

Media misinformation and the US election's war agenda

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The arrest Thursday of two North Carolina men on charges that they successfully hacked the online computer accounts of CIA Director John Brennan, the deputy FBI director and other senior American officials, as well as the computer systems of the Justice Department and other agencies, has cast a revealing light on a central theme promoted by the Hillary Clinton camp and the US media in the 2016 presidential election campaign.

Last July, WikiLeaks posted some 20,000 Democratic National Committee emails that included a damaging exposure of the DNC's attempt to rig the party's primaries in favor of Clinton and against her rival Bernie Sanders. Ever since then, Clinton and the media have insisted that the source of the leak was Russian intelligence, and that this was evidence of an attempt by Russian President Vladimir Putin to interfere in the US election.

In the first instance, this allegation, which was a virtually instantaneous response to the leak, was used to quash any discussion of the actual content of the emails, which provided genuine evidence of the Democratic Party establishment's interference in the process. Then, as Clinton executed a sharp pivot to the right, it formed a foundation of her attempt to portray Republican rival Donald Trump as a dupe of the Kremlin and an unreliable candidate for directing US war aims.

This narrative was promoted enthusiastically by the *New York Times*, which published wholly unsubstantiated "news" stories citing unnamed US officials claiming a "high degree of confidence" that the source of the emails was Russia. This in turn fed editorial columns, such as that of the *Times*' Paul Krugman, describing Trump as the "Siberian candidate." As is often the case, the rest of the media

followed the lead of the *Times*, the lack of a single fact to back up these allegations notwithstanding.

What this week's arrests in North Carolina make clear is that the hacking of the DNC's emails did not require the resources of Russian intelligence. The charges against the two men are still unproven. Clearly, however, they indicate that there are many, many individuals with the skill sets needed to carry out that kind of data breach, and undoubtedly many of them with more direct motives than Vladimir Putin for exposing the dirty machinations of the Democratic Party and the Clinton campaign.

The affidavit in support of the arrests submitted by the FBI in a federal district court in Alexandria, Virginia, identified the two defendants as Andrew Otto Boggs, 22, and Justin Gray Liverman, 24, who are said to be part of a "conspiracy," i.e., a hackers' group, that identified itself as "Crackas with Attitude."

Other members of this "conspiracy," who were not charged in the US, were two 17-year-old and one 15-year-old British youths, who were identified by their online aliases: "Cracka," "Derp," and "Cubed."

Between them they were able to access the emails, voicemails and online accounts of the head of the CIA, the number-two man at the FBI, as well as officials at the White House, the Department of Homeland Security and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. Presumably, similar individuals, without the backing of Russia's FSB or any other intelligence agency, would have been able to do the same thing in relation to the DNC.

There is ample reason to believe that the charges of Russian interference have been made up out of whole cloth. The aim here is not only to further the electoral strategy of Hillary Clinton, who is seeking to win the election by attacking Trump from the right and locking

in the support of both the Republican Party establishment and Washington's immense military-intelligence complex. It is also to further the anti-Russia agenda that is today the focal point of US imperialist global strategy, while preparing public opinion for the prospect of war.

The *New York Times* today functions openly and unabashedly as a mouthpiece for both this Clinton campaign strategy and these broader geostrategic aims of US imperialism. It carries out this rotten role under the guiding hand of state-connected figures like the paper's new editorial page editor, James Bennett, whose brother is a US Senator from Colorado and whose father was an assistant secretary of state and head of the US Agency for International Development, which has long served as a front for the CIA.

That these elements will not tolerate any diversion by the media from the official line being propagated by the *Times* was made clear in the paper's hysterical reaction to the "Commander-in-Chief Forum" broadcast by NBC on Wednesday. A *Times* editorial published Friday, headlined "A Debate Disaster Waiting to Happen," went after the moderator of the event, NBC's Matt Lauer, insinuating that he was guilty of both negligence and bias.

Lauer, according to the *Times*, "neglected to ask penetrating questions, call out falsehoods or insist on answers when it was obvious that Mr. Trump's responses had drifted off." It went on to charge that he "seemed most energized interrogating Mrs. Clinton about her use of a personal email server while secretary of state."

Lauer, a talk show host and news anchor, was no better nor worse than any of the other media talking heads in terms of questioning the two candidates. Little was revealed by the broadcast, outside of the subservience of both parties, the media and the entire US political setup to American militarism.

However, if Lauer is to be accused of having dropped the ball by failing to go after Trump, he should also be indicted for failing to confront Clinton over the barefaced lies she spouted before the audience of military veterans.

She defended her enthusiastic backing for the war of aggression that devastated Libya by recycling the proven lie that it was needed to stop an imminent massacre.

She told the audience, "We are not putting ground troops into Iraq ever again. And we're not putting ground troops into Syria." This, under conditions in which there are already close to 6,000 troops deployed in Iraq and several hundred in Syria. Clinton has herself repeatedly declared her support for establishing a "no-fly zone" in Syria, which would entail a massive escalation of US military intervention and a greatly heightened threat of direct military confrontation with Russia.

If there is an indictment to be made of the NBC forum, it applies with equal if not greater force to the *Times* and the entire US media. It has deliberately concealed the growing threat of global war, even as the US elections unfold under conditions of escalating tensions in the Middle East and increasingly reckless military brinksmanship by US imperialism on Russia's borders and in the South China Sea.

If there is one line of questioning Lauer should have pursued with both big-business candidates it is the following: What do you think will be the consequences of a war with Russia or China? What do you think the US and the rest of the planet will look like the day after it begins? What portion of humanity do you expect will survive?

Of course no one in the corporate-controlled media is interested in raising the real dangers confronting the masses of working people in the US and around the world. Instead, they are engaged in deliberately covering them up.

This makes all the more important the role of the *World Socialist Web Site* in exposing these threats and developing a political strategy to guide the fight against war; and all the more vital the support of its readers in sustaining the WSWS and laying the basis for the continuous expansion of its coverage and global reach.



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