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The WikiLeaks revelations and the crimes of US imperialism

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With increasing frequency, aggressive foreign policy moves by Washington have been palmed off by the media and political establishment as defensive responses to “hacking” and “cyber-espionage” by US imperialism’s geopolitical adversaries: Russia and China.

For months, news programs have been dominated by hysterical allegations that Russia “hacked” the Democratic National Committee in order to subvert the 2016 election. As the print and broadcast media were engaged in feverish denunciations of Russia, the US and its NATO allies moved thousands of troops and hundreds of tanks to the Russian border.

Not content to allege interference only in the American election, the US media and its international surrogates have alleged Russian meddling in elections in France, Germany and other far-flung countries. Prior to the current furor over Russian “hacking” of the election, the Obama administration used allegations of “hacking” and “intellectual property theft” to justify the trade sanctions and military escalation against China that accompanied its “pivot to Asia.”

Whenever the State Department, the CIA or unnamed “intelligence officials” proclaim another alleged “cyber” provocation by Washington’s geopolitical rivals, news anchors breathlessly regurgitate the allegations as fact, accompanying them with potted infographics and footage of masked men in darkened rooms aggressively typing away at computer keyboards.

But the official narrative of a benevolent and well-intentioned US government coming under attack from hordes of Russian and Chinese hackers, spies and “internet trolls” was upended Tuesday with the publication by WikiLeaks of some 9,000 documents showing the methods used by the Central Intelligence Agency to carry out criminal cyber-espionage, exploitation, hacking and disinformation operations all over the world.

The documents reveal that the CIA possesses the ability to exploit and control any internet-connected device, including mobile phones and “smart” televisions. These tools, employed by an army of 5,000 CIA hackers, give the agency the means to spy on virtually anyone, whether inside or outside the United States, including foreign governments, “friend” and foe alike, as well as international organizations such as the United Nations.

The WikiLeaks documents expose the United States as the world’s greatest “rogue state” and “cyber criminal.” The monstrous US espionage network, paid for with hundreds of billions in tax dollars, uses diplomatic posts to hide its activities from its “allies,” spies on world leaders, organizes kidnappings and assassinations and aims to influence or overturn elections all over the world.

On Tuesday, former CIA director Michael Hayden replied to the revelations by boasting, “But there are people out there that you want us to spy on. You want us to have the ability to actually turn on that listening device inside the TV to learn that person’s intentions.”

One can only imagine the howls of indignation such statements would evoke in the American press if they were uttered by a former Russian spymaster. In his comments, Hayden barely attempts to cover up the fact that the United States runs a spying and political disruption operation the likes of which Russian President Vladimir Putin or Chinese President Xi Jinping could only dream of.

The WikiLeaks documents show that the United States seeks to cover up its illicit operations by planting false flags indicating that its geopolitical adversaries, including Russia and China, bear responsibility for its crimes.

Cybersecurity expert Robert Graham noted in a blog post, for example, that “one anti-virus researcher has told me that a virus they once suspected came from the Russians or Chinese can now be attributed to the CIA, as it matches the description perfectly to something in the leak.”

The revelations have already begun to reverberate around the world. German Foreign Ministry spokesman Sebastian Fischer said Wednesday that Berlin was taking the revelations “very seriously,” adding, “issues of this kind emerge again and again.” Meanwhile Germany’s chief prosecutor has announced an investigation into the contents of the documents, with a spokesperson telling Reuters, “We will initiate an investigation if we see evidence of concrete criminal acts or specific perpetrators... We’re looking at it very carefully.”

The documents expose the CIA’s use of the US consulate in Frankfurt, Germany as a base for its spying and cyber operations throughout Europe, employing a network of intelligence personnel including CIA agents, NSA spies, military secret service personnel and US Department of

Homeland Security employees. Many of these operatives were provided with cover identities and diplomatic passports in order to hide their operations from the German and European governments.

Wednesday's rebuke by the German government followed the revelations in 2013 by Edward Snowden that "unknown members of the US intelligence services spied on the mobile phone of Chancellor Angela Merkel," as Germany's top prosecutor put it in 2015.

The US media, true to its function as a propaganda arm of the CIA and other intelligence agencies, immediately sprang into action to minimize the significance of the revelations and to accuse Russia, entirely without substantiation, of having released the documents in an effort to subvert US interests.

NPR quoted favorably the statements of Hayden, who declared, "I can tell you that these tools would not be used against an American," while the *Washington Post* quoted a bevy of security experts who said there is nothing to worry about in the documents. It favorably cited one such "expert," Jan Dawson, who declared, "For the vast majority of us, this does not apply to us at all ... There's no need to worry for any normal law-abiding citizen."

Such absurd statements, made about a security apparatus that was proven by Snowden's revelations to have spied on the private communications of millions of Americans, and then lied about it to the public and Congress, were taken as good coin by the US media.

Just one day after the WikiLeaks revelations, the media spin machine was already busy portraying them as part of a Russian conspiracy against the United States, and indicting WikiLeaks for acting as an agent of foreign powers. "Could Russia have hacked the CIA?" asked NBC's evening news program on Wednesday, while another segment was titled "Could there be a [Russian] mole inside the CIA?"

The types of spying and disruption mechanisms revealed in the documents constitute a key instrument US foreign policy, which works to subvert the democratic rights of people all over the planet in the interest of US imperialism. No methods, whether spying, hacking, blackmail, murder, torture, or, when need be, bombings and invasion, are off the table.