The Reiss Center at NYU's Law School: A think tank for the national security establishment and the Democratic Party

Part 1: Obama's national security apparatus in exile

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Located just a few subway stops from Wall Street, the Reiss Center at New York University embodies the convergence of the interests of finance capital, the Democratic Party and the military-intelligence apparatus.

The Reiss Center was originally founded under a different name in 2003 in the aftermath of 9/11 and at the beginning of the "War on Terror." It is part of New York University's School of Law, which is ranked as one of the best and most expensive in the country, with an annual tuition of $66,442 per year.

In 2018, following Trump's ascendancy to the presidency, the center integrated the publication *JustSecurity.org*, which is playing a central role as a resource for pro-Democratic party media in the impeachment crisis. The center is named since 2018 after Richard Reiss Jr., who gave it an unspecified donation. Reiss is the Director of Lazard Asset Management. which manages funds of over $200 billion worldwide, making it one of the largest investment banks in the world.

Despite claiming to be "a non-partisan multi-disciplinary research institute," the Center's research is intimately integrated with the Democratic Party wing of the State Department and intelligence agencies. Its leading bodies are staffed with top national security and foreign policy officials from the Obama administration. Out of the 18 people on its list of Fellows and Affiliates, 14 are ex-Obama administration officials. Two members of its Board of Advisors and two of its Leadership Team are also former Obama administration officials.

Several of these individuals are worthy of comment:

Rachel Goldbrenner, the center's Executive Director and a professor of law at NYU, served as a senior advisor to Samantha Power, the ideologue of US imperialism's devastating "human rights" imperialist intervention in Libya in 2011, during the latter's various roles in the Obama administration. Goldbrenner is also a fellow at the Washington-based Truman National Security Project, a Democratic think tank for foreign policy which advocates for "muscular internationalism" in US foreign policy.

David S. Cohen, an advisor to the Center, was working in the Treasury Department in the Obama administration and was the deputy director of the CIA between 2015-2017. In the period of his oversight the CIA, Cohen played a critical role in whipping up anti-Russian hysteria with unsubstantiated claims of interference in the 2016 election, while continuing the CIA's infamous and illegal practices of interference in foreign states and assassinations.

Andrew Weissman, a distinguished senior fellow at the Reiss Center, has been the lead prosecutor in Robert Mueller Special Counsel's Office from 2017 to 2019, while the Mueller report was being prepared. From 2011 to 2013, he served as the General Counsel for the FBI.

Lisa O. Monaco is another distinguished senior fellow at the Center. She was the Homeland Security Advisor of Obama from 2013 to 2017 and founder of the Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Center, which works under the direction of the Director of National Intelligence. Since 2017, she has been one of the many ex-national security officials under Obama that now work as talking heads on CNN and other TV networks, playing a critical role in whipping up a war fever against Russia.

Nicholas Rasmussen, non-resident Senior Fellow at Reiss, has spent 27 years working for the national security apparatus. He has worked under both Bush and Obama administrations in senior positions at the National Security Council, and continued during the first year of the Trump administration. He is also the acting director of the McCain Institute, a DC think tank that was named after the late Republican Senator John McCain. It regularly hosts events with figures such as Bill and Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden and is funded by, among others, the government of Saudi Arabia, FedEx and Wal-Mart.

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Following a short stint as White House Staff Secretary 2011-2012 he went on to serve as General Counsel for the National Security Agency (NSA) between 2012 and 2015. It was during this latter period that US federal prosecutors brought draconian charges against Edward Snowden, the ex-CIA and NSA sub-contractor employee who exposed the US intelligence community's invasive spying on the American and world population.

Wally Adeyamo, a non-resident senior fellow at Reiss and a senior advisor at BlackRock (which manages nearly $7 trillion in assets), used to work as the National Security Advisor for International Economics under Obama and also represented him at the G7 and G20. In August of this year, he was named the president of the Obama Foundation, whose day-to-day business he now manages. In addition, Adeyamo is also active at numerous other think tanks, including the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), one of the most important foreign policy think tanks of US imperialism with which NYU enjoys close ties.

Robert (Bob) Bauer, also a senior fellow and professor of law at NYU, was Obama's White House Counsel from 2009 to 2011. In 2014, Obama said of him, "Bob was a critical member of the White House team.... He has exceptional judgment, wisdom, and intellect, and he will continue to be one of my close advisors."

Matthew Spence, a non-resident senior fellow at the Center, was the co-founder of the aforementioned Truman National Security Project, and ex-Assistant Secretary of Defense for Middle East Policy, where he oversaw the sale of the Iron Dome missile defense program to Israel. He has also worked as a security investment banker.

Jon Finer is another fellow who is the ex-Chief of State at US State Department, where he served as the senior advisor to John Kerry. He was also the US lead negotiator at the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal and the 2016 Paris Climate Accord.

The list goes on.

The programs of the Center focus squarely on "national security," that is, waging war both abroad and at home in the interests of the American ruling class. The three programs of the Center focus on "national security at home," "use of force and emerging security threats," and "national security in shifting geopolitical contexts." In particular, the Reiss Center works closely with NYU's Center for Cybersecurity, which is now part of a city-wide Cyber NYC network. The second part of this article will detail the involvement of the center in the war preparations against Russia and the impeachment against Trump.

However, the Reiss Center is also directly implicated in discussing and preparing the repression of the working class in the US itself. Beyond the numerous Obama officials implicated in the assassination, regime change and surveillance programs of the CIA and NSA that are now working advisors to the Center, this also becomes clear through the Center's close ties to the New York City Police Department (NYPD).

Samuel J. Rascoff serves as the Center's Faculty Director, and specializes in "Homegrown Terrorism." His academic work has advocated for the expansion of the intelligence capabilities of local police forces, celebrating the expansion of local police powers in the buildup to Franklin D. Roosevelt's infamous executive order 9066, which led to the extrajudicial incarceration of some 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II as suspected "fifth columnists."

He was previously the head of the NYPD's Intelligence department from 2006 to 2008. On his watch, in 2007, the NYPD published a report entitled *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat.* The purpose of this report was to guide officers in their surveillance activities of "threatening" individuals. In the midst of the "War on Terror" and using the September 11 attacks as pretext, this report explicitly identified male Muslims as targets for observation. Other criteria for identifying "concerning individuals" included, "unremarkable—having ordinary lives and jobs," "little, if any, criminal history," and "under the age of 35". These vague and overtly racist guidelines gave NYPD officers *carte blanche* to spy on and terrorize Muslim communities in New York City, while the department illegally spread its spying to mosques within a 100-mile radius of the city.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), this led to the intensive mapping of Muslim communities, photo and video surveillance and the recruitment of "mosque crawlers" who were informants sent into places of worship to engage in "Create and capture," a technique where the informant starts conversation about extremism to frame attendees. All of this activity represents a direct assault on the democratic rights of the working class as a whole.

The Reiss Center also functions as a recruitment arm for the American state's next generation of operatives and legal enablers. It offers three scholarships which are co-sponsored by NYU's Center for Cyber Security. These are the government-funded ASPIRE Scholarship, which covers full-tuition for those selected, as well as two $10,000 grants, the NYU Cyber Scholars Program and the Latham and Watkins Award in Technology and War. In addition, the Center sponsors an events series with high-ranking national security officials to speak on "A Road Less Travelled: National Security Careers after Law School."

The authors also recommends:

New York University: A center of militarism, mass surveillance and censorship

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