

The Trump indictment and the “national security” secrets of the state

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The indictment of Donald Trump under the Espionage Act and for conspiring to withhold information from federal prosecutors both exposes and accelerates an unprecedented political crisis within the United States.

The indictment of a former president for “endangering national security” is itself extraordinary, the first time that the Justice Department has taken such an action. But Trump is not only a former president; he is the leading candidate of the Republican Party in the 2024 elections. The indictment will dominate American politics for at least a year, involving all the institutions of government, from the Supreme Court to Congress and the states. How the election will even proceed under these circumstances is unclear.

Involved in the decision to indict Trump is far more than the individual deliberations of Special Counsel Jack Smith, who was appointed by US Attorney General Merrick Garland to head investigations into Trump last November, and the 23 members of the grand jury in South Florida. As the 2024 elections approach, a significant section of the state apparatus clearly hopes that the indictment will contribute to driving Trump out of politics. This effort is motivated in particular by Trump’s stated positions on the US-NATO war against Russia over Ukraine.

It is critical for the working class to have a clear understanding of the implications and driving forces of the conflict.

There is no democratic content to the indictment of Trump based on the Espionage Act, a reactionary law that has been used against Eugene Debs, the Rosenbergs, Daniel Ellsberg, Julian Assange and Edward Snowden. While the fascistic and arch-imperialist Trump is no opponent of the war machine, workers have no interest in safeguarding the secrets of

the ruling class and its state.

Critically, the indictment is not over Trump’s effort to overturn the Constitution and establish a presidential dictatorship, culminating in the fascistic coup of January 6, 2021. The Democratic Party and the Biden administration have avoided any serious examination of the coup or the social and political forces behind it, as part of their effort to establish bipartisan unity with the Republicans.

Amidst the voluminous media commentary on the indictment, there is little discussion of the content and implications of the documents Trump removed from the White House, which involve the most dangerous and explosive secrets that the US military and intelligence apparatus possess.

The indictment itself only lists the general subjects of the documents in question, under headlines such as the “military capabilities of a foreign country and the United States”; “military activities and planning of foreign countries”; “military contingency planning of the United States”; “timeline and details of attack in a foreign country”; and, most significantly, “nuclear weaponry of the United States.”

The documents are listed under various classification headlines, such as TS (Top Secret); NF (no foreign, for distribution within the US government only); TK (Talent Keyhole, related to imagery obtained from satellites or manned flights); and FRD (Formerly Restricted Data, which is used for nuclear secrets).

A few analysts have begun to examine in more detail the likely subject matter of the documents, based on their dates and general topics. Matt Tait writes in *Lawfare*, for example, that Document 19 in the indictment (“Undated document concerning nuclear weaponry of the United States”) is classified as FRD, which means that it cannot be declassified by the

president even while president, as it is classified under the Atomic Energy Act. As to its content, Tait states that “a few canonical examples” of what would fall under this category “include US stockpile quantities, nuclear weapons safety and storage, nuclear weapon yields, and locations of US nuclear weapons.”

Document 5 is listed as “concerning nuclear capabilities of a foreign country” and is dated June 2020. Tait concludes that the unnamed foreign country is likely Russia, due to the fact that Russia published its nuclear deterrence policy for the first time on June 2, 2020. Document 11 is listed as “Undated document concerning military contingency planning of the United States.” Based on details in the indictment of Trump’s discussion with a writer, during which he showed a document in his possession, this is likely a detailed review of options for war against Iran.

Other documents likely detail military operations in Syria involving NATO member Turkey, US military operations in Palestine against Hezbollah, and communications with Russia over Trump’s withdrawal from the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty in October 2018.

Trump clearly knew the explosive implications of the documents when he decided to remove them from the White House. For the military-intelligence agencies, this was an intolerable breach of the “security,” that is the *secrecy*, of the state apparatus. The documents involve the permanent and ongoing conspiracy of American imperialism against the population of the entire world.

Beyond the immediate issues in the indictment, it is clearly connected to the intense divisions within the ruling class over foreign policy, particularly in relation to Russia. This was always the focus of the Democrats’ opposition to Trump during his presidency and was the subject of his first impeachment in 2019-2020.

The Biden administration is absolutely committed to the war against Russia over Ukraine. The initiation of the Ukrainian “counter-offensive” last week is the precursor to a massive escalation of US-NATO involvement in the war. A direct intervention involving NATO troops is coming and may not be far off. Under these conditions, the American ruling class, or at least significant sections of it, is not prepared to accept Trump as the leader of its foreign policy.

As for Trump, he has responded to the indictment by

declaring his own “war” on his opponents within the state. He is pitching his appeal to sections of the ruling class that, under conditions of escalating social conflict within the United States, support the unleashing of political violence on a massive scale. “Either the Communists win and destroy America,” Trump declared in a fascist rant on Saturday, “or we destroy the Communists.”

The conflict within the ruling class is of a longstanding character. It is now reaching a new qualitative stage under conditions of the initial stages of a world war and the explosive development of the class struggle within the US and internationally. The institutions of the state are breaking down under the pressure of what the WSWS referred to at the beginning of the year as a “critical mass” of intersecting global and domestic crises that the ruling class cannot contain.

A revolutionary situation, Lenin explained, arises under conditions in which the ruling class cannot rule in the old way and the working class cannot live in the old way. Both of these factors are evident in the present crisis.



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