

How American Journalism Became a Mouthpiece of the Deep State

The intelligence community uses the media to manipulate the American people and pressure elected politicians.

By [Peter Van Buren](#)

Region: [USA](#)

Global Research, May 25, 2021

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

[The American Conservative](#) 24 May 2021

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the “Translate Website” drop down menu on the top banner of our home page (Desktop version).

Visit and follow us on Instagram at [@crg_globalresearch](#).

Reporters joke that the easiest job in Washington is CIA spokesman. You need only listen carefully to questions, say, “No comment,” and head to happy hour. The joke, however, is on us. The reporters pretend to see only one side of the CIA, the passive hiding of information. They meanwhile profit from the other side of the equation, active information operations designed to influence events in America. It is 2021 and the CIA is running an op against the American people.

Leon Panetta, once director of CIA, explained [bluntly](#) that the agency influenced *foreign* media outlets ahead of elections in order to “change attitudes within the country.” The method was to “acquire media within a country or within a region that could very well be used for being able to deliver a specific message or work to influence those that may own elements of the media to be able to cooperate, work with you in delivering that message.” The CIA has been running such ops to [influence](#) foreign elections continuously since the end of WWII.

The goal is to control information as a tool of influence. Sometimes the control is very direct, [operating](#) the media [outlet](#) yourself. The problem is this is easily exposed, destroying credibility.

A more effective strategy is to become a source for legitimate media such that your (dis)information inherits their credibility. Most effective is when one CIA plant is the initial source while a second CIA plant acts seemingly independently as a confirming source. You can push information to the mainstream media, who can then “independently” confirm it, sometimes unknowingly, through your secondary agents. You can basically write tomorrow’s headlines.

Other techniques include exclusive true information mixed with disinformation to establish credibility, using official sources like embassy spokesmen “inadvertently” confirm sub

details, and covert funding of research and side [gigs](#) to promote academics and experts who can discredit counter-narratives.

From the end of WWII to the Church Committee in 1976, this was all dismissed as a conspiracy theory. Of course the U.S. would not use the CIA to influence elections, especially in fellow [democracies](#). Except it did. Real-time reporting on intelligence is by nature based on limited information, albeit marked with the unambiguous fingerprints of established tradecraft. Always give time a chance to explain.

Through [Operation Mockingbird](#) the CIA ran over [400](#) American journalists as direct assets. Almost none have ever discussed their work publicly. Journalists performed these [tasks](#) for the CIA with the consent of America's leading news organizations. The *New York Times* alone willingly provided [cover](#) for ten CIA officers over decades and kept quiet about it.

Long term relationships are a powerful tool, so feeding a true big story to a young reporter to get him promoted is part of the game. Don't forget the anonymous source who drove the Watergate story was an [FBI](#) official who through his actions made the careers of cub reporters Woodward and Bernstein. Bernstein went on to [champion](#) Russiagate. Woodward became a Washington hagiographer. Ken Dilanian, formerly with the Associated Press and now working for NBC, still [maintains](#) a "[collaborative relationship](#)" with the CIA.

That's the tradecraft. The problem for America is once again the tools of war abroad have come home, just the same as when post-9/11 the NSA turned its antennas inward. The intelligence community is currently operating against the American people using established media.

Some of it can't be more obvious. The CIA always [planted](#) stories abroad for American outlets to pick up. To influence public opinion they lied to journalists in the run up to the 2003 Iraq war. The agency works directly with Hollywood to [control](#) movies about itself.

Turn on any of the advocacy media outlets and you see [panels](#) of former CIA officials. None however is more egregious than John Brennan, former director, who for years touted Russiagate when he knew from information gathered while he was still in office that it was all fake. Brennan probably leaked the foundational lie alleging Trump was dirty with Russia to the press in January of 2017 as the kickoff event to the [info op](#) still running today.

Brennan's role is more than speculation. [John Durham](#), the U.S. attorney leading the ongoing "how it happened" Russiagate investigation into the intelligence community, has requested Brennan's emails and call logs from CIA. Durham is also examining whether Brennan [changed](#) his story between his public comments (not under oath: say anything) and his May 2017 testimony to Congress (under oath: watch out for perjury) about the dossier. Reporter Aaron Mate is less delicate, laying out the [evidence](#) Brennan was "a central architect and promoter of the conspiracy theory from its inception." Even blunter is Senator Rand Paul, who directly [accuses](#) Brennan of trying "to bring down a sitting president."

How that worked helps show how info ops intertwine with covert ops. Justice Department Inspector General Michael Horowitz's [report](#) shows the FBI unleashed a full-spectrum spying campaign with the primary document of the information op, the [Steele Dossier](#), as an excuse. Dossier author and ex-British intel officer Christopher Steele also created a textbook [information loop](#) to publicize his work, secretly becoming his own [corroborating](#) source.

The Horowitz report also shows it was a [5 Eyes](#) team effort; Australian diplomat Alexander Downer, a man with ties to his nation's [intel services](#), arranged a meeting with Trump staffer George Papadopoulos to set in motion FISA surveillance. [British GCHQ](#) monitored Trump officials and passed info to the NSA. The op used CIA assets, shadowy academics Stefan Halper and Joseph Mifsud, as dangles. There was even a [honey trap](#) with a female FBI undercover agent inserted into Israeli-arranged social situations with a Trump staffer.

It was all based on nothing but disinformation and the American press swallowed every bit of it to falsely convince a vast number of citizens their nation was run by a Russian asset. [Robert Mueller](#), whose investigation was supposed to propel all this nothing into impeachment, ended up exercising one of the last bits of political courage Americans will ever see in walking right to the edge of essentially a coup and refusing to go one step more.

The CIA is a learning institution, and it recovered well from Russiagate. Details can be investigated. That's where the old story fell apart. The Steele Dossier wasn't true. But the a-ha discovery was the realization that since you'll never formally prosecute anyone, you don't need to bother with evidence when you can just throw out accusations. The new paradigm let the nature of the source—the brave lads of the intelligence agencies—legitimize the accusations. Go overt and let the unexpected prestige of the CIA as progressive heroes substantiate things. It worked.

So in December 2017 CNN [reported](#) Donald Trump, Jr., had advance access to the WikiLeaks archive. Within an hour, NBC's Ken Dilanian and CBS both claimed independent confirmation. It was a complete lie. How do you confirm a lie? Ask another liar.

In February 2020, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) [briefed](#) the House Intelligence Committee the Russians were election meddling again to favor Trump. A few weeks earlier, the ODNI [briefed](#) Bernie Sanders the Russians were also meddling in the Democratic primaries in his favor. Both briefings were leaked, the former to the *New York Times* to [smear](#) Trump for replacing his DNI, the latter to the *Washington Post* ahead of the Nevada caucuses to damage Sanders. Who benefits is always a good question. The answer was Joe Biden.

In June 2020 the *New York Times* [stated](#) the [CIA](#) concluded the Russians "secretly offered bounties to Taliban-linked militants for killing coalition forces in Afghanistan — including targeting American troops." The story ran near another claiming Trump had spoken [disrespectfully](#) about fallen soldiers. Neither was true. But they broke around Trump's announcement about withdrawing troops from Afghanistan and were aimed at discouraging pro-military voters.

Earlier this month the *Washington Post*, [citing](#) anonymous sources, [claimed](#) the FBI gave a [defensive](#) briefing to Rudy Giuliani in 2019, before he traveled to Ukraine. Giuliani supposedly ignored the warning. The story was "independently confirmed" by both *NBC* and the *New York Times*. It was [totally false](#).

We are left to wonder how all these media outlets keep making the same mistakes with sources and only in disfavor to Trump, et al., and never the other way. They have become a machine as trustworthy as the spies they rely on.

The American system always envisioned an adversarial role for the media. One of the earliest challenges to freedom of the press was the colonial-era [Peter Zenger](#) case, which

established the right of the press to criticize politicians free from libel charges. At times when things really mattered, men like Edward R. Murrow worked their craft to preserve democracy. Same for Walter Cronkite reaching his opposition to the Vietnam War, and the *New York Times* reporters weighing imprisonment to publish the Pentagon Papers.

In each of those instances the handful of reporters who risked everything to tell the truth were held up as heroes. Seeing the *Times* fighting for its life, the *Washington Post* co-published the Pentagon Papers to force the government to make its case not just against a rival newspaper, but the 1A itself.

Not today. Journalism is devoted to eliminating [practitioners](#) unwilling to play the game. Few have been targeted more than Glenn Greenwald (with [Matt Taibbi](#) as runner up.)

Greenwald exploded into a journalistic superhero for his reporting on Edward Snowden's NSA archive, founding the Intercept to serve as a platform for that work. Then something very, very odd made it appear the Intercept [outed](#) one of its own whistleblower sources. [Evidence](#) suggests the source was a patsy, set up by the intel community, and exposed via Matt Cole, one of the Intercept journalists on this story. Cole was also involved in [outing](#) CIA officer John Kiriakou as a source on torture. Whistleblowers were made to think twice before turning to the Intercept.

Greenwald's later criticism of the media for accepting Deep State lies as truth, particularly concerning Russiagate, turned him into a villain for progressives. MSNBC [banned](#) him, and other media outlets [ran](#) smear stories. He recently quit the Intercept after it [refused](#) to publish his [article](#) on Hunter Biden's ties to China unless he deleted portions critical of Joe Biden.

Greenwald [wrote](#)

the most significant Trump-era alliance is between corporate outlets and security state agencies, whose evidence-free claims they unquestioningly disseminate... Every journalist, even the most honest and careful, will get things wrong sometimes, and trustworthy journalists issue prompt corrections when they do. That behavior should be *trust-building*...

But when media outlets continue to use the same reckless and deceitful tactics — such as claiming to have “independently [confirmed](#)” one another's false stories when they have merely served as stenographers for the same anonymous security state agents while “confirming” nothing — that strongly suggests a complete indifference to the truth and, even more so, a willingness to serve as disinformation agents.

After decades of success abroad with info ops, the CIA and others turned those weapons on us. We are seeing the Deep State [meddle](#) in presidential politics, simultaneously destroying (albeit mostly with their cooperation) the adversarial media while crushing faith in both our leaders and in the process of electing them. Democracy has no meaning here.

*

Note to readers: Please click the share buttons above or below. Follow us on Instagram, @crg_globalresearch. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Peter Van Buren is the author of [We Meant Well: How I Helped Lose the Battle for the Hearts and Minds of the Iraqi People](#), [Hooper's War: A Novel of WWII Japan](#), and [Ghosts of Tom Joad: A Story of the 99 Percent](#).

Featured image: The Washington Post's David Ignatius (Wikimedia Commons)

The original source of this article is [The American Conservative](#)
Copyright © [Peter Van Buren](#), [The American Conservative](#), 2021

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Peter Van Buren](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca