynn clearly can be faulted for his judgment, he was, in a sense, a marked man the moment he accepted the job of national security adviser. In summer 2016, Democrats seethed over Flynn’s participation in chants at the Republican National Convention to “lock her [Hillary Clinton] up!”

Then, just four days into the Trump presidency, an Obama holdover, then-acting

Attorney General Sally Yates, primed the Flynn perjury trap by coming up with a novel legal theory that Flynn – although the national security adviser-designate at the time of his late December phone calls with Kislyak – was violating the 1799 Logan Act, which prohibits private citizens from interfering with U.S. foreign policy.

But that law – passed during President John Adams’s administration in the era of the Alien and Sedition Acts – was never intended to apply to incoming officials in the transition period between elected presidential administrations and – in the past 218 years – the law has resulted in no successful prosecution at all and thus its dubious constitutionality has never been adjudicated.

### **Stretching Logic**

But Yates extrapolated from her unusual Logan Act theory to speculate that since Flynn’s publicly known explanation of the conversation with Kislyak deviated somewhat from the transcript of the intercepts, Flynn might be vulnerable to Russian blackmail.

Yet, that bizarre speculation would require that the Russians first would have detected the discrepancies; secondly, they would have naively assumed that the U.S. intelligence agencies had not intercepted the conversations, which would have negated any blackmail potential; and thirdly, the Russians would have to do something so ridiculously heavy-handed – trying to blackmail Flynn – that it would poison relations with the new Trump administration.

Yates’s legal theorizing was so elastic and speculative that it could be used to justify subjecting almost anyone to FBI interrogation with the knowledge that their imperfect memories would guarantee the grounds for prosecution based on NSA intercepts of their communications.

Basically, the Obama holdovers concocted a preposterous legal theory to do whatever they could to sabotage the Trump administration, which they held in fulsome disdain.

At the time of Flynn’s interrogation, the Justice Department was under the control of Yates and the FBI was still under President Obama’s FBI Director James Comey, another official hostile to the Trump administration who later was fired by Trump.

The Yates-FBI perjury trap also was sprung on Flynn in the first days of the Trump presidency amid reverberations of the massive anti-Trump protests that had arisen across the country in support of demands for a “#Resistance” to Trump’s rule.



Flynn also had infuriated Democrats when he joined in chants at the Republican National Convention of “lock her up” over Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton’s use of a private email server and other alleged offenses. So, in targeting Flynn, there was a mix of personal payback and sabotage against the Trump administration.

### **The Legal Construct**

The two-page complaint against Flynn, made public on Friday, references false statements to the FBI regarding two conversations with Kisylak, one on Dec. 22, 2016, and the other on Dec. 29, 2016.

The first item in the complaint alleges that Flynn did not disclose that he had asked the Russian ambassador to help delay or defeat a United Nations Security Council vote censuring Israel for building settlements on Palestinian territory.

The New York Times reported on Friday that Russia-gate investigators “learned through witnesses and documents that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu asked the Trump transition team to lobby other countries to help Israel, according to two people briefed on the inquiry.

“Investigators have learned that Mr. Flynn and Mr. Trump’s son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, took the lead in those efforts. Mr. Mueller’s team has emails that show Mr. Flynn saying he would work to kill the vote, the people briefed on the matter said,” according to the Times.

Breaking with past U.S. precedents, President Obama had decided not to veto the resolution criticizing Israel, choosing instead to abstain. However, the censure resolution carried with Russian support, meaning that whatever lobbying Flynn and Kushner undertook was unsuccessful.

But the inclusion of this Israeli element shows how far afield the criminal Russia-gate investigation, headed by former FBI Director Robert Mueller, has gone. Though the original point of the inquiry was whether the Trump team colluded with Russians to use “hacked” emails to defeat Hillary Clinton’s campaign, the criminal charge against Flynn has nothing to do with election “collusion” but rather President-elect Trump’s aides weighing in on foreign policy controversies during the transition. And, the first initiative was undertaken at the request of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, not Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The second item, cited by Mueller’s prosecutors, referenced a Dec. 29 Flynn-Kisylak conversation, which received public attention at the time of Flynn’s Feb. 13 resignation after only 24 days on the job. That phone call touched on Russia’s response to President Obama’s decision to issue new sanctions against

the Kremlin for the alleged election interference.

The complaint alleges that Flynn didn't mention to the FBI that he had urged Kislyak "to refrain from escalating the situation" and that Kislyak had subsequently told him that "Russia had chosen to moderate its response to those sanctions as a result of his request."

The Dec. 29 phone call occurred while Flynn was vacationing in the Dominican Republic and thus he would have been without the usual support staff for memorializing or transcribing official conversations. So, the FBI agents, with the NSA's transcripts, would have had a clearer account of what was said than Flynn likely had from memory. The content of Flynn's request to Kislyak also appears rather uncontroversial, asking the Russians not to overreact to a punitive policy from the outgoing Obama administration.

In other words, both of the Flynn-Kislyak conversations appear rather unsurprising, if not inconsequential. One was taken at the behest of Israel (which proved ineffective) and the other urged the Kremlin to show restraint in its response to a last-minute slap from President Obama (which simply delayed Russian retaliation by several months).

### **Double Standards**

While Flynn's humiliation has brought some palpable joy to the anti-Trump "Resistance" – one more Trump aide being taken down amid renewed hope that this investigation will somehow lead to Trump's resignation or impeachment – many of the same people would be howling about trampled civil liberties if a Republican bureaucracy were playing this game on a Democratic president and his staff.

Indeed, in the turnabout-is-fair-play department, there is some equivalence in what is happening over Russia-gate to what the Republicans did in the 1990s exploiting their control of the special-prosecutor apparatus in the first years of Bill Clinton's presidency when interminable investigations into such side issues as his Whitewater real-estate deal and the firing of the White House travel office staff plagued the Clinton administration.

Similarly, Republicans seized on the deaths of four U.S. diplomatic personnel on Sept. 11, 2012, in Benghazi, Libya, to conduct a series of lengthy investigations to tarnish Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's tenure and raise questions about her judgment. Democrats understandably called these attacks partisan warfare in legal or investigative garb.

What I have heard from many Hillary Clinton supporters in recent months is that they don't care about the unfairness of the Russia-gate process or the dangerous precedents that such politicized prosecutions might set. They simply view Trump

as such a danger that he must be destroyed at whatever the cost.

Yet, besides the collateral damage inflicted on mid-level government officials such as retired Lt. Gen. Flynn facing personal destruction at the hands of federal prosecutors with unlimited budgets, there is this deepening pattern of using criminal law to settle political differences, a process more common in authoritarian states.

As much as the Russia-gate enthusiasts talk about how they are upholding “the rule of law,” there is the troubling appearance that the law is simply being used to collect the scalps of political enemies.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).**

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## Russia-gate Inquisitors Subpoena Journalist

The Russia-gate frenzy is reaching into the ranks of non-mainstream journalists with the House Intelligence Committee’s subpoena of Pacifica’s Randy Credico, who compares this witch-hunt to the McCarthy era, reports Dennis J Bernstein.

By Dennis J Bernstein

The House Intelligence Committee, as part of its Russia-gate investigation, has issued a subpoena demanding the testimony of journalist-activist-and-satirist Randy Credico presumably because he produced a series on WikiLeaks founder and editor Julian Assange, who oversaw the publication of leaked Democratic Party emails in 2016.

“Joe McCarthy is back,” said Credico, who traced the committee’s actions “to my 14- part series on Assange, ‘Julian Assange: Countdown to Freedom,’ which includes Wikileaks founder, Julian Assange, his mom, and some of the most significant U.S. government intelligence agency whistle blowers in modern history. They [the Russia-gate investigators] also abhor my recent visits with Assange [at the Ecuadorian embassy in London], where he is still in exile after five and a half years.”

Credico, a journalistic contributor to the Flashpoints program on Pacifica

Radio, was served the subpoena through his lawyer Martin Stolar in New York City. The subpoena was dated Nov. 27 and followed a request for Credico's "voluntary" testimony that he rebuffed. The subpoena demands Credico's appearance on Capitol Hill on Dec. 15.

A letter dated Nov. 9 from Rep. Adam Schiff, the ranking Democrat on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, in effect, demanded Credico's "voluntary" cooperation with the panel's "bipartisan investigation into Russian active measures directed at the 2016 US election."

Schiff also requested "the preservation and production of all documents, records, electronically-stored information, recordings, data and tangible things, including but not limited to graphs, charts, photographs, images and other documents, regardless of form other than those widely available (e.g. newspaper articles) related to the committee's investigation, your interview and any ancillary matters."

Credico told the Flashpoints show that he would not give testimony voluntarily and, if subpoenaed, he would not cooperate with the House Intelligence Committee's Russia-gate investigation. His lawyer informed the committee of Credico's position and was told that Credico would receive a subpoena to compel his testimony.

I spoke with Credico in New York City on the morning of Nov. 27 before the subpoena arrived.

Dennis Bernstein: I am looking at a letter dated Nov. 9, 2017. It says, "Dear Mr. Credico, as part of its bipartisan investigation into Russian active measures directed at the 2016 US election, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence requires that you participate in a voluntary, transcribed interview at the committee offices." What is this letter about and what is your response?

Randy Credico: I have no idea what they want from me specifically. I did a 14-part series on Julian Assange.

Dennis Bernstein: I want to read a little more from this letter. It says, "We respectfully ask that you produce to the committee by no later than November 24 your availability for the interview during the time identified above." You're not going, are you?

Randy Credico: I have declined to voluntarily testify. The counsel for the committee told my lawyer that I would be subpoenaed.

Dennis Bernstein: Will you respond to a subpoena?

Randy Credico: I am very reluctant to give credence to a broad-based witch hunt such as this.

Dennis Bernstein: Let me read on: "This letter also requests preservation and production of all documents, records, electronically-stored information, recordings, data and tangible things, including but not limited to graphs, charts, photographs, images and other documents, regardless of form other than those widely available (e.g. newspaper articles) related to the committee's investigation, your interview and any ancillary matters."

Randy Credico: It certainly sounds like a form letter. Look, I don't like Trump anymore than anyone else. There are ways that they can get him legally, but to use this Russia-gate thing is a false premise. They are throwing the net too wide and they are spending a lot of money on this. Meanwhile, people are being deported to Haiti, to El Salvador, we're not taking care of business in Puerto Rico. We have this new tax bill which is about to destroy the middle class and the poor. We have two and a half million people in prison. These are the issues they should be talking about in Congress, but they are not.

Look, they have yet to request an interview with Julian Assange. They know they are not going to get anything that is satisfactory to them and that this would force their hand.

Dennis Bernstein: We depended on you, Randy, to report on the New York Police Department during very violent times. You made the current mayor of New York swear that he would put an end to stop-and-frisk.

Randy Credico: I hope I got the word out not only about stop-and-frisk but about the horrible criminal justice system in New York City. This is the Deep South. We always focus on Alabama and Mississippi but the same thing goes on here. The judges are 95% white and the prosecutors are 95% white and mostly male. When I ran for governor I focused on Attica and Sing-Sing and all these other dungeons that should be closed. I learned a lot from Bill Kunstler about focusing on where you can be impactful.

Dennis Bernstein: Why have you devoted so much time to Julian Assange's story?

Randy Credico: It would be the same thing if they were trying to snuff your voice out. This man is an important journalist. A lot of journalists in the corporate media have abandoned him. He has suffered so much, his family has suffered, he hasn't been able to see his kids for five years. And yet he continues to publish, even in his present circumstances.

Dennis Bernstein: Finally, what is the significance of this kind of congressional witch hunt?

Randy Credico: This is a replay of the 1950s, of the Palmer Raids earlier. This is a very significant moment. A person can still be blacklisted. And it is being done by Democrats! What bothers me most is the fact that you have people from the intelligence community who get to testify publicly and without challenge. People like me have to do it privately.

Dennis J Bernstein is a host of "Flashpoints" on the Pacifica radio network and the author of Special Ed: Voices from a Hidden Classroom. You can access the audio archives at www.flashpoints.net.

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## The Lost Journalistic Standards of Russia-gate

**Exclusive:** The Russia-gate hysteria has witnessed a widespread collapse of journalistic standards as major U.S. news outlets ignore rules about how to treat evidence in dispute, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

A danger in both journalism and intelligence is to allow an unproven or seriously disputed fact to become part of the accepted narrative where it gets widely repeated and thus misleads policymakers and citizens alike, such as happened during the run-up to war with Iraq and is now recurring amid the frenzy over Russia-gate.

For instance, in a Russia-gate story on Saturday, The New York Times reported as flat fact that a Kremlin intermediary "told a Trump campaign aide, George Papadopoulos, that the Russians had 'dirt' on Mr. Trump's rival, Hillary Clinton, in the form of 'thousands of emails.'" The Times apparently feels that this claim no longer needs attribution even though it apparently comes solely from the 32-year-old Papadopoulos as part of his plea bargain over lying to the FBI.

Beyond the question of trusting an admitted liar like Papadopoulos, his supposed Kremlin contact, professor Joseph Mifsud, a little-known academic associated with the University of Stirling in Scotland, denied knowing anything about Democratic emails.

In an interview with the U.K. Daily Telegraph, Mifsud acknowledged meeting with

Papadopoulos but disputed having close ties to the Kremlin and rejected how Papadopoulos recounted their conversations. Specifically, he denied the claim that he mentioned emails containing “dirt” on Clinton.

Even New York Times correspondent Scott Shane noted late last month – after the criminal complaint against Papadopoulos was unsealed – that “A crucial detail is still missing: Whether and when Mr. Papadopoulos told senior Trump campaign officials about Russia’s possession of hacked emails. And it appears that the young aide’s quest for a deeper connection with Russian officials, while he aggressively pursued it, led nowhere.”

Shane added, “the court documents describe in detail how Mr. Papadopoulos continued to report to senior campaign officials on his efforts to arrange meetings with Russian officials, ... the documents do not say explicitly whether, and to whom, he passed on his most explosive discovery – that the Russians had what they considered compromising emails on Mr. Trump’s opponent.

“J.D. Gordon, a former Pentagon official who worked for the Trump campaign as a national security adviser [and who dealt directly with Papadopoulos] said he had known nothing about Mr. Papadopoulos’ discovery that Russia had obtained Democratic emails or of his prolonged pursuit of meetings with Russians.”

### **Missing Corroboration**

But the journalistic question is somewhat different: why does the Times trust the uncorroborated assertion that Mifsud told Papadopoulos about the emails – and trust the claim to such a degree that the newspaper would treat it as flat fact? Absent corroborating evidence, isn’t it just as likely (if not more likely) that Papadopoulos is telling the prosecutors what he thinks they want to hear?

If the prosecutors working for Russia-gate independent counsel Robert Mueller had direct evidence that Mifsud did tell Papadopoulos about the emails, you would assume that they would have included the proof in the criminal filing against Papadopoulos, which was made public on Oct. 30.

Further, since Papadopoulos was peppering the Trump campaign with news about his Russian outreach in 2016, you might have expected that he would include something about how helpful the Russians had been in obtaining and publicizing the Democratic emails.

But none of Papadopoulos’s many emails to Trump campaign officials about his Russian contacts (as cited by the prosecutors) mentioned the hot news about “dirt” on Clinton or the Russians possessing “thousands of emails.” This lack of back-up would normally raise serious doubts about Papadopoulos’s claim, but –

since Papadopoulos was claiming something that the prosecutors and the Times wanted to believe – reasonable skepticism was swept aside.

What the Times seems to have done is to accept a bald assertion by Mueller's prosecutors as sufficient basis for jumping to the conclusion that this disputed claim is undeniably true. But just because Papadopoulos, a confessed liar, and these self-interested prosecutors claim something is true doesn't make it true.

Careful journalists would wonder, as Shane did, why Papadopoulos who in 2016 was boasting of his Russian contacts to make himself appear more valuable to the Trump campaign wouldn't have informed someone about this juicy tidbit of information, that the Russians possessed "thousands of emails" on Clinton.

Yet, the prosecutors' statement regarding Papadopoulos's guilty plea is strikingly silent on corroborating evidence that could prove that, first, Russia did possess the Democratic emails (which Russian officials deny) and, second, the Trump campaign was at least knowledgeable about this core fact in the support of the theory about the campaign's collusion with the Russians (which President Trump and other campaign officials deny).

Of course, it could be that the prosecutors' "fact" will turn out to be a fact as more evidence emerges, but anyone who has covered court cases or served on a jury knows that prosecutors' criminal complaints and pre-trial statements should be taken with a large grain of salt. Prosecutors often make assertions based on the claim of a single witness whose credibility gets destroyed when subjected to cross-examination.

That is why reporters are usually careful to use words like "alleged" in dealing with prosecutors' claims that someone is guilty. However, in Russia-gate, all the usual standards of proof and logic have been jettisoned. If something serves the narrative, no matter how dubious, it is embraced by the U.S. mainstream media, which – for the past year – has taken a lead role in the anti-Trump "Resistance."

## **A History of Bias**

This tendency to succumb to "confirmation bias," i.e., to believe the worst about some demonized figure, has inflicted grave damage in other recent situations as well.

One example is described in the Senate Intelligence Committee's 2006 study of the false intelligence that undergirded the case for invading Iraq in 2003. That inquiry discovered that previously discredited WMD claims kept reemerging in finished U.S. intelligence analyses as part of the case for believing that Iraq was hiding WMD.



In the years before the Iraq invasion, the U.S. government had provided tens of millions of dollars to Iraqi exiles in the Iraqi National Congress, and the INC, in turn, produced a steady stream of “walk-ins” who claimed to be Iraqi government “defectors” with knowledge about Saddam Hussein’s secret WMD programs.

Some U.S. intelligence analysts – though faced with White House pressure to accept this “evidence” – did their jobs honestly and exposed a number of the “defectors” as paid liars, including one, who was identified in the Senate report as “Source Two,” who talked about Iraq supposedly building mobile biological weapons labs.

CIA analysts caught Source Two in contradictions and issued a “fabrication notice” in May 2002, deeming him “a fabricator/provocateur” and asserting that he had “been coached by the Iraqi National Congress prior to his meeting with western intelligence services.”

But the Defense Intelligence Agency never repudiated the specific reports that were based on Source Two’s debriefings. Source Two also continued to be cited in five CIA intelligence assessments and the pivotal National Intelligence Estimate in October 2002, “as corroborating other source reporting about a mobile biological weapons program,” the Senate Intelligence Committee report said.

Thus, Source Two became one of four human sources referred to by Secretary of State Colin Powell in his United Nations speech on Feb. 5, 2003, making the case that Iraq was lying when it insisted that it had ended its WMD programs. (The infamous “Curve Ball” was another of these dishonest sources.)

### **Losing the Thread**

After the U.S. invasion and the failure to find the WMD caches, a CIA analyst who worked on Powell’s speech was asked how a known “fabricator” (Source Two) could have been used for such an important address by a senior U.S. government official. The analyst responded, “we lost the thread of concern as time progressed I don’t think we remembered.”

A CIA supervisor added, “Clearly we had it at one point, we understood, we had concerns about the source, but over time it started getting used again and there really was a loss of corporate awareness that we had a problem with the source.”

In other words, like today’s Russia-gate hysteria, the Iraq-WMD groupthink had spread so widely across U.S. government agencies and the U.S. mainstream media that standard safeguards against fake evidence were discarded. People in Official Washington, for reasons of careerism and self-interest, saw advantages in running with the Iraq-WMD pack and recognized the dangers of jumping in front

of the stampeding herd to raise doubts about Iraq's WMD.

Back then, the personal risk to salary and status came from questioning the Iraq-WMD groupthink because there was always the possibility that Saddam Hussein indeed was hiding WMD and, if so, you'd be forever branded as a "Saddam apologist"; while there were few if any personal risks to agreeing with all those powerful people that Iraq had WMD, even if that judgment turned out to be disastrously wrong.

Sure, American soldiers and the people of Iraq would pay a terrible price, but your career likely would be safe, a calculation that proved true for people like Fred Hiatt, the editorial-page editor of The Washington Post who repeatedly reported Iraq's WMD as flat fact and today remains the editorial-page editor of The Washington Post.

Similarly, Official Washington's judgment now is that there is no real downside to joining the Resistance to Trump, who is widely viewed as a buffoon, unfit to be President of the United States. So, any means to remove him are seen by many Important People as justified – and the Russian allegations seem to be the weightiest rationale for his impeachment or forced resignation.

Professionally, it is much riskier to insist on unbiased standards of evidence regarding Trump and Russia. You'll just stir up a lot of angry questions about why are you "defending Trump." You'll be called a "Trump enabler" and/or a "Kremlin stooge."

However, basing decisions on dubious information carries its own dangers for the nation and the world. Not only do the targets end up with legitimate grievances about being railroaded – and not only does this prejudicial treatment undermine faith in the fairness of democratic institutions – but falsehoods can become the basis for wider policies that can unleash wars and devastation.

We saw the horrific outcome of the Iraq War, but the risks of hostilities with nuclear-armed Russia are far graver; indeed, billions of people could die and human civilization end. With stakes so high, The New York Times and Mueller's prosecutors owe the public better than treating questionable accusations as flat fact.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in print here or as an e-book (from Amazon and barnesandnoble.com).**

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# Russia-gate Spreads to Europe

**Exclusive:** The Russia-gate hysteria has jumped the Atlantic with Europeans blaming Russia for Brexit and Catalonian discontent. But what about Israeli influence operations or, for that matter, American ones, asks Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Ever since the U.S. government dangled \$160 million last December to combat Russian propaganda and disinformation, obscure academics and eager think tanks have been lining up for a shot at the loot, an unseemly rush to profit that is spreading the Russia-gate hysteria beyond the United States to Europe.

Now, it seems that every development, which is unwelcomed by the Establishment – from Brexit to the Catalonia independence referendum – gets blamed on Russia! Russia! Russia!

The methodology of these “studies” is to find some Twitter accounts or Facebook pages somehow “linked” to Russia (although it’s never exactly clear how that is determined) and complain about the “Russian-linked” comments on political developments in the West. The assumption is that the gullible people of the United States, United Kingdom and Catalonia were either waiting for some secret Kremlin guidance to decide how to vote or were easily duped.

Oddly, however, most of this alleged “interference” seems to have come *after* the event in question. For instance, more than half (56 percent) of the famous \$100,000 in Facebook ads in 2015-2017 supposedly to help elect Donald Trump came *after* last year’s U.S. election (and the total sum compares to Facebook’s annual revenue of \$27 billion).

Similarly, a new British study at the University of Edinburgh blaming the Brexit vote on Russia discovered that more than 70 percent of the Brexit-related tweets from allegedly Russian-linked sites came after the referendum on whether the U.K. should leave the European Union. But, hey, don’t let facts and logic get in the way of a useful narrative to suggest that anyone who voted for Trump or favored Brexit or wants independence for Catalonia is Moscow’s “useful idiot”!

This week, British Prime Minister Theresa May accused Russia of seeking to “undermine free societies” and to “sow discord in the West.”

## What About Israel?

Yet, another core problem with these “studies” is that they don’t come with any

“controls,” i.e., what is used in science to test a hypothesis against some baseline to determine if you are finding something unusual or just some normal occurrence.

In this case, for instance, it would be useful to find some other country that, like Russia, has a significant number of English speakers but where English is not the native language – and that has a significant interest in foreign affairs – and then see whether people from that country weigh in on social media with their opinions and perspectives about political events in the U.S., U.K., etc.

Perhaps, the U.S. government could devote some of that \$160 million to, say, a study of the Twitter/Facebook behavior of Israelis and whether they jump in on U.S./U.K. controversies that might directly or indirectly affect Israel. We could see how many Twitter/Facebook accounts are “linked” to Israel; we could study whether any Israeli “trolls” harass journalists and news sites that oppose neoconservative policies and politicians in the West; we could check on whether Israel does anything to undermine candidates who are viewed as hostile to Israeli interests; if so, we could calculate how much money these “Israeli-linked” activists and bloggers invest in Facebook ads; and we could track any Twitter bots that might be reinforcing the Israeli-favored message.

### **No Chance**

If we had this Israeli baseline, then perhaps we could judge how unusual it is for Russians to voice their opinions about controversies in the West. It’s true that Israel is a much smaller country with 8.5 million people compared to Russia’s 144 million, but you could adjust for those per capita numbers – and even if you didn’t, it wouldn’t be surprising to find that Israel’s interference in U.S. policymaking still exceeds Russian influence.

It’s also true that Israeli leaders have often advocated policies that have proved disastrous for the United States, such as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s encouragement of the Iraq War, which Russia opposed. Indeed, although Russia is now regularly called an American enemy, it’s hard to think of any policy that President Vladimir Putin has pushed on the U.S. that is even a fraction as harmful to U.S. interests as the Iraq War has been.

And, while we’re at it, maybe we could have an accounting of how much “U.S.-linked” entities have spent to influence politics and policies in Russia, Ukraine, Syria and other international hot spots.

But, of course, neither of those things will happen. If you even tried to gauge the role of “Israeli-linked” operations in influencing Western decision-making, you’d be accused of anti-Semitism. And if that didn’t stop you, there would be

furious editorials in The New York Times, The Washington Post and the rest of the U.S. mainstream media denouncing you as a “conspiracy theorist.” Who could possibly think that Israel would do anything underhanded to shape Western attitudes?

And, if you sought the comparative figures for the West interfering in the affairs of other nations, you’d be faulted for engaging in “false moral equivalence.” After all, whatever the U.S. government and its allies do is good for the world; whereas Russia is the fount of evil.

So, let’s just get back to developing those algorithms to sniff out, isolate and eradicate “Russian propaganda” or other deviant points of view, all the better to make sure that Americans, Britons and Catalonians vote the right way.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in print here or as an e-book (from Amazon and barnesandnoble.com).**

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## Stumbling Blindly into Cold War Two

As the U.S. and its Western allies lurch into a new and dangerous confrontation with Russia, the different sides don’t even have a thorough understanding of the history behind the tensions, warns Alice Slater.

By Alice Slater

NATO’s recent provocative decision to build up its military forces across Europe – by sending four new multinational battalions to Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland – comes at a time of great turmoil and intense questioning of global security with new forces for both good and evil straining to make their mark on the course of history.

This weekend, at the Vatican, Pope Francis held an international conference to follow up on the recently negotiated treaty to prohibit the possession, use, or threat of use of nuclear weapons leading to their complete elimination which was negotiated in the United Nations General Assembly this summer by 122 nations, although none of the nine nuclear weapons states participated.

Honored at the conference were members of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which worked with friendly governments to hold nuclear

weapons unlawful, and has recently been awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize for its successful efforts.

The Pope issued a statement that the doctrine of nuclear deterrence in which countries threaten to wreak catastrophic nuclear devastation on their opponents should they be attacked with nuclear bombs has become ineffective against Twenty-first Century threats like terrorism asymmetrical conflicts, environmental problems and poverty. While the church once held that such an insane policy could be moral and lawful, it no longer views it as such. And there are plans for the church to examine the so-called theory of "just war" with an eye to prohibiting the very morality and legality of war itself.

In the U.S., an unprecedented examination of our hidden history has begun. People are questioning the numerous honorary statues memorializing Civil War generals from the South who fought to preserve slavery. Indigenous First Peoples are questioning the adulation given to Christopher Columbus, who "discovered" America for Spain and was responsible for enormous slaughters and bloodshed of natives in the first colonies established in the Americas. Famous and powerful men are being questioned in an avalanche of truth-telling about how they used their professional power to take sexual advantage of women who feared for their career prospects in theater, publishing, business, academia.

### **Need for Truth about U.S. and Russia**

Unfortunately we have barely begun to tell the truth about the U.S. relationship with Russia and appear to be moving backwards in the U.S. with calls for RT, formerly *Russia Today*, the Russian equivalent of the BBC or Al Jazeera, to be registered in the U.S. as a foreign agent. This is certainly not consistent with the U.S. belief in the sanctity of a free press and will be challenged in the courts.

Indeed, there is a huge effort to misrepresent the provocations of NATO, to gloss over the history of the nuclear arms race— the refusal to take up Mikhail Gorbachev's offer to Ronald Reagan to eliminate all their nuclear weapons provided the U.S. gave up its plans to dominate and control the use of space; the expansion of NATO despite President George H.W. Bush's promises to Gorbachev that NATO would not go any further eastward beyond a unified Germany after the wall fell; Bill Clinton's rejection of Vladimir Putin's offer to cut arsenals to 1,000 nuclear weapons each and call all the parties to the table to negotiate for their elimination provided the U.S. didn't put missiles in Eastern Europe; Clinton leading NATO into the unlawful bombing of Serbia, ignoring Russia's veto of the action in the U.N. Security Council; George W. Bush walking out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty; the blocking of consensus in the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva to start negotiations on a Russian and

Chinese proposal, made in 2008 and again 2015, to ban weapons in space.

Ironically, in light of the recent NATO announcement that it will expand its cyber operations, the U.S. rejection of Russia's 2009 proposal to negotiate a Cyberwar Ban Treaty after the U.S. boasted of having destroyed Iran's uranium enrichment capacity with Israel using the Stuxnet virus in a cyber-attack seems like a gross misjudgment on the part of the U.S. not to have taken Russia up on its proposal.

Indeed, the whole nuclear arms race might have been avoided, if Harry Truman and Josef Stalin could have agreed on a satisfactory arrangement for putting this devastating weapon under U.N. control at the end of World War II. Instead, the U.S. retained control of the technology, and the Soviet Union developed its own bomb.

Now we are entering a New Cold War between the U.S. and Russia. Perhaps the only way to understand this deterioration of U.S.-Russian relationship is to remember President Eisenhower's warning in his 1961 farewell address about the military-industrial complex. The arms manufacturers, with billions of dollars at stake, have corrupted U.S. politics, media, academia and Congress.

U.S. public opinion is manipulated to support war and "blame it on Russia." Meanwhile, the so-called "War on Terror" is a recipe for more terrorism. Like throwing a rock on a hornet's nest, the U.S. sows death and destruction around the world killing innocent civilians in the name of fighting terrorism and thus invites more terror.

Russia, which lost 27 million people to the Nazi onslaught of World War II, may have a much better understanding of the horrors of war. Perhaps we need a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to reveal the causes and provocation of the historic tensions between the U.S. and Russia. After all, in other spheres, we seem to be entering a new time of truth-telling. And what could be more welcome and important than an honest presentation of the U.S.-Russian relationship over the past century to further better understanding and a peaceful resolution of our differences. With the looming environmental climate catastrophe and the possibility of destroying all life on earth with nuclear devastation, shouldn't we give peace a chance?

**Alice Slater serves on the Coordinating Committee of World Beyond War.**

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# America's Righteous Russia-gate Censorship

**Exclusive:** Arriving behind the anti-Trump “resistance” and the Russia-gate “scandal” is a troubling readiness to silence dissent in the U.S., shutting down information that challenges Official Narratives, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

A stark difference between today's Washington and when I was here as a young Associated Press correspondent in the late 1970s and the early 1980s is that then – even as the old Cold War was heating up around the election of Ronald Reagan – there were prominent mainstream journalists who looked askance at the excessive demonization of the Soviet Union and doubted wild claims about the dire threats to U.S. national security from Nicaragua and Grenada.

Perhaps the Vietnam War was still fresh enough in people's minds that senior editors and national reporters understood the dangers of mindless groupthink inside Official Washington, as well as the importance of healthy skepticism toward official pronouncements from the U.S. intelligence community.

Today, however, I cannot think of a single prominent figure in the mainstream news media who questions any claim – no matter how unlikely or absurd – that vilifies Russian President Vladimir Putin and his country. It is all Russia-bashing all the time.

And, behind this disturbing anti-Russian uniformity are increasing assaults against independent and dissident journalists and news outlets outside the mainstream. We're not just entering a New Cold War and a New McCarthyism; we're also getting a heavy dose of old-style Orwellianism.

Sometimes you see this in individual acts like HuffingtonPost taking down a well-reported story by journalist Joe Lauria because he dared to point out that Democratic money financed the two initial elements of what's now known as Russia-gate: the forensic examination of computers at the Democratic National Committee and the opposition research on Donald Trump conducted by ex-British spy Christopher Steele.

HuffingtonPost never contacted Lauria before or after its decision to retract the story, despite a request from him for the reasons why. HuffPost editors told a BuzzFeed reporter that they were responding to reader complaints that the article was filled with factual errors but none have ever been spelled out, leaving little doubt that Lauria's real “error” was in defying the Russia-gate



groupthink of the anti-Trump Resistance. [[A version of Lauria's story](#) appeared at Consortiumnews.com before Lauria posted it at HuffPost. If you want to sign a petition calling on HuffPost to restore Lauria's article, [click here.](#)]

## **Muzzling RT**

Other times, the expanding American censorship is driven by U.S. government agencies, such as the Justice Department's demand that the Russian news outlet, RT, register under the restrictive Foreign Agent Registration Act, which requires such prompt, frequent and detailed disclosures of supposed "propaganda" that it could make it impossible for RT to continue to function in the United States.

This attack on RT was rationalized by [the Jan. 6 "Intelligence Community Assessment"](#) that was, in reality, prepared by a handful of "hand-picked" analysts from the CIA, FBI and National Security Agency. Their report included a seven-page addendum from 2012 accusing RT of spreading Russian propaganda – and apparently this Jan. 6 report must now be accepted as gospel truth, no questions permitted.

However, if any real journalist actually read the Jan. 6 report, he or she would have discovered that RT's sinister assault on American democracy included such offenses as holding a debate among third-party candidates who were excluded from the Republican-Democratic debates in 2012. Yes, allowing Libertarians and Greens to express their points of view is a grave danger to American democracy.

Other RT "propaganda" included reporting on the Occupy Wall Street protests and examining the environmental dangers from "fracking," issues that also have been widely covered by the domestic American media. Apparently, whenever RT covers a newsworthy event – even if others have too – that constitutes "propaganda," which must be throttled to protect the American people from the danger of seeing it.

If you bother to study the Jan. 6 report's addendum, it is hard not to conclude that these "hand-picked" analysts were either stark-raving mad or madly anti-Russian. Yet, this "Intelligence Community Assessment" is now beyond questioning unless you want to be labeled a "Kremlin stooge" or "Putin's useful idiot." [An earlier [State Department attack on RT](#) was equally ridiculous or demonstrably false.]

And, by the way, it was President Obama's Director of National Intelligence James Clapper who testified under oath that the analysts from the three agencies were "[hand-picked.](#)" That means that they were analysts personally selected by Obama's intelligence chiefs from three agencies – not "all 17" as the American

public was told over and over again – and thus were not even a full representation of analysts from those three agencies. Yet, this subset of a subset is routinely described as “the U.S. intelligence community,” even after major news outlets finally had to retract their “all 17” canard.

So, the myth of the intelligence community’s consensus lives on. For instance, in an upbeat article on Tuesday about the U.S. government’s coercing RT into registering as a foreign agent, Washington Post reporters Devlin Barrett and David Filipov wrote, “U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded that the network and website push relentlessly anti-American propaganda at the behest of the Russian government.”

In the old days, even during the old Cold War and President Reagan’s ranting about “the Evil Empire,” some of us would have actually examined the Jan. 6 report’s case against RT and noted the absurdity of these claims about “relentlessly anti-American propaganda.” Whether you want to hear the views of the Greens and Libertarians or not – or whether you like “fracking” and hate Occupy Wall Street – the opportunity to hear this information doesn’t constitute “relentlessly anti-American propaganda.”

The U.S. government’s real beef with RT seems to be that it allows on air some Americans who have been blacklisted from the mainstream media – including highly credentialed former U.S. intelligence analysts and well-informed American journalists – because they have challenged various Official Narratives.

In other words, Americans are not supposed to hear the other side of the story on important international conflicts, such as the proxy war in Syria or the civil war in Ukraine or Israel’s mistreatment of Palestinians. Only the State Department’s versions of those events are permitted even when those versions are themselves propagandistic if not outright false.

For example, you’re not supposed to hear about the huge holes in the Syria-sarin cases, nor about Ukraine’s post-coup regime arming neo-Nazis to kill ethnic-Russian Ukrainians, nor about Israel’s evolution into an apartheid state. All right-thinking Americans are to get only a steady diet of how righteous the U.S. government and its allies always are. Anything else is “propaganda.”

Also off limits is any thoughtful critique of that Jan. 6 report – or apparently even Clapper’s characterization of it as a product of “hand-picked” analysts from only three agencies. You’re not supposed to ask why other U.S. intelligence agencies with deep knowledge about Russia were excluded and why even other analysts from the three involved agencies were shut out.

No, you must always think of the Jan. 6 report as the “consensus” assessment

from the entire “U.S. intelligence community.” And you must accept it as flat fact – as it now is treated by The New York Times, The Washington Post, CNN and other mainstream news outlets. You shouldn’t even notice that the Jan. 6 report itself doesn’t claim that Russian election meddling was a fact. The report explains, that “Judgments are not intended to imply that we have proof that shows something to be a fact.”

But even quoting from the Jan. 6 report might make an American reporter some kind of traitorous “Russian mole” whose journalism must be purged from “responsible” media and who should be forced to wear the journalistic equivalent of a yellow star.

### **The Anti-Trump/Russia Hysteria**

Of course, much of this anti-Russian hysteria comes from the year-long fury about the shocking election of Donald Trump. From the first moments of stunned disbelief over Hillary Clinton’s defeat, the narrative was put in motion to blame Trump’s victory not on Clinton and her wretched campaign but on Russia. That also was viewed as a possible way of reversing the election’s outcome and removing Trump from office.

The major U.S. news media quite openly moved to the forefront of the Resistance. The Washington Post adopted the melodramatic and hypocritical slogan, “Democracy Dies in Darkness,” as it unleashed its journalists to trumpet the narrative of some disloyal Americans spreading Russian propaganda. Darkness presumably was a fine place to stick people who questioned the Resistance’s Russia-gate narrative.

An early shot in this war against dissenting information was fired last Thanksgiving Day when the Post published a front-page article citing an anonymous group called PropOrNot smearing 200 Internet news sites for allegedly disseminating Russian propaganda. The list included some of the most important sources of independent journalism, including Consortiumnews.com, apparently for the crime of questioning some of the State Department’s narratives on international conflicts, particularly Syria and Ukraine.

Then, with the anti-Russia hysteria building and the censorship ball rolling, Congress last December approved \$160 million for think tanks and other non-governmental organizations to combat Russian propaganda. Soon, reports and studies were flying off the shelves detecting a Russian behind every article, tweet and posting that didn’t toe the State Department’s line.

The New York Times and other leading news organizations have even cheered plans for Google, Facebook and other technology companies to deploy algorithms that

can hunt down, marginalize or eliminate information that establishment media deems “fake” or “propaganda.” Already Google has put together a First Draft coalition, consisting of mainstream media and establishment-approved Web sites to decide what information makes the cut and what doesn’t.

Among these arbiters of truth is the fact-check organization PolitiFact, which judged the falsehood about “all 17 intelligence agencies” signing off on the Russian “hacking” claim to be “true.” Even though the claim was never true and is now clearly established as false, PolitiFact continues to assert that this lie is the truth, apparently filled with the hubris that comes with its power over determining what is true and what is false.

But what is perhaps most troubling to me about these developments is the silence of many civil liberties advocates, liberal politicians and defenders of press freedom who might have been counted on in earlier days to object to this censorship and blackballing.

It appears that the ends of taking down Donald Trump and demonizing Vladimir Putin justify whatever means, no matter the existential danger of nuclear war with Russia or the McCarthyistic (even Orwellian) threats to freedom of speech, press and thought.

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