

CIA Cloud over Jeff Bezos's Washington Post

By [Institute for Public Accuracy](#)

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A petition that has gained more than 15,000 signers so far this week is urging the Washington Post to provide readers with “full disclosure” about a conflict of interest involving the Post’s sole owner Jeff Bezos and his newspaper’s coverage of the CIA.

Noting that “a basic principle of journalism is to acknowledge when the owner of a media outlet has a major financial relationship with the subject of coverage,” the [petition](#) calls on the *Washington Post* to be “fully candid with its readers about the fact that the newspaper’s new owner, Jeff Bezos, is the founder and CEO of Amazon which recently landed a \$600 million contract with the CIA.”

Currently, the *Post*’s coverage of the CIA does not disclose that the newspaper’s sole owner is the main owner of CIA business partner Amazon.



PHOTO: PATRICK FALLON/ANDREW HARRER/BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY

RootsAction.org, which launched the petition, said that “the Amazon-CIA deal is apt to be just the start.” The group added: “Amazon’s offer wasn’t the low bid, but it won the CIA contract anyway by offering advanced high-tech ‘cloud’ infrastructure. ... Bezos is personally and publicly touting Amazon Web Services — and Amazon will be seeking future CIA contracts.”

Last month, Amazon released a statement saying: “We look forward to a successful

relationship with the CIA.” For more background information, click [here](#).

The following media and intelligence analysts are available for interviews:

ROBERT McCHESNEY, [rwmccchesney at gmail.com](mailto:rwmccchesney@gmail.com)

McChesney is co-author of *Dollarocracy: How the Money and Media Election Complex is Destroying America* and author of *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism is Turning the Internet Against Democracy*, both published this year. He is professor of communications at the University of Illinois.

McChesney said today:

“When the main shareholder in one of the very largest corporations in the world benefits from a massive contract with the CIA on the one hand, and that same billionaire owns the Washington Post on the other hand, there are serious problems. The Post is unquestionably the political paper of record in the United States, and how it covers governance sets the agenda for the balance of the news media. Citizens need to know about this conflict of interest in the columns of the Post itself.”

He added:

“If some official enemy of the United States had a comparable situation — say the owner of the dominant newspaper in Caracas was getting \$600 million in secretive contracts from the Maduro government — the Post itself would lead the howling chorus impaling that newspaper and that government for making a mockery of a free press. It is time for the Post to take a dose of its own medicine.”

RAY McGOVERN, [rrmcgovern at gmail.com](mailto:rrmcgovern@gmail.com)

McGovern is a former CIA analyst whose responsibilities included chairing National Intelligence Estimates. He is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity.

Today, McGovern cited the CIA-Bezos duo as

“compelling proof that the Fourth Estate is moribund, and that defenders of the independence and integrity of the Web must thwart attempts by bozos at CIA and Bezos at the once-independent Washington Post from leaving still more stain on journalism.”

McGovern added:

“CIA secret ties with the Post and other Fawning Corporate Media (FCM) go back several decades. After leaving the Post in 1977, Carl Bernstein wrote a major story for Rolling Stone (Oct. 20, 1977) showing how the FCM worked hand in glove with the CIA and how this was all covered up by the committee led by [Senator] Frank Church in 1975.

“What emerges now is what, in intelligence parlance, is called an ‘agent of influence’ owning the *Post* — with a huge financial interest in playing nice with the CIA. In other words, two main players nourishing the national security state in undisguised collaboration.”

JOHN HANRAHAN, johnhanrahan5 at gmail.com

Hanrahan is a former executive director of The Fund for Investigative Journalism and reporter for the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Star*, UPI and other news organizations. A former legal investigator and currently a writer based in Washington, D.C., Hanrahan is also the author of books including *Government by Contract*. He recently wrote on press criticism, civil liberties and dissent for the now-defunct *NiemanWatchdog.org* website.

Hanrahan said today:

“It’s all so basic. Readers of the *Washington Post*, which reports frequently on the CIA, are entitled to know — and to be reminded on a regular basis in stories and editorials in the newspaper and online — that the *Post*’s new owner Jeff Bezos stands to benefit substantially from Amazon’s \$600-million contract with the CIA. Even with such disclosure, the public should not feel assured they are getting tough-minded reporting on the CIA. One thing is certain: *Post* reporters and editors are aware that Bezos, as majority owner of Amazon, has a financial stake in maintaining good relations with the CIA — and this sends a clear message to even the hardest-nosed journalist that making the CIA look bad might not be a good career move.”

Hanrahan added:

“*Post* blogger Andrea Peterson nicely captured this sentiment when she asked Bezos, in a Q&A with *Post* staff in September, to ‘comment on Amazon’s pursuit of CIA cloud contracts.’ Bezos, as Peterson [recounted](#), gave a non-answer, just ‘repeating what was already public knowledge.’ He merely praised Amazon’s cloud computing expertise but avoided any talk of the implications of Amazon linking up with the CIA. Peterson closed her column with a tongue-in-cheek understanding of what it means to raise such issues with the big boss: ‘To the best of my knowledge I remain employed by the *Washington Post*.’ And in her jest lies the problem for *Post* reporters and editors — and for readers — in this Amazon-CIA arrangement.”

MELVIN GOODMAN, goody789 at verizon.net

Goodman is director of the National Security Project at the Center for International Policy. He was an analyst at the CIA for 24 years. His most recent book is *National Insecurity: The Cost of American Militarism*.

NORMAN SOLOMON, solomonprogressive at gmail.com

The author of several books on U.S. news media, Solomon is co-founder of RootsAction.org. He said today:

“This is a test of journalistic integrity that the *Washington Post* is currently failing. Full disclosure is the least that readers of the *Post*’s coverage of the CIA deserve. Yet almost every day, the *Post* is publishing articles that cover the CIA

without any indication that the Post's sole owner is in business with the CIA to the tune of \$600 million, while clearly seeking to expand that business relationship even further."

Solomon added:

"We should keep in mind that hundreds of newspapers around the country routinely publish articles from the Washington Post, and those articles are also widely read online. Most days, millions of people are reading Post stories about CIA activities that do not mention that the Post's sole owner is in a business relationship with the CIA via his company Amazon."

Solomon is founding director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. His books include *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death* and *The Habits of Highly Deceptive Media*.

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