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By Patrick Martin
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Why do the CIA assassins and coup-plotters love this “whistleblower”?

Ninety former national security officials under the Obama and Bush administrations—and three who served for a period under Donald Trump—have signed an “Open Letter to the American People” defending the CIA officer, as yet unidentified, whose whistleblower complaint has become the basis for the House of Representatives opening an impeachment inquiry into the president.

The signers “applaud the whistleblower not only for living up to that responsibility but also for using precisely the channels made available by federal law for raising such concerns.”

They further claim, “A responsible whistleblower makes all Americans safer by ensuring that serious wrongdoing can be investigated and addressed ... What’s more, being a responsible whistleblower means that, by law, one is protected from certain egregious forms of retaliation.”

They draw the conclusion that the anti-Trump whistleblower’s identity must be protected at all costs, writing that “he or she has done what our law demands; now he or she deserves our protection.”

This professed defense of whistleblowing as a critical function of democracy would be more convincing if it did not come from high officials in the administration that prosecuted more leakers and whistleblowers than all previous US administrations combined.

The signers include former CIA directors John Brennan, Michael Hayden and Michael Morell, former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, former Defense Undersecretary Michele Flournoy, former Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman (Obama's point-woman on Ukraine). Bush administration officials who signed the letter include Matthew G. Olsen, former head of the Justice Department's National Security Division, and Paul Rosenzweig, former deputy assistant secretary for policy, Department of Homeland Security. Among the former Trump aides who signed is Andrea Kendall-Taylor, former deputy national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the National Security Council.

These officials had a much different attitude toward genuine American whistleblowers like Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden and John Kiriakou, who exposed crimes of US imperialism. Manning supplied WikiLeaks with Pentagon files documenting US war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as State Department cables showing US conspiracies against governments around the world. Snowden brought to light NSA spying on the entire world. Kiriakou exposed CIA torture in secret overseas prisons during the "war on terror."

None of these genuine whistleblowers received any form of protection. On the contrary, they were rebuffed in their efforts to expose atrocities by the US military-intelligence apparatus and felt compelled to release the information to the public. For their courageous actions, they have been brutally persecuted.

Manning went to prison for seven years, before her sentence was commuted, and is now in prison again for refusing to provide false testimony against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, currently in solitary confinement in London's Belmarsh Prison awaiting hearings on the US demand that he be extradited to face espionage charges and a possible 175-year prison sentence. Kiriakou went to prison for two years. Snowden fled the country as Democratic and Republican politicians called for his arrest and even assassination. He has been living in exile in Russia for the past six years.

In a recent commentary in *Consortium News*, Kiriakou noted the contrast between his own treatment and that accorded the "whistleblower" in the Ukraine case. He wrote, "If he's a whistleblower, and not a CIA plant whose task it is to take down the president, then his career is probably over. Intelligence agencies only pay lip service to whistleblowing."

Kiriakou further noted the dubious role of one of the whistleblower's attorneys, Mark Zaid, who had been his, Kiriakou's, first attorney when he sought to expose CIA torture.

Kiriakou fired him, only to have his former attorney testify against him in front of the grand jury that indicted him. “How this man still has a law license is an utter mystery to me,” Kiriakou wrote. “That Zaid is involved in this case leads me to believe that the CIA whistleblower is either an idiot who has no idea what he’s gotten himself into or he’s been directed to make his ‘disclosure.’”

In other words, the former CIA agent suggests, the entire “whistleblower” complaint against Trump is likely an operation directed by higher-level officials at the agency.

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Similar questions are raised in a remarkable **article** posted Monday on the website of *Rolling Stone* magazine, written by its main political writer Matt Taibbi. The article includes a large photograph of Chelsea Manning with the caption, “Real American whistleblower, Chelsea Manning.” It is the first major pro-Manning commentary to appear in any corporate-owned US publication since Manning was sent back to jail for refusing to testify before the grand jury convened to bring charges against Assange.

Under the headline, “The ‘Whistleblower’ Probably Isn’t,” Taibbi argues that what is really taking place in Washington is a conflict between the CIA and Trump, in which both sides are reactionary and anti-democratic.

The article begins, “The unnamed person at the center of this story sure didn’t sound like a whistleblower.” It continues:

“Americans who’ve blown the whistle over serious offenses by the federal government either spend the rest of their lives overseas, like **Edward Snowden**, end up in jail, like **Chelsea Manning**, get arrested and ruined financially, like former NSA official **Thomas Drake**, have their homes raided by the FBI, like disabled NSA vet **William Binney**, or get charged with espionage like ex-CIA exposé-of-torture **John Kiriakou**. It’s an insult to all of these people, and the suffering they’ve weathered, to frame the ballcarrier in the Beltway’s latest partisan power contest as a whistleblower.”

Taibbi also reports this little-noted discussion on CNN by former CIA agent Robert Baer (a dissident agent whose memoir became the basis of the film *Syriana*). He was speaking with CNN host Brooke Baldwin.

BAER: That’s what I find remarkable, is that this whistleblower knew about that, this attempt to cover up. This is a couple of people. It isn’t just one.

BALDWIN: And on the people point, if the allegation is true, Bob, what does it say that White House officials, lawyers, wanted to cover it up ?

BAER: You know, my guess, it's a palace coup against Trump. And who knows what else they know at this point.

Taibbi continues: “That sounds about right. Actual whistleblowers are alone. The Ukraine complaint seems to be the work of a group of people, supported by significant institutional power, not only in the intelligence community, but in the Democratic Party and the commercial press.”

Readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* are certainly familiar with such an analysis, which the WSWS elaborated more than two years ago in the statement “**Palace coup or class struggle: The political crisis in Washington and the strategy of the working class,**” and in dozens of commentaries since then.

It is rare for such an assessment even to be hinted at in the American media, however, let alone stated with a fair amount of bluntness.

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