

The global cyberattack, the NSA and Washington's war propaganda against Russia

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The cyberattack that hit some 200,000 computers around the world last Friday, apparently using malicious software developed by the US National Security Agency, is only expected to escalate and spread with the start of the new workweek.

The cyber weapon employed in the attack, known as “WannaCrypt,” has proven to be one of the most destructive and far-reaching ever. Among the targets whose computer systems were hijacked in the attack was Britain’s National Health Service, which was unable to access patient records and forced to cancel appointments, treatments and surgeries.

Major corporations hit include the Spanish telecom Telefonica, the French automaker Renault, the US-based delivery service Fedex and Germany’s federal railway system. Among the worst affected countries were reportedly Russia, Ukraine and Japan.

The weaponized software employed in the attacks locks up files in an infected computer by encrypting them, while demanding \$300 in Bitcoin (digital currency) to decrypt them and restore access.

Clearly, this kind of attack has the potential for massive social disruption and, through its attack on institutions like Britain’s NHS, exacting a toll in human life.

This event, among the worst global cyberattacks in history, also sheds considerable light on issues that have dominated the political life of the United States for the past 10 months, since WikiLeaks began its release of documents obtained from the hacked accounts of the Democratic National Committee and John Podesta, the chairman of Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign.

The content of these leaked documents exposed, on the one hand, the DNC’s machinations to sabotage the presidential campaign of Bernie Sanders, and, on the

other, the subservience of his rival, Hillary Clinton, to Wall Street through her own previously secret and lavishly paid speeches to financial institutions like Goldman Sachs.

This information, which served to discredit Clinton, the favored candidate of the US military and intelligence apparatus, was drowned out by a massive campaign by the US government and the corporate media to blame Russia for the hacking and for direct interference in the US election, i.e., by allegedly making information available to the American people that was supposed to be kept secret from them.

Ever since then, US intelligence agencies, Democratic Party leaders and the corporate media, led by the *New York Times*, have endlessly repeated the charge of Russian hacking, involving the personal direction of Vladimir Putin. To this day, none of these agencies or media outlets have provided any probative evidence of Russian responsibility for “hacking the US election.”

Among the claims made to support the allegations against Moscow was that the hacking of the Democrats was so sophisticated that it could have been carried out only by a state actor. In a campaign to demonize Russia, Moscow’s alleged hacking was cast as a threat to the entire planet.

Western security agencies have acknowledged that the present global cyberattack—among the worst ever of its kind—is the work not of any state agency, but rather of a criminal organization. Moreover, the roots of the attack lie not in Moscow, but in Washington. The “WannaCrypt” malware employed in the attack is based on weaponized software developed by the NSA, code-named Eternal Blue, part of a bundle of documents and computer code stolen from the NSA’s server and then leaked by a hacking group known as

“Shadow Brokers.”

Thus, amid the hysterical propaganda campaign over Russian hacking, Washington has been developing an array of cyber-weapons that have the capability of crippling entire countries. Through the carelessness of the NSA, some of these weapons have now been placed in the hands of criminals. US authorities did nothing to warn the public, much less prepare it to protect itself against the inevitable unleashing of the cyber weapons it itself had crafted.

In its report on the global cyberattacks on Saturday, the *New York Times* stated: “It could take months to find out who was behind the attacks—a mystery that may go unsolved.”

The co-author of these lines was the *New York Times* chief Washington correspondent David E. Sanger, who, in addition to writing for the “newspaper of record,” finds time to lecture at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, a state-connected finishing school for top political and military officials. He also holds membership in both the Council on Foreign Relations and the Aspen Strategy Group, think tanks that bring together capitalist politicians, military and intelligence officials and corporate heads to discuss US imperialist strategy.

All of this makes Sanger one of the favorite media conduits for “leaks” and propaganda that the CIA and the Pentagon want put into the public domain.

It is worth contrasting his treatment of the “WannaCrypt” ransomware attack with the way he and the *Times* dealt with the allegations of Russian hacking in the run-up to and aftermath of the 2016 US presidential election.

There was no question then of an investigation taking months to uncover the culprit, much less any mystery going unsolved. Putin and Russia were declared guilty based upon unsubstantiated allegations and innuendo. Ever since, the *Times*, serving as the propaganda outlet of the US intelligence services, has given the lead to the rest of the media by endlessly repeating the allegation of Russian state direction of the hacking of the Democratic Party, without bothering to provide any evidence to back up the charge.

With the entire world now under attack from a weapon forged by Washington’s cyberwarfare experts, the hysterical allegations of Russian hacking are placed in perspective.

From the beginning, they have been utilized as war propaganda, a means of attempting to promote popular support for US imperialism’s steady escalation of military threats and aggression against Russia, the world’s second-largest nuclear power.

Since Trump’s inauguration, the Democratic Party has only intensified the anti-Russian propaganda. It serves both as a means of pressuring the Trump administration to abandon any turn toward a less aggressive policy toward Moscow, and of smothering the popular opposition to the right-wing and anti-working class policies of the administration under a reactionary and neo-McCarthyite campaign painting Trump as an agent of the Kremlin.



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