

# Former CIA Chief Brennan Running Scared

With former CIA Director John Brennan accusing President Donald Trump of “moral turpitude” for his “scapegoating” of Andy McCabe, it remains to be seen whether a constitutional crisis will be averted, writes Ray McGovern.

By Ray McGovern

What prompted former CIA Director John Brennan on Saturday to accuse President Donald Trump of “moral turpitude” and to predict, with an alliterative flourish, that Trump will end up “as a disgraced demagogue in the dustbin of history”? The answer shines through the next sentence in Brennan’s threatening tweet: “You may scapegoat Andy McCabe [former FBI Deputy Director fired Friday night] but you will not destroy America...America will triumph over you.”

It is easy to see why Brennan lost it. The Attorney General fired McCabe, denying him full retirement benefits, because McCabe “had made an unauthorized disclosure to the news media and lacked candor – including under oath – on multiple occasions.” There but for the grace of God go I, Brennan must have thought, whose stock in trade has been unauthorized disclosures.

In fact, Brennan can take but small, short-lived consolation in the fact that he succeeded in leaving with a full government pension. His own unauthorized disclosures and leaks probably dwarf in number, importance, and sensitivity those of McCabe. And many of those leaks appear to have been based on sensitive intercepted conversations from which the names of American citizens were unmasked for political purposes. Not to mention the leaks of faux intelligence like that contained in the dubious “dossier” cobbled together for the Democrats by British ex-spy Christopher Steele.

It is an open secret that the CIA has been leaking like the proverbial sieve over the last two years or so to its favorite stenographers at the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. (At one point, the obvious whispering reached the point that the *Wall Street Journal* saw fit to complain that it was being neglected.) The leaking can be traced way back – at least as far as the Clinton campaign’s decision to blame the Russians for the publication of very damning DNC emails by WikiLeaks just three days before the Democratic National Convention.

This blame game turned out to be a hugely successful effort to divert attention from the *content* of the emails, which showed in *bas relief* the dirty tricks the DNC played on Bernie Sanders. The media readily fell in line, and all attention was deflected from the *substance* of the DNC emails to the question as to why the

Russians supposedly “hacked into the DNC and gave the emails to WikiLeaks.”

This media operation worked like a charm, but even Secretary Clinton’s PR person, Jennifer Palmieri, conceded later that at first it strained credulity that the Russians would be doing what they were being accused of doing.

### **Magnificent Diversion**

On April 6, 2017 I attended a panel discussion on “Russia’s interference in our democracy” at the Clinton/Podesta Center for American Progress Fund. In my subsequent write-up I noted that panelist Palmieri had inadvertently dropped tidbits of evidence that I suggested “could get some former officials in deep kimchi – if a serious investigation of leaking, for example, were to be conducted.” (That time seems to be coming soon.)

Palmieri was asked to comment on “what was actually going on in late summer/early fall [2016].” She answered:

“It was a surreal experience ... so I did appreciate that for the press to absorb ... the idea that behind the stage that the Trump campaign was coordinating with Russia to defeat Hillary Clinton was too fantastic for people to, um, for the press to process, to absorb...”

“But then we go back to Brooklyn [Clinton headquarters] and heard from the – mostly our sources were other intelligence, with the press who work in the intelligence sphere, and that’s where we heard things and that’s where we learned about the dossier and the other story lines that were swirling about; and how to process ... And along the way the administration started confirming various pieces of what they were concerned about what Russia was doing. ... So I do think that the answer for the Democrats now ... in both the House and the Senate is to talk about it more and make it more real.”

So the leaking had an early start, and went on steroids during the months following the Democratic Convention up to the election – and beyond.

### **As a Reminder**

None of the leaking, unmasking, surveillance, or other activities directed against the Trump campaign can be properly understood, if one does not bear in mind that it was considered a sure thing that Secretary Clinton would become President, at which point illegal and extralegal activities undertaken to help her win would garner praise, not prison.

But she lost. And a month ago, House Intelligence Committee Chair Devin Nunes (R-CA) threw down the gauntlet, indicating that there could be legal

consequences, for example, for officials who misled the FISA court in order to enable surveillance on Trump and associates. His words are likely to have sent chills down the spine of yet other miscreants. "If they need to be put on trial, we will put them on trial," he said. "The reason Congress exists is to oversee these agencies that we created."

John Brennan is widely reported to be Nunes's next target. Does one collect a full pension in jail?

**Unmasking:** Senior national security officials are permitted to ask the National Security Agency to unmask the names of Americans in intercepted communications for national security reasons – not for domestic political purposes.

Congressional committees have questioned why Obama's UN ambassador Samantha Power (as well as his national security adviser Susan Rice) made so many unmasking requests. Power is reported to have requested the unmasking of more than 260 Americans, most of them in the final days of the administration, including the names of Trump associates.

### **Deep State Intimidation**

Back to John Brennan's bizarre tweet Saturday telling the President, "You may scapegoat Andy McCabe but you will not destroy America ... America will triumph over you." Unmasking the word "America," so to speak, one can readily discern the name "Brennan" underneath. Brennan's words and attitude are a not-so-subtle reminder of the heavy influence and confidence of the deep state, including the media – exercised to a fare-thee-well over the past two years.

Later on Saturday, Samantha Power, with similar equities at stake, put an exclamation point behind what Brennan had tweeted earlier in the day. Power also saw fit to remind Trump where the power lies, so to speak. She warned him publicly that it is "not a good idea to piss off John Brennan."

Meanwhile, the *Washington Post* is dutifully playing its part in the deep-state game of intimidation. The following excerpt from Sunday's lead article conveys the intended message: "Some Trump allies say they worry he is playing with fire by taunting the FBI. 'This is open, all-out war. And guess what? The FBI's going to win,' said one ally, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to be candid. 'You can't fight the FBI. They're going to torch him.'" [sic]

The Post, incidentally, waited until paragraph 41 of 44 to inform readers that it was the FBI's own Office of Professional Responsibility and the Inspector General of the Department of Justice that found McCabe guilty, and that the charge was against McCabe, not the FBI. A quite different impression was conveyed by the large headline "Trump escalates attacks on FBI" as well as the

first 40 paragraphs of Sunday's lead article.

### **Putting Down a Marker**

It isn't as though Donald Trump wasn't warned, as are all incoming presidents, of the power of the Deep State that he needs to play ball with – or else. Recall that just three days before President-elect Trump was visited by National Intelligence Director James Clapper, FBI Director James Comey, CIA Director John Brennan, and NSA Director Michael Rogers, Trump was put on notice by none other than the Minority Leader of the Senate, Chuck Schumer. Schumer has been around and knows the ropes; he is a veteran of 18 years in the House, and is in his 20th year in the Senate.

On Jan. 3, 2017 Schumer said it all, when he told MSNBC's Rachel Maddow, that President-elect Trump is "being really dumb" by taking on the intelligence community and its assessments on Russia's cyber activities:

"Let me tell you, you take on the intelligence community, they have six ways from Sunday at getting back at you," Schumer told Maddow. "So even for a practical, supposedly hard-nosed businessman, he's being really dumb to do this." Did Maddow ask Schumer if he was saying President of the United States should be afraid of the intelligence community? No, she let Schumer's theorem stand.

With gauntlets now thrown down by both sides, we may not have to wait very long to see if Schumer is correct in his blithe prediction as to how the present constitutional crisis will be resolved.

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