

Shambolic Doings in Washington. “One Good Thing about Donald Trump: He is not Hillary”

Will we survive the next 90 days?

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There remains one good thing to say about Donald Trump: he is not Hillary. The boneheaded cruise missile attack in Syria would have occurred even earlier under President Rodham Clinton and there would undoubtedly be no-fly and safe zones already in place. Oh, and Ukraine and Georgia would be negotiating their entries into NATO to make sure that old Vlad Putin would be put on notice and understand that the days of namby-pamby jaw-jaw-jaw that characterized the Obama Administration are now ancient history.

Apart from that, I can only observe dumbstruck how yet again a candidate promising peace and dialogue could be flipped so quickly. Or maybe he never believed in anything he said, which is perhaps more to the point. Be that as it may, we now, after only ninety days in office, have a neo-neocon foreign policy and the folks clustered around their water coolers in the Washington think tanks are again smiling. And as the ruinous Syrian civil war continues thanks to American intervention, there are probably plenty of high fives within Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu government. Bibi again rules the roost.



The Israelis are no doubt particularly delighted to hear Donald Trump's latest factually exempt voyage into the outer reaches of the galaxy regarding Iran. Or perhaps The Donald is only having continuing digestive problems dealing with "most beautiful piece of chocolate cake that you've ever seen" when dining with mortified Chinese leader Xi Jinping while simultaneously launching cruise missiles intended to send a message to Beijing's ally Russia. It is inevitably Iran's turn for vilification, so Trump, while conceding that the Iranians have been compliant with the nuclear weapons agreement they signed, also felt compelled to add that they continue to be a threat and have not entered into the "spirit" of the pact. Apparently the spirit codicil was somehow left out of the final draft, an interpretation that will no doubt surprise the other signatories consisting of Russia, China and the European Union.

To make its point that Tehran is somehow [a cheater](#), the White House has ordered a 90 day review of Iran policy which will empower hardliners in that country in upcoming elections as well as nut cases like Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham on this side of the Atlantic. Iranian opposition groups like the terrorist Mujaheddin e Khalq (MEK) are already rising to the challenge by floating phony intelligence while Graham is [currently advocating](#) a preemptive attack on North Korea, conceding that it would be catastrophic for every country in the region while noting smugly that the carnage and destruction would not reach the United States. Too bad that Pyongyang's fury cannot be directed straight to Graham's house in South Carolina.

Graham is reportedly a good dancer and multitasker who can pivot back to Iran effortlessly as soon as Pyongyang is reduced to rubble, so those who want to deal with Iran sooner rather than later should not despair. As things continue to go south nearly everywhere, tension in the Middle East will no doubt lead to a rapidly deteriorating situation in the Persian Gulf that will require yet another ham-handed show of strength by the United States of Amnesia. There will be a war against Iran.

There have been a couple of other interesting stories circulating recently, all demonstrating that when Benjamin Franklin observed that we Americans had created a republic, "if we can keep it," he was being particularly prescient. Robert Parry has observed that all the fuss about Russiagate is misleading as the only country that interferes with the political process in the U.S. persistently and successfully while also doing terrible damage to our national security is Israel. He wonders when we will have Congress convening investigative commissions to [look into Israel-gate](#) but then answers his own question by observing that it will never happen given who controls what in the United States.

"No one dares suggest a probe of Israel-gate," he concludes, but it is interesting and also encouraging to note that some Americans are actually starting to figure things out.

One of the curious things relating to the Russiagate scandal is the issue of who in the U.S. intelligence community leaked highly classified information to the media, a question which somehow seems to have disappeared from whatever final reckoning might be forthcoming. The issue is particularly relevant at the moment because [there are reports](#) that the Justice Department is pulling together a case against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange as part of a possible attempt to remove him forcibly from his refuge in Britain and try him for constituting what CIA Director Mike Pompeo [describes as](#) a "hostile intelligence service helped by Russia." It all suggests that low hanging fruit is fair game while some "official" leakers at high levels are somehow being protected.

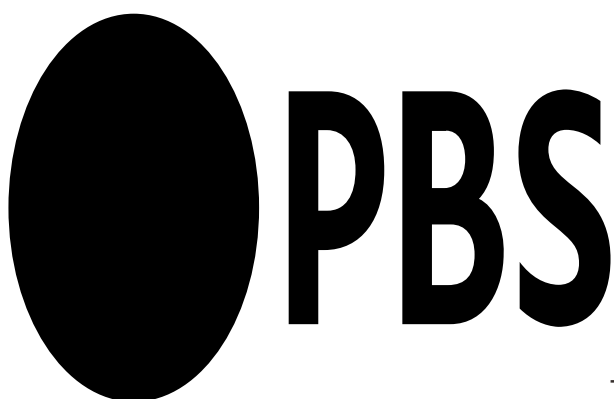
To cite another example of Justice Department hypocrisy, three current and four former U.S. officials leaked to Reuters last week's story about a Russian think tank having [created a plan](#) to subvert the U.S. election. If that is so, their identities might be discernible or surmised. Why aren't they in jail? Or is it that many in government now believe that Russia is fair game and are prepared to look the other way?

It is significant that the recent House Intelligence Committee hearing on Russiagate, featuring FBI Director James Comey and NSA Director Mike Rogers, provided very little new information even as it confirmed troubling revelations that had already surfaced regarding the corruption of the nation's security services. Given that former Central Intelligence

Agency (CIA) head John Brennan and former Director of National Intelligence (DNI) chief James Clapper have been most frequently cited as the Obama administration's possible bag men in arranging for the generation, collection, dissemination, and leaking of information disparaging to Trump, why weren't they also being questioned?

The latest focus on Brennan, an Obama/Clinton loyalist who might safely be regarded as the most likely candidate seeking to discredit Team Trump and reap the benefits from Hillary, explores some suspicions about what actually took place last year and how it might have been arranged. [The story broke](#) in *The Guardian* on April 13th, headlined "*British spies were first to spot Trump team's links with Russia.*" The article rehashes much old information, but, relying on a "source close to UK intelligence," it describes how Britain's NSA equivalent GCHQ obtained information late in 2015 relating to suspect "interactions" between Trump associates and the Russian intelligence. GCHQ reportedly routinely passed the information on to its U.S. liaison counterparts, and continued to do so over the next six months. The information was supplemented by similar reporting from a number of European intelligence services as well as the remaining "Five Eyes": Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

According to the *Guardian* source and reporters, who are clearly hostile to Trump, the collection was not directed or targeted but was rather part of random interception of Russian communications. This may or may not be true but it serves as a useful cover story if someone was up to something naughty. And it also makes one wonder about the highly incriminating British intelligence sourced ["dossier"](#) on Trump and his associates, which *The Guardian* strangely does not mention, that appeared in January. Another apparent *Guardian* source called GCHQ the "principal whistleblower" in sharing the information that led to the opening of an FBI investigation in July 2016, a suggestion that the British role was not exactly passive.



The article goes on to describe how John Brennan, then CIA Chief, was personally the recipient of the material passed hand-to-hand at "director level" because of its sensitivity. So the *Guardian* article is essentially saying that the information was both routine and extremely sensitive, which would seem to be contradictory. Brennan was reportedly then the driving force behind launching a "major inter-agency investigation" and he briefed selected members of Congress regarding what he had obtained. Shortly thereafter leaks began appearing in the British press followed subsequently by revelations in the media in the U.S.

An October request to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) court reportedly was initiated after particularly damaging information was received from Estonia concerning Trump associate Carter Page and also regarding allegations that a Russian bank was funneling money into the Trump campaign. This led to an investigation of Page and the tapping into servers in Trump Tower, where the presidential campaign offices were located.

Estonia, it should be noted, was particularly concerned about Trump comments on de-emphasizing NATO and strongly supported a Hillary victory so it is fair to speculate that the intelligence provided might have been cherry picked to make a particular case, but *The Guardian* fails to make that obvious point.

It is interesting to note how for the first time, in this media account, Brennan surfaces as the central player in the investigation of Team Trump. And it is perhaps not out of line to suggest that the European reporting of information on Trump associates was not exactly due to random collection of information, as *The Guardian* seeks to demonstrate. It could just as easily have been arranged at the “director level” by Brennan and his counterparts to disrupt the Trump campaign and enhance the electability of Hillary Clinton, which would have directly benefited Brennan and his inner circle as well as the Europeans, all of whom feared a Trump victory. Intelligence can be skewed, “fixed around a policy” or even fabricated and can say whatever one wants it to say so it is fair to suggest that the role of a politically committed John Brennan remains to be explored much more fully.

It is [now being reported](#) that Brennan will be summoned to give testimony at a closed House Intelligence Committee meeting on May 2nd. Hopefully his comments will be somehow leaked to the media plus those of James Clapper, who is also scheduled to appear. Nevertheless, one imagines that, as was the case in Comey’s [first appearance](#), both former officials will spend most of their time refusing to confirm or deny anything.

The active participation of Brennan in the background to the 2016 electoral campaign is unprecedented and it is also suggestive of what America’s national security agencies have become, basically creatures of the White House. It is hard to escape the conclusion that Benjamin Franklin would undoubtedly deplore the fact that we have failed to keep the republic that the Founding Fathers bequeathed to us. That would be bad enough, but we are slipping into a pattern of foreign wars based on tissues of lies and deceptions by the very people who are in place to protect us, quite possibly exemplified by unscrupulous and ambitious ladder climbers like John Brennan, who was also the architect of Obama’s assassination policy. If we go to war because of suspected lack of “spirit” in our adversaries or merely because someone in the White House had a piece of chocolate cake and wanted something to talk about over his cup of espresso then we are doomed as a nation.

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