

Who is the new Washington Post editor Sally Buzbee?

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In the selection of key positions in the US national security apparatus, the American ruling elite insists on absolute loyalty to its global interests. Any hint of dissent against the depredations of American imperialism, which might perhaps be tolerated in Congress in order to provide a safety valve for mass discontent, is an absolute disqualification in filling such posts as CIA director, FBI director or Secretary of Defense.

Much the same is true for positions in the media that have a quasiofficial role: for example, editorial page editor and executive editor of the *New York Times*, which sets the agenda for the bulk of the American media; and executive editor of the *Washington Post*, the principal daily newspaper in the US capital.

The appointment last week of Sally Buzbee as executive editor of the *Post* must be viewed in that context. Buzbee, currently executive editor of the Associated Press, is the first *Post* newsroom chief to be named since billionaire Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon and arguably the world's richest man, bought the newspaper in 2013.

The \$250 million price tag meant little to a man with a fortune now estimated at over \$150 billion. It is the equivalent of a \$100 purchase for a teacher or autoworker making \$60,000 a year, to buy unparalleled influence in the nation's capital, where Amazon is seeking to become the cyber-contractor of choice for the Pentagon and CIA.

While Bezos claimed, improbably, that he would have nothing to do with the day-to-day news coverage or editorial line of the *Post*, there is no doubt that his role was decisive in selecting a new executive editor.

The nominal decision-maker, publisher Fred Ryan, was installed by Bezos in 2014 after a career that included both corporate roles at Albritton

Communications and as publisher of *Politico*, and two decades of service to President Ronald Reagan, first in the White House, then as chief of staff for Reagan's post-presidential operations, including the post of chairman of the board for the Reagan presidential library.

In a memo to employees last week, Ryan said that Buzbee was the choice of both Bezos and himself after interviews they conducted with several prospective editors. Bezos has pumped money into the *Post* since he bought the newspaper in 2013. Under executive editor Martin Baron, who announced his retirement in January, the newsroom has grown from 580 to more than 1,000, and the newspaper's digital audience has tripled to three million, even as its daily print circulation has dropped to 200,000.

Even more significant than Buzbee's selection by Bezos, which confirms that the financial oligarchy regards her as a "safe pair of hands," are the new executive editor's close ties to the military-intelligence apparatus. Buzbee is the widow of a career State Department official, John Buzbee, who died in 2016 when he was only 50 years old, of colon cancer.

In his career of nearly 20 years, John Buzbee spent nearly all his time in the Middle East, the focus of the violent intervention of American imperialism throughout this period. The son of a Kansas small town publisher, he obtained a degree in Arab Studies and mastered Arabic at Georgetown University, one of the leading conduits for the State Department and CIA.

He joined the Foreign Service "working in US embassies and consulates throughout the Middle East and in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the State Department in Washington over the next 16 turbulent years," according to his obituary.

Buzbee did two tours in Iraq during the period of de

facto US rule over the country after the 2003 invasion and occupation: in 2004 in Tikrit, the birthplace of Saddam Hussein and a hotbed of opposition to American intervention; and in 2008-2009 as a political officer in Baghdad.

His biography, published by the Associated Press, continues:

Buzbee served as a political officer and vice consul in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; an economic officer in both Cairo and Jerusalem; and a cultural affairs officer in Cairo. In later years, he served in Washington as deputy director for Syria in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs; as a senior adviser in the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs; as a researcher at the Foreign Service Institute; and as an adviser in the office of Israel and Palestinian Affairs.

He also worked on Balkans issues in the Bureau of European Affairs as the deputy director for South Central Europe.

During this period, his wife Sally spent a number of years in the Middle East as regional bureau chief of the Associated Press in Cairo, as well as in Washington, where she directed AP coverage of both the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections.

It goes without saying that a State Department official who served in Tikrit, Baghdad, Riyadh, Jerusalem and Cairo, as well as “deputy director for Syria,” must enjoy the highest confidence of his superiors. Moreover, the concentration on the Middle East and the types of positions he held, such as “political officer” in Baghdad and in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, suggest that Buzbee may well have been a CIA officer operating under diplomatic cover.

Whatever the agency that wrote his paychecks, Buzbee was acting as a high-level operative for American imperialism in the locations and during the times that the most monstrous crimes were being carried out at Washington’s behest: mass murder in Iraq and Syria, the Saudi war in Yemen, drone missile warfare and CIA assassination plots.

And standing at his side, helping provide press coverage that invariably portrays the actions of the US

government in the most favorable light, motivated by democratic and humanitarian impulses, was his wife, Sally Buzbee. The obituary of John Buzbee, published by the “news” organization she then headed, the Associated Press, quoted a diplomatic colleague to this effect:

“He loved serving people,” said Ambassador Stuart Jones, Buzbee’s longtime friend and colleague, who served with him in Iraq, Egypt and Washington. Jones most recently served as the US ambassador to Iraq.

“The question with him was always, ‘How do we make people’s lives better?’ It was something that animated the work he did,” Jones said.

One would not know, reading this treacle, that John Buzbee was an instrument of the most rapacious government in the world, participating in activities responsible for mass deaths throughout the region.

More importantly, from the standpoint of 2021, is that Buzbee’s wife Sally would undoubtedly have been vetted by the same agencies that directed her husband’s activities. The new executive editor of the *Washington Post* thus carries the stamp of approval of not only Jeff Bezos, but also the American military-intelligence apparatus.

While the American media celebrates Sally Buzbee as the first female executive editor of the *Washington Post*, the working class should understand the real significance of her elevation.



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