

Trump Blurts Out the Truth about US Killings and the Media Goes Wild

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The furor unleashed by the remarks of President Donald Trump in response to Fox News commentator Bill O'Reilly's calling Russian President Vladimir Putin "a killer" during an interview broadcast Sunday has continued to reverberate, drawing hypocritical condemnations from leading figures in both the Republican and Democratic parties.

In response to O'Reilly's denunciation of Putin, Trump stated: "There are a lot of killers. We've got a lot of killers. What, do you think our country's so innocent?"

Trump went on to cite Iraq in support of his statement. O'Reilly's face went slack. He clearly did not know what to say. The new leader of the "Free World" had wandered seriously off message.

As far as the capitalist politicians of both parties and the media are concerned, Trump committed an unpardonable offense: he—in this one instance, and for purely pragmatic reasons related to his immediate political needs—had said something true about US imperialism's role in the world.

The official posture of outrage over Trump's off-hand comment will have little effect on the broader public. Do the politicians and media really believe that the public is so naïve and its memory so short? The United States is a country where *The Bourne Identity* and its innumerable sequels—whose basic premise is that the US government is run by murderers—are among the most popular movies of the last twenty years. This premise is well grounded in fact. Over the past 70 years, presidents and other high government officials have been implicated in the authorization and implementation of countless atrocities. Many of these crimes have been substantiated in official government reports and congressional hearings.

In a review of Joshua Kurlantzick's *A Great Place to Have a War: America in Laos and the Birth of the Military CIA*, reviewer Scott Shane wrote in the February 3 edition of *The New York Times* :

"Speaking last September in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, Barack Obama mentioned a staggering fact: that the United States had between 1963 and 1974 dropped two million tons of bombs on the country, more than the total loosed on Germany and Japan together during World War II. That made Laos, which is slightly smaller than Michigan, the most heavily bombed nation in history, the president said. More than four decades after the end of the war, unexploded ordnance is still killing and maiming Laotians, and Obama announced that he was doubling American funding to remove it."

Calling attention to information in Kurlantzick's book, Shane noted:

"In his first presidential term, Richard M. Nixon escalated the bombing from about 15 sorties per day to 300 per day. 'How many did we kill in Laos?' Nixon asked Henry Kissinger one day in a conversation caught on tape. Kissinger replied: 'In the Laotian thing, we killed about 10, 15'-10,000 or 15,000 people, he meant. The eventual death toll would be 200,000."

When it comes to killing, the US Government is without equal. In multiple wars of aggression, from Korea to Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and the proxy war for regime-change in Syria, US imperialism has killed and maimed tens of millions.

The chief accusation being leveled against Trump-by both supposed liberals in the Democratic Party and right-wing Republicans-is that he implied a "moral equivalence" between Russia and the US. This was a phrase used during the Cold War to justify every crime committed by the US and its allies, from Latin America's bloody dictatorships to the Apartheid regime in South Africa, on the grounds that there could be no "moral equivalence" between the leader of the "Free World" and the Soviet "Evil Empire."

There is, in fact, no equivalence. When it comes to killing and global thuggery, Putin is a small fry compared to the leaders of the United States.

That the Democratic Party jumps on this reactionary bandwagon only proves that there is nothing progressive whatsoever in its purported opposition to Trump. This was exemplified Monday by the remarks of California Congresswoman Maxine Waters, a supposed "left" Democrat and leading member of the Congressional Black Caucus, who suggested that Trump should be impeached for "wrapping his arms around Putin while Putin is continuing to advance into Korea [sic]."

Underlying the furor over Trump's remarks are fierce divisions over US imperialist strategy and Washington's preparations for war that have been brought into the open with the change of administrations.

These differences have been exacerbated by recent events in Syria. The Syrian government's retaking in December of eastern Aleppo, the last urban stronghold of the US-backed "rebels," represented a colossal setback for US policy in the Middle East.

There are bitter recriminations within the foreign policy establishment over the Obama administration's backing off of its "red line" in 2013, when it nearly went to war over false charges of Syrian government use of chemical weapons. Within these circles, there are many who feel that a military intervention would have been better for US interests, no matter what new catastrophe it unleashed.

An article published in the *Washington Post* Monday, warning that the US faces "a far stronger Iran" after "years of turmoil in the Arab world," spelled out the situation that Washington now confronts in stark terms:

"Iran and Russia together have fought to ensure the survival of President Bashar al-Assad's regime, and they are now pursuing a peace settlement in alliance with Turkey that excludes a role for the United States. America has been left with few friends and little leverage, apart from the Kurds in the northeast of the country.

“Russia controls the skies over Syria, and Turkey wields influence over the rebels, but Iran holds sway on the ground ...”

Talk of “respecting” Putin, possible collaboration with Russia against ISIS in Syria, and an easing of sanctions is not, as the Democrats have suggested, evidence of some secret control exercised by the Kremlin over Trump. It is, rather, part of a definite strategy of peeling Russia off from Iran in order to pave the way for a new war in the Middle East, while sharply escalating provocations against China.

Citing unnamed administration officials, the *Wall Street Journal* spelled this policy out on Monday: “The administration is exploring ways to break Russia’s military and diplomatic alliance with Iran... The emerging strategy seeks to reconcile President Donald Trump’s seemingly contradictory vows to improve relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin and to aggressively challenge the military presence of Iran.”

Trump’s chief White House strategist and adviser, Stephen Bannon, a student and admirer of Adolf Hitler, no doubt views the administration’s pivot toward Moscow through the historical prism of the Stalin-Hitler pact, which set the stage for the Second World War, a war that ultimately claimed 20 million Soviet lives.

Putin’s government is susceptible to such maneuvers. It shares all of the stupidity, backwardness and shortsightedness of the counterrevolutionary bureaucracy headed by Stalin. Putin sits atop a regime that represents a rapacious clique of oligarchs who enriched themselves through theft of state property and the extraction and sale of the resources of the former Soviet Union. They are anxious to see US sanctions lifted so that they can accelerate their accumulation of wealth at the expense of the Russian working class.

Within the US political establishment and Washington’s vast military and intelligence apparatus, there exists sharp opposition to Trump’s turn in foreign policy. Immense political, military and financial resources have been invested in the buildup against Russia, from the coup in Ukraine to the deployment of thousands of US and NATO troops on Russia’s western border. There are concerns within ruling circles that a shift in imperialist strategy is reckless and poses serious dangers.

While popular attention and outrage have been focused on Trump’s anti-democratic executive orders imposing a ban on Muslims and refugees, ordering a wall built on the southern border, and laying the groundwork for a mass dragnet against undocumented immigrant workers, within the ruling class a serious fight is being waged over global imperialist strategy.

This fight over policy is between two bands of cutthroats, each of which is committed to an escalation of US militarism to further the profit interests of the US-based banks and transnational corporations. Whichever one wins out, the threat of world war, rooted in the crisis of global capitalism, will only grow.

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