

Arrest of bomb scare suspect heightens political warfare in Washington

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After a massive operation involving federal and local police and intelligence agencies, the Federal Bureau of Investigation on Friday arrested a suspect in the wave of bombs sent through the mail to prominent Democratic politicians and critics of President Trump. Cesar Sayoc, 56, of Aventura, Florida was taken into custody in nearby Plantation, part of the Miami metropolitan area, and charged with five federal counts carrying a maximum sentence of 58 years.

Sayoc appears to be a down-and-out strip club disc jockey and bouncer and avid Trump supporter. FBI operatives towed his white van, covered with pro-Trump and anti-Democratic decals, from the strip mall where he was apprehended on Friday morning. Sayoc, who filed for bankruptcy in 2012 and has a record of eight arrests in Florida, was reportedly living in the van.

The suspect's Twitter feed includes posts attacking Hillary Clinton and the billionaire Democratic donor George Soros, two of the 12 people who were sent a total of 14 crude pipe bombs, all of which were intercepted and failed to detonate. One post shows him at a Trump campaign rally.

The others targeted were former President Barack Obama, former Vice President Joe Biden, former Attorney General Eric Holder, Democratic Congresswoman Maxine Waters, Democratic senators Kamala Harris and Cory Booker, the two top intelligence officials under Obama—former CIA Director John Brennan and former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper—actor Robert De Niro and billionaire Democratic activist Tom Steyer.

While Sayoc has been apprehended, many questions remain unanswered and caution should be exercised about jumping to conclusions. In light of the precarious circumstances of the suspect's life, the precise nature

of his alleged involvement in the incidents, as well as the possibility that Sayoc has been manipulated by others, demands careful investigation.

But one thing is certain: this event, on the eve of a major national election, reflects the extreme crisis of American democracy. The mail bombs are a symptom of a deepening social and political crisis in the United States, the center of world capitalism.

Trump has made the elections a referendum on himself. His rallies are aimed at whipping up a fascistic mentality that combines extreme nationalism, racism and anti-immigrant chauvinism with pseudo-populist demagoguery against the “elites.” It is not an accident that those sent potentially lethal mail bombs were all the targets of Trump's vilification.

The Democrats do not represent a genuine opposition to the threat of dictatorship, but an alternate route to it. They base their nominal opposition to Trump on powerful sections of the military-intelligence establishment represented by figures such as Brennan and Clapper. They fundamentally agree with Trump's pro-corporate domestic policies such as tax cuts for the rich and attacks on Medicaid and food stamps. They do not seriously oppose his police-state attacks on immigrants and assault on democratic rights more generally. On the contrary, they are in the forefront of the demands for more overt and systematic censorship of the internet.

On foreign affairs, they support a massive expansion of the military and largely oppose Trump from the right—using the trumped-up anti-Russia campaign to demand a more aggressive policy against Moscow and in the Middle East.

Both parties rest on narrow social bases and are held in contempt by broad sections of the population. Under conditions of a deepening economic and financial crisis

in the US and internationally, and a resurgence of class struggle, the ruling class is lurching toward dictatorship.

The media hysteria over the mail bombs, despite their having been intercepted and having failed to detonate, showed no signs of abating on Friday. The Democrats and media outlets aligned with them, such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, CNN and NBC, hope to leverage the bomb scare to their advantage in the November 6 midterm elections.

The media banished from public attention such issues as Trump's witch hunt against immigrants—including the dispatch of active troops to the US-Mexico border and plans to effectively abolish the right to asylum for Central American refugees—the decision to pull out of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty and trigger a new nuclear arms race with Russia, and the ongoing mass slaughter in Yemen. The Democrats for their part maintained their silence on these issues and instead attacked Trump for "sowing divisions."

Right-wing, pro-Trump media outlets such as *Breitbart News*, which had called the mail bombs a "false flag" operation carried out by the Democrats and allied intelligence officials, joined Trump himself in blaming the mainstream media for stoking up violence.

At a campaign rally Friday night in Charlotte, North Carolina, Trump attacked the media for promoting "the politics of personal destruction." He went on to blame a "Bernie Sanders supporter" for the attack on Republican congressmen in June 2017 that severely wounded Representative Steve Scalise, and added: "Nor do we blame the Democrat Party every time radical leftists seize and destroy public property and unleash violence and mayhem."

Neither side raised as an issue the implications of the massive police mobilization less than two weeks from a national election, including cordoning off entire sections of midtown Manhattan twice during the week following the interception of mail bombs, and the first activation of a new program for the state to take control of the cell phone system. That took the form of a text sent to everyone located within a certain radius of the Manhattan headquarters of Time Warner following the interception of a bomb addressed to Brennan at CNN.

Instead, both Trump and the Democrats lavished praise on the FBI, the New York Police Department and local police in Florida and California, making clear

that the bomb scare will be used to step up attacks on democratic rights, including more intensive internet censorship and a further strengthening of police powers and mass surveillance.

Typical were the remarks of MSNBC anchor Stephanie Ruhle, who pointed to the provocative decals on Sayoc's van and demanded to know why he had not been immediately arrested on that account. A national security "expert" on another cable channel declared that the American people had to consider themselves on 24-hour alert to detect terrorist threats, and should treat this as the "new normal."



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