

US media steps up espionage slander against Edward Snowden

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As the one-year anniversary of the publication of the first of Edward Snowden's revelations of massive and illegal government spying on the American and world population approaches, the campaign of vilification and character assassination against the former National Security Agency contractor is being stepped up.

A particularly filthy example is a column published Saturday in the *Wall Street Journal* by author Edward Jay Epstein, entitled "Was Snowden's Heist a Foreign Espionage Operation?"

The author does not advance a shred of actual evidence to back up his accusation, which may explain why the headline is in the form of a question. The charge is stated more plainly in a blowout that accompanies the piece: "Those who know the files he stole think he was working for a foreign power, perhaps Russia, where he now lives."

This is but one of thousands of propaganda pieces being pumped out that have nothing to do with legitimate journalism. It is witch-hunting and frame-up either commissioned by the state intelligence agencies or tailored to their specifications. Its modus operandi is distortion, innuendo and falsification.

Epstein is the author of a series of books on the assassination of John F. Kennedy, including *Legend: The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald*, and works on US intelligence operations, including *Deception: The Invisible War Between the KGB & the CIA*. He is well connected to the NSA, the CIA and the American intelligence complex.

He begins by attacking the notion that Snowden is a whistle-blower, attributing that view—held by the vast majority of the American and world public—to a "narrative designed by Mr. Snowden himself." Epstein snidely dismisses the notion that "Snowden, acting alone ... heroically exposed the evils of government

surveillance beginning in 2013."

He cites as witnesses against Snowden military, intelligence and political figures such as Gen. Martin Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Republican head of the House Intelligence Committee Mike Rogers; Chairperson of the Senate Intelligence Committee Dianne Feinstein; Rick Ledgett, an NSA executive; and recently retired NSA Director Keith Alexander. Both Rogers and Feinstein are on record calling Snowden a traitor and demanding that he be sent back to the US and prosecuted for espionage.

Epstein adds that a "former member of President Obama's cabinet went even further, suggesting to me off the record in March this year that there are only three possible explanations for the Snowden heist: 1) It was a Russian espionage operation; 2) It was a Chinese espionage operation, or 3) It was a joint Sino-Russian operation."

The evidence? The fact that only a small portion of the documents Snowden downloaded deal directly with mass spying programs against civilians. That is it, except for the following supposedly damning fact:

"The suspicions that whistle-blowing was a cover for espionage by Mr. Snowden are further heightened by his winding up under the protection of the Russian security service, the FSB, in Moscow."

Play fast and loose with the truth, Mr. Epstein, but give the public credit for at least a smattering of intelligence!

Anyone familiar with the Snowden story knows that he ended up in Russia not by choice, but because of the actions of the United States government. Last June 23, Snowden flew to Moscow's Sheremetyevo International Airport with a ticket for an onward flight to Latin America via Cuba. The Obama administration, which had already accused Snowden of violating the

Espionage Act and stealing government property, and had lifted his passport, announced that it would have him arrested and deported to the US if he stepped out of the airport transit zone.

After being stranded in the airport for more than a month, he accepted the offer of the Russian government for a one-year temporary renewable asylum. So much for his sinister decision to “live in Russia”!

Epstein then goes on to argue that Snowden’s state enemies are a more reliable source of information than Snowden or the media outlets that have published his revelations. He writes: “His detractors are the people who know enough about what happened to conclude that far from being a whistle-blower, Mr. Snowden was a participant in an espionage operation...”

Of course, they are also complicit in the massive crimes against the US Constitution and the democratic rights of the people that Snowden has exposed, and therefore have a huge vested interest in demonizing and silencing the whistle-blower—including the possibility that they could be criminally prosecuted in the future.

That Epstein’s article is part of a broader campaign is demonstrated by the inclusion in Sunday’s edition of ABC News’ “This Week” interview program of a segment introduced with the question: “Is Edward Snowden a spy?”

ABC News correspondent Pierre Thomas states: “Edward Snowden is a traitor and could be a spy recruited by Russia to target the US. That’s the suspicion of the man who was running the NSA when the breach happened last year.”

Asked, “Is he a spy?” former NSA Director Alexander replies with innuendo to the effect that he is, stating: “I don’t know the answer to that. I am concerned that where he is now, he is at least influenced by Russia. The real question—and we don’t know an answer to—is how far back did that go?”

The implication is that the US government must get its hands on Snowden to extract the information from him.

Alexander goes on to repeat the official smear that Snowden is aiding and abetting terrorists, declaring: “We’re losing capabilities to track terrorists. This is a huge impact.”

Next, moderator Martha Raddatz brings in former White House counterterrorism adviser Richard Clarke to pile on against Snowden. Asked by Raddatz, “Do

you think that Edward Snowden damaged national security?” Clarke replies, “I know he did.”

This is a scurrilous operation, directed in the first instance against an individual who heroically sacrificed his career, and possibly his life, to expose to the people of America and the world a secret police state operation that tracks virtually every communication of a large proportion of the earth’s inhabitants. More fundamentally, the witch-hunt of Snowden is directed against the democratic rights of the working class.

It demonstrates the complete integration of the corporate-controlled media into the apparatus of the state and the complicity of pseudo-journalists who churn out propaganda and lies to assist in the destruction of democratic rights.



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