

Washington think tank bars WSWs reporter

An incident that says much about the US capital

Barry Grey in Washington DC
9 January 2007

In covering Washington DC, it does not take long to get a sense of the political atmosphere that pervades the nation's capital. It is a place where corporate interests and their legions of lobbyists wine, dine and bribe politicians of both parties. It is a place where corporate- and government-funded think tanks work out imperialist policies affecting the lives of countless millions of people at home and abroad, entirely outside the control and behind the backs of the American people.

An incident occurred Monday that provided a telling example of the real relationships and forces at work in Washington.

This reporter was barred from attending a public event at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a national security think tank that has close ties to the government and lists among its officers some of the most prominent names in the American foreign policy establishment.

The event, entitled "The Way Forward in Iraq," was advertised on the web site of the CSIS and posted on its events page, which states that all of the listed events "are open to the public." It was broadcast live on the CSPAN cable TV network.

This is but one of many official and semi-official events currently being held in the capital as part of the effort to fashion a bipartisan consensus, in complete disregard for the popular antiwar sentiment expressed in the November elections, on the basis of which the catastrophic US occupation of Iraq is to be continued and intensified.

The *World Socialist Web Site* registered to cover the CSIS forum as part of its reporting from Washington on the newly installed 110th Congress and the development of US policy in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East as a whole.

The panel for the event consisted of four members of the Armed Services Committee of the US House of Representatives: the new chairman of the committee, Rep. Ike Skelton (Democrat from Montana); Rep. Jim Marshall (Democrat from Georgia); Representative Jim Saxton (Republican from New Jersey) and Rep. Mac Thornberry (Republican from Texas).

The evening prior to the event, I sent an email to the Office of External Relations, the press office of the CSIS, to register as a

member of the press, in accordance with the instructions given on the CSIS web site. Early Monday morning, I telephoned the office to confirm my registration and was told I had been included on the list of press members registered to cover the panel discussion.

However, when I went to the press table 30 minutes before the scheduled start of the event, I was told by H. Andrew Schwartz, deputy director for external relations of the CSIS, that I was not on the list and that I could not attend as a member of the press. When I explained that I had registered and received confirmation that morning, Mr. Schwartz flatly denied that this had occurred.

I asked whether I could cover the event regardless, and he said I could not because the policy of the CSIS was to admit only those members of the press with "federalized credentials." He claimed that this policy is stated on the organization's web site. (I could find no such statement when I subsequently checked the CSIS web site.) When I protested at this arbitrary attempt to exclude me, Schwartz added that the press registration was "overbooked" and there was no room.

I then asked if I could attend as a member of the public, since the event was advertised on the CSIS web site as a public event. Schwartz said I could not because I had already sought to attend as a reporter. Sensing the irrationality of this argument, he added that the public registration was already complete. In the course of this exchange, he changed his previous story, admitting that I had registered "at 8:50 that morning," but claimed that by that time the press registration was already full.

When I told him none of this was true, he threatened to have me ejected from the building.

Schwartz's grounds for excluding the *World Socialist Web Site* were absurd. It was a public event, being addressed by elected officials of both parties. Why was I barred?

I was barred because, having realized who I was, the CSIS officials were concerned that I might raise a question that did not proceed from the entirely pro-establishment premises of the Washington press corps. They feared a question being posed, especially in the presence of the CSPAN cameras, that in any way exposed the real content of the policies being developed.

No intrusion into their reactionary deliberations by media representatives outside of their own circle could be permitted.

The incident underscores the elitist and undemocratic character of the entire system of political bodies, media organizations and policy think tanks that constitute the Washington establishment. It is a very small and politically incestuous fraternity of organizations and individuals who share a common allegiance to the corporate-financial ruling elite and disdain for the general public.

Washington abounds in think tanks like the CSIS. An examination of this particular institution sheds light on the entire network of quasi-government organizations and the personnel and political outlooks that shape government policy.

Let us start with H. Andrew Schwartz. According to the CSIS web site, "Prior to joining CSIS, Mr. Schwartz was a spokesman for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), America's pro-Israel lobby. Prior to that, Mr. Schwartz produced the Fox News Channel's *Special Report with Brit Hume* for more than five years and subsequently served as a White House producer for the network . . . Early in his career, Mr. Schwartz served as a research assistant to former Carter domestic policy adviser Stuart E. Eizenstat . . . and as a legislative fellow in the offices of Senator J. Bennett Johnston (D-LA) and Representative Lindy Boggs (D-New Orleans)."

This is a profile of a Democratic Party functionary who moved on to work for the right-wing Murdoch media empire and a powerful US lobby working in behalf of the Zionist regime in Israel.

He is, however, a relative small fry on the CSIS roster. The figure listed among the think tank's "experts" with perhaps the biggest public profile is Anthony H. Cordesman, the CSIS' Arleigh A. Burke chair in strategy.

A national security analyst for ABC News, Cordesman has appeared many times on television news and commentary programs. The CSIS web site lists his research focus as energy, the Middle East and North Africa, defense policy, and terrorism and transnational threats. His expertise as listed on the web site includes Middle East military affairs, weapons of mass destruction, national missile defense, homeland defense, Middle East energy, Saudi Arabia, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A former national security assistant to the pro-war Republican Senator John McCain, he also held posts in the Defense Department, the State Department, the Energy Department and NATO. His foreign assignments include stints in Lebanon, Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia. "He has," according to the web site, "led studies on national missile defense, asymmetric warfare, weapons of mass destruction, and critical infrastructure protection."

This profile describes a veteran state operative who specializes in the defense of American imperialist oil interests and counterinsurgency.

A list of the other leading lights of CSIS comprises a who's who of US imperialist intrigue, war and subversion. They include the organization's chairman, Sam Nunn, the former Democratic senator from Georgia with the closest ties to the military establishment, and trustees Richard Armitage, formerly Colin Powell's deputy in George W. Bush's State Department; Harold Brown, secretary of defense under Carter; Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's national security adviser; William Cohen, defense secretary under Clinton; investment banker Felix Rohatyn; David M. Rubenstein, co-founder and managing director of the Carlyle Group; James R. Schlesinger, defense secretary under Nixon and Ford and energy secretary under Carter; Brent Scowcroft, national security adviser for the senior Bush; and Henry Kissinger.

Under "About CSIS" the web site states that the organization "seeks to advance global security" and "serves as a strategic planning partner for the government." The "brief history" provided on the site vaunts the CSIS' anti-communist credentials, stating, "The CSIS was launched at the height of the Cold War," and stresses its bipartisan character: "From its beginning, CSIS has been committed to bipartisan problem solving . . . CSIS actively unites leaders from both parties to join in shared problem solving."

According the web site's financial information page, CSIS receives 9 percent of its funding from the US government and 28 percent from corporations.

Here we have the profile of an organization at the very center of US imperialist policy-making. It exemplifies the Washington establishment as a whole.

The CSIS does not want a web site that is read daily by tens of thousands of students and working people all over the world intruding into its efforts to salvage the US interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. The prosecution of these neo-colonial wars in the name of "democracy" entails the closing down of democracy within the US.

The exclusion of the *World Socialist Web Site* reflects the essential political character of Washington DC. It is not a center of representative government. It is rather a center of conspiracies against the American people and the international working class.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact