

Ex-CIA head John Brennan hired as news analyst by NBC

Julian James
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The further integration of the US corporate-controlled media with the American intelligence apparatus was signaled by the recent announcement that the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), a subsidiary of the cable TV giant Comcast, has hired former CIA Director John Brennan as a news analyst. Brennan will be a paid contributor and “senior national security and intelligence analyst” for NBC News.

Brennan is implicated in some of the most criminal policies enacted under the Bush and Obama administrations, including the CIA torture program and the drone assassination program. The latter, under Brennan’s tenure first as Obama’s deputy national security adviser for homeland security and counterterrorism and then as CIA director, was used to kill thousands of innocent civilians along with alleged terrorists, including US citizens. It continues to operate in at least half a dozen countries in Africa and the Middle East.

As director of the National Counterterrorism Center under George W. Bush, Brennan played a major role in the “extraordinary rendition” program, whereby suspected terrorists were kidnapped and sent to CIA “black sites,” where they were systematically tortured.

One would be hard pressed to find any figure in the intelligence establishment with more open disdain for human rights, the rule of law, civil liberties and the framework of checks and balances between the three branches of government—executive, legislative and judicial—laid down in the US Constitution.

In 2014, Brennan became embroiled in a major scandal that pointed to the increasing tendency of the CIA to act unchecked as a law unto itself. With Obama’s support, he had worked to block the release of a Senate Intelligence Committee report on the results of its investigation into the post-9/11 torture program initiated by the Bush administration.

In March of 2014, then-Intelligence Committee Chair Dianne Feinstein took to the floor of the Senate to denounce Brennan and the CIA for hacking into the computers of

committee staffers working on the torture report, calling it a flagrant attack on Congress, which is tasked with overseeing the CIA, and a direct violation of the Constitution. Obama, who had blocked any prosecution of Bush officials involved in the torture program, sided with Brennan, who responded to Feinstein’s denunciation by filing a criminal referral with the Justice Department to prosecute Intelligence Committee investigators for allegedly stealing classified CIA material.

In December of 2014, the committee released a 600-page declassified version of its 8,000-page report, which contained horrific and damning details about the CIA torture program. Feinstein quickly dropped her criticisms of Brennan and the media almost immediately buried the torture report.

Now, using his platform at NBC/MSNBC, Brennan will continue to serve the interests of American imperialism at home and abroad, albeit in a different role. He joins the ranks of CIA, NSA and Pentagon mouthpieces embedded in mainstream news outlets, such as Michael Morell, deputy director and for a time acting director of the CIA under Obama. Morell, also known for his defense of torture and drone assassinations, appears regularly on CBS News to make hysterical denunciations of Russian “meddling” and agitate for a war of aggression against North Korea.

The list of retired generals and intelligence agents extends far beyond these two men and includes Jack Keane (Fox News), Mark Hertling (CNN), Montgomery Meigs (NBC/MSNBC) and many others. Very little effort is made to uphold any pretense of impartiality on the part of these representatives of the intelligence/military/industrial complex within the news media.

One particularly blatant case is retired general Barry McCaffrey, a long-time “military analyst” at NBC/MSNBC, who for years has used his platform on national television to call for massive increases in defense spending. In an obvious conflict of interest, McCaffrey is also a paid lobbyist for defense contractors Dyncorp and Defense Solutions.

The infiltration and co-opting of American news outlets by the Pentagon and the intelligence agencies is not a new

phenomenon and has been official (though unstated) policy since the late 1940s, when CIA chief Allen Dulles began a program to secure the cooperation of powerful media bosses in advancing the interests of American foreign policy. Dulles developed a personal relationship with a number of network heads, including CBS's William Paley.

Paley was an eager collaborator, making sure that information deemed unfavorable to the CIA went unreported and providing cover for numerous paid CIA operatives to work as "journalists" and "correspondents" at the network. Arthur Hays Sulzberger, editor of the *New York Times* in the 1950s, developed a similar relationship with Dulles. Through the CIA's sustained campaign for influence and editorial control, the mainstream media was made to function to a large degree as an arm of the agency.

These activities were revealed in a 1976 report by the Senate committee headed by Idaho Democrat Frank Church, which found that "approximately 50 [CIA assets] are individual American journalists or employees of US media organizations." The Church committee based its investigation on information supplied by the CIA itself, which no doubt presented only the tip of the iceberg with regard to its involvement in manipulating the mainstream media. It is safe to assume that, aside from the high profile former agents and generals at the various news networks, there remains a legion of unidentified CIA assets providing their services when called upon.

The efforts of the intelligence agencies and the military to co-opt and control the mass media, as successful as they have been, cannot fully account for the near-total integration of these two pillars of American capitalism. There is an organic alignment of interests that leads mainstream networks, themselves massive business interests, to work in lockstep with the intelligence agencies and the military in advancing the interests of American imperialism.

US wars and interventions are, in the final analysis, operations to secure the profit interests of American corporations and the thin layer of owners and stockholders who derive their tremendous wealth from them. In the case of NBC, this relationship is glaringly obvious. General Electric, NBC's parent company until 2011, makes tens of billions of dollars selling hardware for America's endless wars and interventions.

One of the primary tasks presently allotted to CIA-connected media personalities and "journalists" is to support the drive to isolate and dismember the Russian Federation by repeating as established and indisputable facts unsubstantiated allegations of Russian meddling made by the intelligence agencies. Russia's disintegration would spell a bonanza for corporate America and its prospects for expansion throughout Eurasia and the Middle East.

The same can be said for China, a country with a \$12 trillion-economy and plans to vastly expand its economic reach, which finds itself in the crosshairs of the Trump administration and the American ruling class. Iran and North Korea are likewise being targeted for dismemberment. The media are virtually silent on the fact that war against any of these nations could easily lead to a nuclear conflict that would result in the annihilation of all life on earth.

As the drive to war escalates, the major Internet conglomerates are also playing a key role in suppressing domestic dissent and limiting the population's access to information and left-wing perspectives. This is accomplished through blatant acts of censorship.

Socialist and anti-war news sources such as the *World Socialist Web Site* have been scrubbed from Google search results and demoted on Facebook. Content from "trusted" and "authoritative" news sources such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*—both notorious for their record of publishing fabricated stories—is being promoted, driving stock values for the two media outlets to new heights.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg also recently announced that the social media giant will begin deprioritizing news and political content. National and international news stories will be demoted in favor of local stories for the benevolent purpose of "building community--both on and offline," and "making sure that Facebook isn't just fun but also good for your well-being and for society."

Meanwhile, the promotion of militarism and state violence in the media is reaching nauseating levels. A recent advertisement for the Marines aired to tens of millions of Americans during Super Bowl LII features warplanes taking off from an aircraft carrier and bombing a Middle Eastern-looking city, while soldiers go door-to-door in tactical teams firing off their assault rifles.



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