

Britain's secret propaganda "Integrity Initiative" targets Russia

Thomas Scripps
4 February 2019

In a desperate attempt to cover its tracks, the propaganda network linked to Britain's security services, the Integrity Initiative (II), has wiped its website and locked its Twitter account "pending an investigation into the theft of data."

The decision was taken shortly after the Anonymous hacking group released new II documents targeting Russia as supposedly the greatest threat to world peace, based on claims that it is the country most likely to use nuclear weapons.

The documents reveal yet more of the disinformation campaign used to justify NATO preparations for war with Russia, including the use of nuclear weapons.

Minutes from a joint workshop of the Institute for Statecraft (IfS), which runs the II, and the US government-funded Center for Naval Analyses discuss what would happen if the "West" intervened to "push back" a Russian advance in the case of a localized conflict. "The reality of the Russian nuclear doctrine is that it will not back down. ... War games usually start with Russia about to, or using a nuclear weapon," the minutes conclude.

Citing the inevitability of Russian use of nuclear weapons is used to justify their "pre-emptive" use by the NATO powers in the type of "pre-emptive war" made infamous by President George Bush's criminal invasion of Iraq and which now forms the bedrock of the Pentagon's National Security Strategy. Last Friday, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced US withdrawal from the 1987 Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty as part of the reorientation of the US military toward "great-power" conflict with Russia and China.

Registered as a Scottish charity promoting good "governance and statecraft" and working to "counter disinformation," the IfS and II privately list their "top three" objectives as:

- "Developing and proving the cluster concept and methodology"—that is, creating various national networks of assets in government, the military, the media and academia to covertly coordinate anti-Russian propaganda. The "silencing [of] pro-Kremlin voices on Serbian TV" by the

Serbian political analyst and director of the Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies, Jelena Milic, is given as an example.

- "Making people (in Government, think tanks, military, journalists) see the big picture, making people acknowledge that we are under concerted, deliberate hybrid attack by Russia," as seen in the II's coordination of the media response to the Skripal affair.

- "Increasing the speed of response, mobilising the network to activism in pursuit of the 'golden minute.'" That is, creating fraudulent "popular" campaigns and "independent" news stories to push an anti-Russian agenda, as with the successful effort to prevent the promotion of an insufficiently Russophobic general in Spain and the attack on Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn.

This work is overseen by military intelligence operatives and run in service to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) on behalf of a network of pro-British and US imperialist outfits.

The IfS co-founder and director, Daniel Lafyeedney, is a Senior Member, St. Antony's College, University of Oxford. His online university biography notes, "As Senior Associate Fellow at the Advanced Research and Assessment Group at the Defence Academy of the UK (2004-2010) he specialised in the development and implementation of capacity-building projects for high-level governance of the security sector in European and middle-Eastern countries ...". It adds, "His military service, legal background and career as an entrepreneur have given him an understanding of the importance of the link between business and national security."

Speaking in Israel in 2018, Lafyeedney explained, "We have supported the creation of special Army reserve units (e.g., 77 Bde and SGMI—Specialist Group Military Intelligence) with which we now have a close, informal relationship" and how the work of the IfS and II feeds "into the highest levels of MoD and the armed forces."

In return, the IfS and II receives £2.6 million in funding for 2018-19 as well as office space in central London provided by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Funding also comes from HQ NATO Public Diplomacy, the US State Department, the “German business community,” the Lithuanian Ministry of Defence, the US think tank the Smith Richardson Foundation and other named “partner institutions.”

II is involved in a concerted anti-Russian offensive in Eastern European states. Ukraine, the Baltic states, Moldova and Armenia are all referenced as crucial areas of II work. One document on the Baltics refers to the need to be “educating our audience to understand how Russia sees this world as being at war.” Another on the war in Eastern Ukraine claims “aggression is inherent in the Russian condition.”

A file called “Moldova Democracy” explicitly argues for regime change, demanding that “A new team of people with integrity must come to power” or else “Moldova will remain a captured state forever, under Russian direct influence.”

During the 2018 protests in Armenia, the II published articles and intervened in social media to encourage a break with Russia after a change in government.

One of its key partners in Ukraine is Stopfake, which defends the far-right Ukrainian regime and the fascist forces which put it in power. An II document resolves to “Provide guest articles from ... our clusters for StopFake’s printed material published and distributed along the contact line in Eastern Ukraine.”

In the UK the II is engaged in efforts to shut down uncooperative media outlets, accusing them of precisely the dirty tricks that it itself engages in. The most notable target is *Russia Today* (RT), which, II laments, is finding an audience because of “growing mistrust of western media among westerners.”

RT has been the target of an escalating campaign of attempted censorship with MPs demanding its broadcasting license be revoked. In December, the regulator Ofcom threatened to fine RT, claiming it had broken impartiality rules. There was no prior announcement from Ofcom that any RT shows had received more than 10 complaints from the public—as is standard practice. The II’s hidden hand is suggested in an II “Production timetable” document, which included the item in “eight complaints forwarded to Ofcom on RT’s failure to ensure due impartiality with request to launch a formal investigation.”

Other II plans include efforts to investigate “likely target[s] (e.g., a university with an anti-fracking agenda)” in receipt of Russian funding—even where those organisations are not in breach of the law.

A 2016 report by Péter Krekó and Lóránt Gy?ri of the

Budapest-based Political Capital Institute on “pro-Russian far-left parties in Europe” names parties such as Syriza in Greece, the Left Party in Germany, and Unsubmissive France and essentially accuses them of being Russian stooges. Invoiced for payment to the II, the report ends with the recommendation that states “need to assess in more detail the security implications” of these parties’ alleged Russian connections.

In the UK—and this helps explain the complete absence of media coverage of its sordid activities—the leaked II documents list the names of a “cluster” of top journalists and TV reporters including the *Times*’ David Aaronovitch and Dominic Kennedy, the *Guardian*’s Natalie Nougayrede, Carole Cadwalladr and Paul Canning, the BBC’s Jonathan Marcus, the *Financial Times*’ Neil Buckley, the *Economist*’s Edward Lucas and Sky News’ Deborah Haynes.

Leading Blairite Labour MP Ben Bradshaw is listed, as are “individuals who are very senior civilian experts in some relevant area, such as Hedge Fund managers, senior bankers, Heads of PA companies, etc., i.e., people whom the Army could never afford to hire, but who donate their time and expertise as patriots.”

The drawing together of such figures is a manifestation of the strategy laid out in the recent British National Security Capability Review, which singled out Russia as enemy number one for British imperialism. It called for a “Fusion Strategy” to advance the UK’s strategic interests against Moscow, which would make use “of all our capabilities; from economic levers, through cutting-edge military resources to our wider diplomatic and cultural influence on the world’s stage” to “project our global influence.” The BBC and “collaborative programmes with industry and academia” are listed as examples.

The II is proof that these plans are far-advanced and have been able to proceed without a word of criticism from a complicit bourgeois media.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)