WikiLeaks reveals vast CIA spying, cyberwar operation

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8 March 2017

The bitter internecine struggle within the US state apparatus and ruling political establishment, featuring unsubstantiated Democratic claims of Russian hacking in support of Trump, on the one hand, and Trump's own charge that his campaign was bugged by Obama, on the other, was overshadowed Tuesday by a massive release of CIA documents by WikiLeaks.

The 8,761 documents contained in what WikiLeaks has described as "the largest intelligence publication in history" have begun to lay bare a vast system of surveillance, hacking and cyberwarfare directed against the people of the United States and the entire planet.

The anti-secrecy organization called the first document trove "Year Zero" and said that further CIA data dumps are still to come under a larger project dubbed "Vault 7."

The files were taken from the CIA's Center for Cyber Intelligence, a huge and little-known command that includes some 5,000 hackers, both CIA agents and private contractors. Much as in the case of Edward Snowden's leaking of secret documents exposing the global spying operation of the National Security Agency (NSA) in 2013, the CIA documents have apparently come from a former agency hacker or contractor concerned about the scope and purpose of the agency's cyberwar operations.

The programs described in the documents indicate that the CIA, according to WikiLeaks, has developed "more than a thousand hacking systems, trojans, viruses and other 'weaponized' malware" allowing it to seize control of devices, including Apple iPhones, Google's Android operating system (used by 85 percent of smart phones) and devices running Microsoft Windows. By hacking these devices, the CIA is also able to intercept information before it is encrypted on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, Wiebo, Confide and Cloackman.

The agency has apparently stockpiled so-called weaponized "zero-day" threats that can be used to exploit unidentified vulnerabilities in a wide range of devices before their manufacturer is able to detect the flaw and correct it. Under the Obama administration, the White House had supposedly established a "Vulnerabilities Equities Process," under which the intelligence agencies would inform manufacturers of most software vulnerabilities while keeping some to itself for exploitation. In part, this was designed to prevent US companies from losing market share overseas. The vast character of the CIA arsenal establishes that this program was a sham from the outset.

One of the programs developed by the CIA, codenamed "Weeping Angel," turns Samsung smart televisions into the kind of technology envisioned by George Orwell in *1984*, in which "thought police" monitored "telescreens" that served as both televisions, broadcasting the speeches of "Big Brother," and security cameras, monitoring every word and action of the viewer. This surveillance technique places targeted TVs in a "fake off" mode, transmitting conversations in a room over the Internet to a covert CIA server.

WikiLeaks reported that a large amount of information had been redacted from the leaked documents, including computer codes for actual cyberweapons as well as the identities of "tens of thousands of CIA targets and attack machines throughout Latin America, Europe and the United States."

That "targets" exist in the US indicates that the agency is engaged in wholesale domestic spying in violation of its charter.

The documents also establish that the CIA has developed these programs in collaboration with MI5, the British intelligence agency, and that it operates a covert cyberwarfare center out of the US Consulate in Frankfurt, Germany.

One chilling revelation provided by the documents, according to WikiLeaks, is that, "As of October 2014 the

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CIA was also looking at infecting the vehicle control systems used by modern cars and trucks." WikiLeaks notes that "The purpose of such control is not specified, but it would permit the CIA to engage in nearly undetectable assassinations."

While WikiLeaks does not specifically mention it, this was the scenario suggested by many in the 2013 fatal single-car accident in Los Angeles that claimed the life of journalist Michael Hastings. At the time of his death, Hastings, who had previously written an article that led to the removal of Gen. Stanley McChrystal as the top US commander in Afghanistan, was working on a profile of Obama's CIA Director John Brennan. Before the accident, Hastings had informed colleagues that he was under government surveillance and had asked a neighbor to lend him her car, saying he feared his own vehicle had been tampered with.

One other politically significant element of the revelations contained in the WikiLeaks documents concerns a CIA program known as "Umbrage," which consists of a sizable "library" of malware and cyberattack techniques developed in other countries, including Russia. The agency is able to exploit these "stolen" tools to mask its own attacks and misdirect attribution to their originators. The existence of such a program underscores the lack of any foundation for the hysterical campaign alleging Russia's responsibility for the hacking and leaking of Democratic Party emails.

While the Democrats continue to center their fire against Trump on the question of alleged ties to Russia—rather than the reactionary policies his administration has unleashed against immigrants and the working class as a whole—the WikiLeaks revelations about the CIA are being dismissed by sections of the media as another Moscow plot.

Along similar lines, the *New York Times* Monday published a lengthy article mocking alleged "signs of a White House preoccupation with a 'deep state' working to thwart the Trump presidency" following Trump's charge that he had been bugged during the presidential campaign.

Such a term might be appropriate for countries like Egypt, Turkey or Pakistan, the *Times* argued, but could not be applied to the US because it "suggests an undemocratic nation where legal and moral norms are ignored."

The reality is that the "deep state" in the US is more massive and powerful than anywhere in the world and is the patron of similar military-intelligence complexes in countries like Egypt, Turkey and Pakistan. As for "legal and moral norms," the latest revelations about the CIA, an organization long ago dubbed Murder, Inc., offer a glimpse of the real methods of the American state.

That the *Times* attempts to dismiss concerns about the activities and influence of the military-intelligence apparatus only establishes its own role as a propaganda organ and ideological instrument of this "deep state," with the most intimate ties to the CIA, the Pentagon and other agencies.

The documents released by WikiLeaks cover the period of 2013 to 2016, the last years of the Obama administration, which presided over the continuation and spread of the wars begun under Bush, a sweeping expansion of the power the US intelligence apparatus and a corresponding assault on democratic rights. This included the organization of an international drone assassination program under which the White House claimed the authority to order the extrajudicial murder of American citizens.

This vast apparatus of war, repression and mass surveillance has now been handed over to the administration of Donald Trump, a government of billionaires, generals and outright fascists that is determined to escalate war abroad and carry out unprecedented attacks on the working class at home.

While the Democratic Party is calling for a special prosecutor over alleged Russian "meddling" in the US election—a demand aimed at sustaining the US war drive against Russia and diverting the mass opposition to Trump into reactionary channels—and Trump is calling for a probe of the alleged bugging of his communications, neither side has called for investigation of the CIA spying operation. Both Democrats and Republicans are agreed that such police-state measures are required to defend the crisis-ridden capitalist system against the threat of a social revolution by the working class.

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