

“Ministry of Truth” Plus \$611 Billion for the Military in 2017: Obama Quietly Signs the “Countering Disinformation and Propaganda Act” into Law

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Late on Friday, with the US population embracing the upcoming holidays and oblivious of most news emerging from the administration, [Obama quietly signed into law the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act \(NDAA\)](#) which authorizes \$611 billion for the military in 2017.

In a statement, [Obama said that](#):

Today, I have signed into law S. 2943, the “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017.” This Act authorizes fiscal year 2017 appropriations principally for the Department of Defense and for Department of Energy national security programs, provides vital benefits for military personnel and their families, and includes authorities to facilitate ongoing operations around the globe. It continues many critical authorizations necessary to ensure that we are able to sustain our momentum in countering the threat posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and to reassure our European allies, as well as many new authorizations that, among other things, provide the Departments of Defense and Energy more flexibility in countering cyber-attacks and our adversaries’ use of unmanned aerial vehicles.”

Much of the balance of Obama’s statement blamed the GOP for Guantanamo’s continued operation and warned that “unless the Congress changes course, it will be judged harshly by history,” Obama said. Obama also said Congress failed to use the bill to reduce wasteful overhead (like perhaps massive F-35 cost overruns?) or modernize military health care, which he said would exacerbate budget pressures facing the military in the years ahead.

But while the passage of the NDAA – and the funding of the US military – was hardly a surprise, the biggest news is what was buried deep inside the provisions of the Defense Authorization Act.



Recall that as [we reported in early June](#), “a bill to implement the U.S.’ very own *de facto* Ministry of Truth had been quietly introduced in Congress. As with any legislation attempting to dodge the public spotlight the Countering Foreign Propaganda and Disinformation Act of 2016 marks a further curtailment of press freedom and another avenue to stultify avenues of accurate information. Introduced by Congressmen Adam Kinzinger and Ted Lieu, H.R. 5181 seeks a “whole-government approach without the

bureaucratic restrictions” to counter “foreign disinformation and manipulation,” which they believe threaten the world’s “security and stability.”

Also called the Countering Information Warfare Act of 2016 (S. 2692), when introduced in March by Sen. Rob Portman, the legislation represents a dramatic return to Cold War-era government propaganda battles. “These countries spend vast sums of money on advanced broadcast and digital media capabilities, targeted campaigns, funding of foreign political movements, and other efforts to influence key audiences and populations,” Portman explained, adding that while the U.S. spends a relatively small amount on its Voice of America, the Kremlin provides enormous funding for its news organization, RT.

“Surprisingly,” Portman continued, “there is currently no single U.S. governmental agency or department charged with the national level development, integration and synchronization of whole-of-government strategies to counter foreign propaganda and disinformation.”

Long before the “fake news” meme became a daily topic of extensive conversation on such discredited mainstream portals as CNN and WaPo, H.R. 5181 would task the Secretary of State with coordinating the Secretary of Defense, the Director of National Intelligence, and the Broadcasting Board of Governors to “establish a Center for Information Analysis and Response,” which will pinpoint sources of disinformation, analyze data, and — in true dystopic manner — ‘develop and disseminate’ “fact-based narratives” to counter effrontery propaganda.

In short, long before “fake news” became a major media topic, the US government was already planning its legally-backed crackdown on anything it would eventually label “fake news.”

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Fast forward to [December 8](#), when the “Countering Disinformation and Propaganda Act” passed in the Senate, *quietly inserted inside the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) Conference Report*.

And now, following Friday’s Obama signing of the NDAA on Friday evening, *the Countering Disinformation and Propaganda Act* is now law.

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Here is the [full statement](#) issued by the [generously funded](#) Senator Rob Portman (R- Ohio) on the singing into law of a bill that further chips away at press liberties in the US, and which sets the stage for future witch hunts and website shutdowns, purely as a result of an accusation that any one media outlet or site is considered as a source of “disinformation and propaganda” and is shut down by the government.

[President Signs Portman-Murphy Counter-Propaganda Bill into Law](#)

Portman-Murphy Bill Promotes Coordinated Strategy to Defend America, Allies Against Propaganda and Disinformation from Russia, China & Others

U.S. Senators Rob Portman (R-OH) and Chris Murphy (D-CT) today announced that their *Countering Disinformation and Propaganda Act* – legislation designed to help American

allies counter foreign government propaganda from Russia, China, and other nations – has been signed into law as part of the FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) Conference Report. The bipartisan bill, which was [introduced](#) by Senators Portman and Murphy in March, will improve the ability of the United States to counter foreign propaganda and disinformation from our enemies by establishing an interagency center housed at the State Department to coordinate and synchronize counter-propaganda efforts throughout the U.S. government. To support these efforts, the bill also creates a grant program for NGOs, think tanks, civil society and other experts outside government who are engaged in counter-propaganda related work. This will better leverage existing expertise and empower our allies overseas to defend themselves from foreign manipulation. It will also help foster a free and vibrant press and civil society overseas, which is critical to ensuring our allies have access to truthful information and inoculating people against foreign propaganda campaigns.

“Our enemies are using foreign propaganda and disinformation against us and our allies, and so far the U.S. government has been asleep at the wheel,” Portman said. “But today, the United States has taken a critical step towards confronting the extensive, and destabilizing, foreign propaganda and disinformation operations being waged against us by our enemies overseas. With this bill now law, we are finally signaling that enough is enough; the United States will no longer sit on the sidelines. We are going to confront this threat head-on. I am confident that, with the help of this bipartisan bill, the disinformation and propaganda used against us, our allies, and our interests will fail.”

“The use of propaganda to undermine democracy has hit a new low. But now we are finally in a position to confront this threat head on and get out the truth. By building up independent, objective journalism in places like eastern Europe, we can start to fight back by exposing these fake narratives and empowering local communities to protect themselves,” said Murphy. “I’m proud that our bill was signed into law, and I look forward to working with Senator Portman to make sure these tools and new resources are effectively used to get out the truth.”

NOTE: The bipartisan *Countering Disinformation and Propaganda Act* is organized around two main priorities to help achieve the goal of combatting the constantly evolving threat of foreign disinformation from our enemies:

- The first priority is developing a whole-of-government strategy for countering THE foreign propaganda and disinformation being wages against us and our allies by our enemies. The bill would increase the authority, resources, and mandate of the Global Engagement Center to include state actors like Russia and China as well as non-state actors. The Center will be led by the State Department, but with the active senior level participation of the Department of Defense, USAID, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, the Intelligence Community, and other relevant agencies. The Center will develop, integrate, and synchronize whole-of-government initiatives to expose and counter foreign disinformation operations by our enemies and proactively advance fact-based narratives that support U.S. allies and interests.
- Second, the legislation seeks to leverage expertise from outside government to create more adaptive and responsive U.S. strategy options. The legislation establishes a fund to help train local journalists and provide grants and contracts to NGOs, civil society organizations, think tanks, private sector companies, media organizations, and other experts outside the U.S. government with

experience in identifying and analyzing the latest trends in foreign government disinformation techniques. This fund will complement and support the Center's role by integrating capabilities and expertise available outside the U.S. government into the strategy-making process. It will also empower a decentralized network of private sector experts and integrate their expertise into the strategy-making process.

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And so, with the [likes of WaPo having already primed the general public](#) to equate "Russian Propaganda" with "fake news" (despite admitting [after the fact their own report was essentially "fake"](#)), while the US media has indoctrinated the public to assume that any information which is not in compliance with the official government narrative, or dares to criticize the establishment, is also "fake news" and thus falls under the "Russian propaganda" umbrella, the scene is now set for the US government to *legally* crack down on every media outlet that the government deems to be "foreign propaganda."

Just like that, the US *Ministry of Truth* is officially born.



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