

# US national security insider found dead in trash dump

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The body of John Wheeler, a former senior Pentagon official and current national security consultant was dumped from a trash truck into a Delaware landfill New Year's eve.

Wheeler, who had served in the administrations of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush, was a well-known Washington national security insider, who at the time of his death was deeply involved in US cyber warfare programs. He had also worked as a senior official at the Securities and Exchange Commission in the 1980s.

The former official was last seen in downtown Wilmington, Delaware on the evening of December 30. He had a home in the nearby upscale town of Old New Castle and had apparently returned by train from his job outside Washington two days earlier. According to the *Wilmington News Journal*, witnesses described him as "a man disoriented and so disheveled that he was mistaken for a homeless person."

A garage attendant said that she saw the 66-year-old Wheeler searching for his car, holding his shoe in his hand. He told her that he did not have a ticket for the vehicle as someone had stolen his briefcase. His car was subsequently discovered blocks away at another garage near the train station, where he reserved a space monthly.

He was also caught on surveillance video at a Wilmington office building. Lt. Mark Farrall of the Newark, Delaware police told the *News Journal* that Wheeler "appears confused" and that "several individuals ... offered assistance to him" but he refused help.

The Newark police have taken the lead in the investigation as Wheeler's body was likely thrown into one of ten large trash bins in Newark that were emptied by the garbage truck which then delivered it the

landfill.

While having ruled the death a homicide, the authorities have not given a cause of death, determined where Wheeler was killed or indicated any suspects.

It was reported Tuesday that the FBI has entered the investigation.

Among those who had demanded a federal probe was retired Lt. Gen. Tom McInerney, the former Air Force assistant vice chief of staff. The two had worked together when Wheeler was a senior assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force during the last four years of the George W. Bush administration.

The murder "had to be a professional hit job," McInerney told Fox News. Asked what motive there was for such a killing, the retired general said, "I don't know why, but he had some of the highest security clearances in this country."

According to the Wilmington newspaper, police spent the weekend searching Wheeler's homes where, it reported, floorboards had been removed from the kitchen.

A next-door neighbor told the *News Journal* that for the previous several days a television was playing loudly inside Wheeler's house, but no one appeared to be home.

Citing a "law enforcement source", the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported Wednesday that an investigation has linked Wheeler to an explosive device planted at the New Castle home of a neighbor in what appeared to have been an attempted arson.

Wheeler had filed a lawsuit to stop the construction of the two-story dwelling, which he charged would block his own view of a park and the Delaware River. The lawyer who was handling the case has offices near to where Wheeler was last spotted in downtown

Wilmington last week.

The *Inquirer* reported that its source “emphasized that the evidence does not shed light on Wheeler’s death, but it has helped detectives understand his state of mind before he disappeared.”

At the time of his death, Wheeler was working as a consultant for the MITRE Corporation, based in McLean, Virginia, outside Washington.

Described as a not-for-profit corporation, MITRE was created in the late 1950s to provide scientific and technological support for the US war machine. Last year it was awarded a \$375 million contract for “systems engineering and integration support for the Air Force.”

Headed by James Schlesinger, the former CIA director and defense secretary, MITRE provides services not only to the Pentagon, but also to the Federal Aviation Administration, the US Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service. Another of its newer “clients” is the Department of Homeland Security, which it assists with “protection from terrorist threats”, immigration and “recovery from national emergencies.”

The corporation boasts the services of some 6,700 scientists and “support specialists.”

Wheeler began his rise within the national security and political establishment as a graduate of the US Military Academy at West Point in 1966. Within a year of graduation, the military sent him to Harvard University, where he completed a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree.

Ten percent of Wheeler’s West Point class was killed in the Vietnam War. The son of a West Point graduate who was a prominent officer in the war, Wheeler served in Vietnam as a staff officer and did not see combat.

Wheeler left the Army after completing the five-year minimum service required of USMA graduates. From there, he went to Yale Law School. Within three years of completing his law degree, he was at the Securities and Exchange Commission.

In addition to his career in the government and military-industrial complex, Wheeler led the fundraising campaign for the building of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

Journalist James Fallows, who was Jimmy Carter’s chief speechwriter in the 1970s, had known Wheeler

for many years, having worked with him on a 1980s book *Touched with Fire* on the impact of the Vietnam War. He described him as a “complicated man of very intense (and sometimes changeable) friendships, passions, and causes.”

The book posed the necessity of “healing the divisions” caused by the Vietnam War, in large measure in order to prepare for the wars that were to come.

At the time of his death, Wheeler was involved in a public campaign to pressure elite universities to allow the Reserve Officer Training Corps to operate on their campuses. Previously, he had been a vocal opponent of the decision to scrap the multi-billion-dollar program to build the new F-22 fighter jet.



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