US Department of Homeland Security compiling database of world's journalists

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The Trump administration's Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is establishing a database of the public activities, "sentiments" and personal information of hundreds of thousands of news publications, journalists, bloggers and "media influencers" around the world. The project was revealed in an April 3 notice on the governmental Federal Business Opportunities website requesting proposals from private contractors to administer the project.

The "Media Monitoring Service" will provide DHS with "24/7 access to a password protected, media influencer database," which will include "journalists, editors, correspondents, social media influencers, etc."

There are no constraints on who should be placed in the database or what information it should contain. The instructions state: "For each media influencer found, present contact details and any other information that could be relevant." Given that the brief specifically refers to monitoring the "sentiments" of publishers, "relevant" information undoubtedly will include journalists' political views and affiliations, personal relations, and more.

The document specifically calls for the capacity to draw up lists of journalists and publications, specifying an "ability to build media lists based on beat, location, outlet type/size, and journalist role."

The unlimited scope of this program is made clear by the section, "objectives," which calls for monitoring "any and all media coverage" either "related to the DHS or a particular event." The database must track information from more than "290,000 global news sources," including "online, print, broadcast, cable, radio, trade and industry publications, local sources, national/international outlets, traditional news sources, and social media." It adds: "Unlimited coverage per search (no cap on coverage)."

Significantly, while the document calls for tracking news in more than 100 languages, it specifically mentions only languages spoken in Syria and the Middle East, Russia and China, the regions most immediately targeted for US military and diplomatic aggression. The database must contain "coverage written in Arabic, Chinese and Russian" and the "ability to access English translation of this coverage" within a "mobile app."

The DHS was created by the George W. Bush administration in 2002 and provided with vast powers of domestic repression as part of the fraudulent "war on terror." It controls the customs and border patrol forces as well as the secret service. It is now headed by Kirstjen Nielsen, the former chief of staff to retired marine general John Kelly, who headed the DHS before being nominated as Trump's chief of staff. Nielsen was previously a special assistant to Bush and a senior director at the White House Homeland Security Council.

The DHS's construction of a journalist database follows reports of numerous journalists, artists and writers being detained and questioned while crossing the US border after having made critical statements against the Trump administration. The DHS announced last September that it has begun collecting social media information and search results of all immigrants—including green card holders and permanent residents—from Facebook and Twitter.

The database will be overseen by a sub-branch of the DHS, the National Protection and Programs Directorate, which oversees cybersecurity and communications.

Given the threat to the journalistic and democratic rights demonstrated in the latest revelations, it is

particularly noteworthy that they have been met with a virtual blackout in the corporate-controlled media. Of the major media broadcasters, only CBS News and Forbes published a single article on the subject since Bloomberg Law broke the story on April 5. Neither the *New York Times*, the supposed "newspaper of record," MSNBC, or the *Washington Post* have written on the issue.

One can only imagine the howls of indignation that would be scrawled across the pages of the *Times*, *Post* and other corporate outlets if it was revealed that a similar operation to track and database the activities and "sentiments" of the world's journalists and bloggers was being conducted by the government of Vladimir Putin in Russia. It would be taken as the latest proof of the nefarious activities of the Kremlin to influence public opinion around the world and undermine American democracy.

But the columnists and editors at the *Times* and *Post*, which function as clearing houses for American government propaganda, take it for granted that the US government should monitor and database the views of journalists in the United States and around the world.

These publications are currently engaged in a ferocious campaign, led by the Democratic Party and intelligence agencies, to justify the censorship of the internet and alternative news sources, particularly socialist and left-wing publications, supposedly in the name of combating "fake news" and defending "authoritative news." They are insisting that the only legitimate sources of news information are the pages of the corporate-controlled press.