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DITCH THE CIA, THE PENTAGON, AND THE NSA

by Jacob G. Hornberger
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The fight between Donald Trump and the CIA over the supposed Russian hacking scandal has at least two positive benefits: One, it helps to remind us what the conversion of the federal government to a national-security state has done to us here at home. Two, it enables us to ask an important fundamental question: Given that the Cold War ended decades ago, why don't we just ditch the entire national security establishment and restore a constitutional republic to our land?

The conversion of the federal government from a constitutionally limited government to a national-security state occurred after World War II. U.S. officials said that the Soviet Union, Red China, and the communist world posed a grave threat to the United States. In order to combat this threat, they said, it would be necessary for the United States to become like them — a national-security state. If America failed to do that, the argument went, the country would end up falling to the Reds.

That meant, for the first time in U.S. history, a vast and ever-growing military establishment, which would consist of military bases and installations all over the country and all over the world.

It would also mean calling into existence the CIA, a secretive agency with omnipotent powers, including the powers to assassinate (i.e., murder) people, to kidnap people, to torture people, to bribe foreign officials, to incarcerate people, and to effect regime change operations in foreign countries, including ones whose leaders were democratically elected.

It also meant calling into existence the NSA, a secretive agency with the omnipotent power to secretly spy on both the citizens and foreigners.

It was all justified in the name of keeping us safe from the Reds. What most Americans failed to notice was that this new-fangled governmental structure was quite similar to that found in the governmental structures of the Soviet Union and China.

And sure enough, after the conversion, America became like them. For example, the CIA began assassinating people, including people who had never committed any acts of aggression against the United States. The assassination attempts against Cuban leader Fidel Castro come to mind. Neither Castro nor Cuba had ever attacked the United States or even threatened to do so. But it was considered okay to murder him simply because of his communist or socialist beliefs.

And murder and attempted murder it was. Not everyone wanted to recognize that. President Lyndon Johnson was one of the ones who did. He observed that the CIA was running a “damned Murder, Inc.”

Castro wasn't the first intended victim of official state-sponsored murder by the U.S. government. In 1954, the CIA engineered the ouster of the democratically elected president of Guatemala, Jacobo Arbenz. In the run-up to that coup, the CIA prepared an assassination manual and a list of people to be assassinated, none of whom had ever done anything against the United States.

Morally or religiously speaking, however, is murder ever justified? That's the question few Americans asked during the Cold War. Instead, there was just deference to authority, just like the deference to authority that the mainstream media today are paying to the CIA and the rest of the national-security establishment in the suppose Russian hacking controversy.

Don't ask questions. Don't challenge. Oh sure, they lie, like when Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper Jr. and CIA Director Richard Helms did in sworn testimony to Congress. That doesn't matter. Even when they lie, it is automatically assumed that they do it to protect “national security” and “to keep us safe.” Automatic, unconditional deference to authority is expected of the citizenry, especially those who grew up reciting the pledge of allegiance every morning for 18 long years in public (i.e., government) schools.

In the process, the Pentagon, the CIA, and the NSA have warped and perverted the moral, values, principles, and consciences of the American people. Murder became okay. So did secret surveillance. So did coups that destroyed democratic regimes and installed brutal tyrannical regimes whose personnel murdered, tortured, raped, and oppressed their citizenry, with the full support of U.S. national-security state officials.

Oh sure, when the communists or even the Nazis did these types of things, everyone was quickly able to see that such things were bad. But when the Pentagon, the CIA, and the NSA did them, Americans were expected to thank them for their service. The CIA's MKULTRA program comes to mind.

One good example of the warping of U.S. consciences was with respect to the assassination of former Chilean official Orlando Letelier, which occurred in Washington, D.C. U.S. officials said that the assassination was bad because it was murder. But when U.S. officials did the same thing to people overseas, they said that it was good and didn't really constitute murder.

Consider the supposed Russian hacking scandal. In accusing the Russians of hacking into emails of Democratic Party officials, U.S. officials are saying that the Russians did something bad. But notice something important here: U.S. officials do the same things to regimes in other countries. The notion is that when they do it, it's bad but when "we" do it, it's good.

Referring to Trump's refusal to defer to the authority of the national-security establishment, one White House official stated, "It's appalling... No president has ever taken on the CIA and come out looking good."

He's right. The only president who has ever taken on the CIA was John F. Kennedy and he came out dead.

In fact, Trump's fight with the CIA is mild compared to Kennedy's. After the Bay of Pigs fiasco, where the U.S. government initiated a surprise, undeclared attack on a country that had never attacked the United States, JFK vowed to tear the CIA into a thousand pieces. He also fired the head of the CIA Allen Dulles, who, in one of the biggest conflicts of interest in history, was appointed to serve on the commission that supposedly investigated who assassinated President Kennedy.

Kennedy also went to war against the military establishment, opposing its desire to again invade Cuba and its desire to start a nuclear war against the Soviet Union.

In fact, it was Kennedy's turn toward peace after the Cuban Missile Crisis that ended up in a full-fledged, all-out war against his national-security establishment, which ardently opposed JFK's attempts to end the Cold War and peacefully coexist with the communist world.

On November 22, 1963, Kennedy lost the war, and the national security establishment, buoyed by LBJ's continuation of the Cold War and his expansion of the Vietnam War, ended up becoming a permanent part of America's governmental structure. After all, notice something important: When the Cold War finally ended in 1989, the national security establishment didn't go anywhere, notwithstanding the fact that the Cold War was the excuse used to call it into existence.

Moreover, not surprisingly, ever since the Kennedy assassination, not one single president has dared to take on the CIA, the Pentagon, the NSA, and the rest of the national-security establishment. For that matter, neither has the federal judiciary.

The mainstream press continues to maintain that the CIA, the Pentagon, and the CIA are necessary to "keep us safe." It's the exact opposite. They are the ones who stir up the enemies and produce the crises when they then use as the excuse to "keep us safe."

One example: the 9/11 attacks, which were retaliatory blowback from U.S. foreign interventionism. Another example: ISIS, which was a direct result of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq, another country that had never attacked the United States.

The worst mistake Americans ever made was to convert the federal government into a national-security state. We should have fought the communists with freedom and limited government, not with a national-security state. As the Germans, the Russians, the Chinese, the Cubans, the Chileans, the Guatemalans, the Iranians, the North Koreans, the Egyptians, and so many others have discovered, it is impossible to have a free and prospering economy under a warfare state. As Americans are finally realizing, ultimately a national security state leads to the destruction of freedom and to financial bankruptcy.

Donald Trump should do America and the world a favor. He should ask Congress to dismantle the CIA, the Pentagon, and the NSA and restore a constitutionally limited-government republic to our land.