

The case of Texas A&M: A university integrated into the military-intelligence apparatus

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Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director William Burns made visits to two leading universities in Texas this April, part of a campaign of the United States military and intelligence agencies to mobilize the resources of major educational institutions as the NATO war against Russia intensifies and preparations are made for a military conflict with China.

Beyond official university announcements and university newspapers, there has been little reporting in the media on these trips of the CIA director.

The universities and the specific institutes visited are of strategic significance to US imperialism. They include Texas A&M University's Bush School of Government and Public Service, which Burns visited on April 12, and the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University, which he visited on April 11.

The CIA director spoke at an event at Texas A&M University that was jointly hosted by the Bush School of Government and Public Service and its Intelligence Studies Program. The speech was given following a visit by FBI Director Christopher Wray a week earlier. No doubt many smaller meetings, perhaps over lunch and dinner, occurred alongside these speeches.

During his speech at A&M, Burns described the world as in the middle of a "transformative" moment. He compared the period to the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany, noting that US imperialism could take advantage of the situation. He cited Russia and China as "dangers" that needed to be responded to.

Burns made the claim that Russia sought to "restore" itself as a world power, and impose an "authoritarian order" against supposedly "democratic" Ukraine. This language demonstrates that the pseudo-left's claims of "Russian imperialism" align with the perspective of the CIA.

In fact, in contrast to the CIA director's claim, the Ukrainian regime is infested with Nazis and has imprisoned and disappeared its ideological opponents. Ukraine grabs draft evaders everywhere to send them to the slaughter, and has expanded media censorship, moved to ban any opposition on the internet and destroyed what remains of the independent judiciary in favor of rule by direct force so as to continue the unpopular war. Meanwhile, on the historical front, the regime in Kiev has spent millions renaming streets after and erecting monuments to historical figures such as Stepan Bandera and his allies, Nazi collaborators during World War II.

Burns also claimed, as is echoed incessantly in the media and government, that Putin is solely responsible for an unprovoked war. He presented China, likewise as solely responsible for escalations relating to Taiwan, glossing over both the US-backed coup in 2014 in Ukraine and the US encirclement and various provocations against both regimes.

The chief aim of the speech was to encourage students to join the CIA. Burns called on students to join the agency responsible for countless war

crimes, torture and other human rights violations around the world. According to one report, Burns "hopes Texas A&M students will follow in the footsteps of the hundreds of Aggies who have served in the CIA over the years," calling a chance to join the CIA "an incredible opportunity." In this spirit, much of the latter half of his speech consisted of warm reminiscing about the CIA, widely hated around the world for its engagement in torture, murder and endless conspiracies against democratic rights.

Texas A&M and the national-security apparatus

Burns' visit underscores the immense need of US imperialism to continually recruit new forces into its ranks. In particular, the CIA and Pentagon hope to deepen ties with top-tier research institutions whose research feeds into weaponry, military policy, and other areas of concern.

As the drive to war against China and Russia expands and the US military has begun warning both of "recruitment crises" as well as "ammunition crises," university and college campuses, in this context, are seen as major sources of recruitment, including in the much-needed technical sciences.

Texas A&M University's total enrollment reaches almost 75,000 and is classified as an R1 school in the Carnegie Classification system for very high research activity. It is a top military university and has been for some time, historically producing "more officers than any other institution in the nation other than the academies" according to its website.

Texas A&M University's Corps of Cadets—which works with the US Armed Forces Reserve Officer Training Corps—was established over 145 years ago, in 1876. It is the oldest student organization on campus. According to its website, "Texas A&M remains one of only six senior military colleges, and the Corps is the largest uniformed body outside the national service academies. As such it has historically produced more officers than any other institution in the nation other than the academies."

Some 2,500 cadets enter Texas A&M's Corp of Cadets program every year, with about 45 percent pursuing commissions in the Armed Forces. Up until 1960 it was mandatory for students to join the Corps.

Ten generals, including eight Air Force generals, have received their degrees from Texas A&M University. The most recent include four-star General Stephen W. Wilson (who retired in 2020), and Marine Corps General Eric Smith. A sizeable proportion of top-level Marine and Air Force officers came from A&M.

The integration of Texas A&M with the US military-intelligence apparatus reached a new high point in 1998, when former CIA Director

Robert Gates became dean of the Bush School, and then, in 2002, president of the entire university.

In 2007, Gates returned to active duty for US imperialism, replacing war criminal Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense in the George W. Bush administration. There he oversaw the “surge” of tens of thousands of troops to bolster the collapsing US-backed puppet regime in Baghdad, and a campaign of provocations that touched off the bloody civil war between predominantly Sunni insurgents, who had been spearheading the resistance to the US occupation, and Iranian-backed Shi’ite militias. What was left of the country, after the US invasion and occupation, and a 15-year blockade, was torn to pieces.

Military research and a school for spies

Texas A&M is part of the network of universities involved in the production of critical systems for US war plans, including in semiconductors as well as systems for delivering nuclear warheads, as we previously reported.

The university is currently in the process of constructing a massive military research complex, known as the “George H.W. Bush Combat Development Complex.” The complex includes a proving ground for “autonomous aerial, ground and subterranean [military] vehicles,” a “state-of-the-art innovation hub where researchers, students, industry, government and the military collaborate to create emerging technologies that will modernize the Army,” as well as a center for “hypersonics and directed energy research [i.e., laser weapons]” a part of a “one-of-a-kind Ballistic, Aero-optics, and Materials (BAM) Range.”

The so-called BAM center “will feature an above-ground tunnel that is one kilometer long and two meters in diameter, as well as integrated sensors,” according to the website. Construction started around three years ago. The complex’s most important client is Army Futures Command, which is also pursuing a collaboration worth at least tens of millions with the University of Texas at Austin.

Clearly A&M functions as a center for research necessary for the carrying out of US imperialism’s war and training of its military leadership. The same, however, could be said for its relationship to the intelligence agencies.

The Bush School, named in honor of former US President and CIA director George H.W. Bush, was established 26 years ago in 1997. That same year, the George Bush Presidential Library was opened at A&M, one of the few universities to host such a facility on its campus.

The school’s dean, Mark Welsh III, was appointed to his position in 2016, the same year that Northrop Grumman Corporation announced that it had elected him to its board of directors. Welsh served as Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force, as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Barack Obama, as well as commander of US Air Forces in Europe, where he had authority over a fifth of the world’s airspace. Later he was Associate Director for Military Affairs of the Central Intelligence Agency.

According to its website, the Bush School “is ranked in the top 25 graduate schools for public affairs for 2023.” As it states, it “educates principled leaders in international affairs, political science, and public service, conducts research, and performs service.” It has a branch in Washington D.C. as well.

Some of the examples of alumni produced by the school include Roman Napoli, a top adviser to the US Agency for International Development (USAID), a longtime front for the CIA, as well as Kathryn Kaufman, a venture capitalist and Managing Director for Global Women’s Issues with the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, which is now also part of

USAID.

Women are well-represented in the Bush School, with five out of the seven of the “outstanding alumni” on its web page being women.

Several of the alumni include corporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) bureaucrats and another who works with JPMorgan Chase specifically to deal with identity-based businesses and non-profits of the minority layers of the upper-middle class in their pursuit of wealth.

The Bush School, much like the CIA, is a major purveyor of identity politics, training (and celebrating) corporate DEI coordinators and practitioners of human-rights imperialism, with the school having a DEI Committee. The university more broadly also has a significant bureaucracy of this sort.

The Department of International Affairs at the Bush School also has a Program on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). According to Wikipedia, “its research arm, The WomanStats Project, is currently funded by the US Department of Defense.” WomanStats calls for the arrest of Putin, i.e., regime change, on the grounds of “sexual violence” against women.

Professor James Olson, a longtime CIA agent, is a key figure at the center. His “about” page reads:

When the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University was established in 1997, President George H.W. Bush strongly desired to have a concentration in intelligence studies as part of the curriculum. Professor James Olson uses his lengthy career as a CIA undercover operative to teach intelligence. Student interest was strong and over 300 graduates have successfully completed the program. Today, the program is considered a top school for U.S. intelligence agencies and maintains practitioner expertise from the CIA, FBI, NSA, and U.S. military, as well as the facilities to discuss and store classified information.

Olson stated in a February 2015 article in *My Plainview* that “this state [Texas] provides more recruits for the CIA than any other.”

Olson, who spied against the Soviet Union, is an open supporter of regime change in Russia. In April of this year, Olson called for the killing of Russian President Vladimir Putin, claiming it is the only way to end the war.

The faculty is full of other intelligence agents. It includes FBI veteran of 23 years Michael W. Howell, “former” NSA intelligence analyst Katherine T. Weary, and Matt Gill, currently a senior adviser to US Army intelligence leaders.

The director of the school, CIA veteran of 30 years Greg Vogle, leads a “large complement of paramilitary officers in areas of conflict across the globe,” according to his “about” page. He was awarded the Distinguished Intelligence Cross, was deputy commander to the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), and Deputy Director for Operations to the CIA, managing billions of dollars. He was also named a volunteer member of the Joe Biden presidential transition Agency Review Team, which facilitated transition efforts relating to the intelligence agencies. During Burns’s remarks at the Bush School, he called Vogle “one of the most remarkable officers ever to serve at the CIA.”

JSOC is implicated in numerous human rights violations and war crimes around the world, including torture and murder of Afghan civilians, and its death squads are authorized to carry out assassinations across the globe. As we wrote, JSOC “carried out wholesale assassinations of opponents of the Iraqi occupation during the 2007 ‘surge’ ordered by the [George W.] Bush administration, and were implicated in systematic torture of detainees.”

Bush and his wife Laura, according to an “outstanding alumni” page,

“were fixtures at the Bush School in those days: sitting in on classes, socializing with students, and even organizing gatherings.”

According to the School’s page on Bush, Dr. Charles Hermann, founding director of the Bush School, said, “We wouldn’t have had the deans we’ve had without [Bush’s] direct involvement, and he also wrote letters to potential faculty members, encouraging them to come to the School ... Many of his friends and former political supporters made major contributions to the School.” Hermann served on the National Security Council under US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger while he was overseeing war crimes in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, which caused the deaths of at least 1 million people.

Build a movement against war!

The integration of Texas A&M University with the drive to war by American imperialism deserves the attention of all students. While A&M is not unique, it represents a major node for military-university collaboration, research, and recruitment.

Enormous pressure is and increasingly will be brought on college and university campuses to offer up researchers, officers and recruits as cannon fodder to the war machine. A&M, in this regard, has a special link to the Pentagon and intelligence apparatus.

Students in Texas and beyond who are interested in fighting these developments, and wish to join a genuine anti-war movement, should contact the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE). The IYSSE fights against the drive to war, through the mobilization of the international working class against war’s root cause, capitalism. To learn more, contact us here.



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