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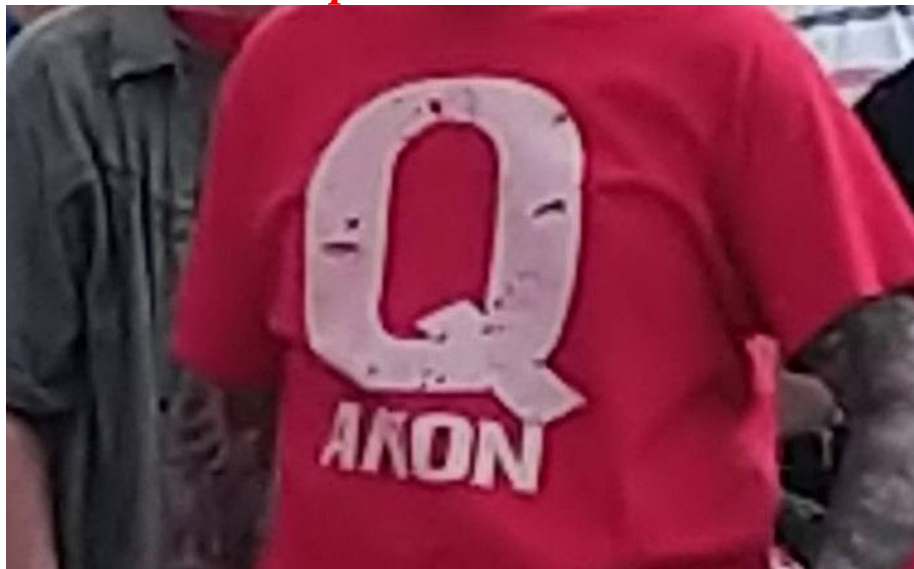
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by JEFFERSON MORLEY
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The Pro-Trump CIA Man: QAnon Madness and Upward Failure



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Michael Scheur is a pure product of the CIA. A career operations officer, he ran the first agency task force that hunted Osama bin Laden. Scheur authored the agency's rendition program, which kidnapped suspected terrorists (and sometimes innocent people) and tortured them. He combined a deep knowledge of Islamic jihadist movements with a willingness to use illegal methods to fight them. In that regard, he was in the mainstream of the CIA.

Since retiring in 2004, Scheur has undergone self-radicalization. In 2014, he advocated the assassination of Barack Obama and British conservative leader David Cameron. Last year he announced he is a follower—a believer—in QAnon, the anonymous conspiratorial

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Twitter account. Last week, he described the removal of Confederate war memorials as “a savage and tyrannical attack on the citizenry’s ability to understand and use the lessons of the history.”

As blogger Yashar Ali noted recently, Scheur’s wife, Alfreda Frances Bikowsky, still works at the agency. She has risen through the ranks of the agency despite at least two serious lapses in judgment. He is not responsible for her failures nor she for his madness. But, as a CIA power couple, the arc of their careers speaks to the future of the agency if Trump is re-elected.

Gaslighting the FBI

Bikowsky played in the run-up to the terror attacks of September 11. She was one of several CIA officials who failed to notify the FBI when two of the men who would become hijackers entered the United States in 2000. It was, according to FBI agents assigned to the CIA, a missed opportunity to break up the 9/11 plot.

As Rory O’Connor and Ray Nowosielski reported in Salon, the FBI agents involved agreed Bikowsky played a key role in keeping the Bureau in the dark. They recounted how Bikowsky prevented them from telling the FBI colleagues the agency had learned that two al-Qaeda agents, Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi, had likely arrived in southern California in early 2000.

(Full disclosure: As the Washington editor of Salon at the time, I edited and published O’Connor and Nowosielski’s story. It’s well-worth reading for the high-level named sources who confirmed the story.)

In the story, Mark Rossini, a retired FBI agent, recalled the confrontation with a woman from the CIA.

“She got a little heated,” Rossini recalled. “She just put her hand on her hip and just said to me, ‘Listen, it’s not an FBI case. It’s not an FBI matter. When we want the FBI to know, we’ll let them know. And you’re not going to say anything.’”

That woman was named Michael Anne Casey, according to O’Connor and Nowosielski. She spoke on behalf of Bikowsky, her boss.

The FBI didn’t learn about the two men’s presence in the United States until was too late. Mihdhar and Hazmi boarded American Flight 77 at Washington Dulles airport on the morning of Sept. 11. After the plane took off, they joined three other men in commandeering the aircraft and flying it into the Pentagon, killing a total of 184 people.

“9/11 occurred not because the systems failed,’ one FBI agent told Salon. “The systems actually worked. Somebody made a critical decision not to share this information ... If you look at this, it’s really just a handful of people. I don’t know how they sleep at night, I really don’t.”

Bikowsky testified to the 9/11 Commission that she passed the information about Mihdhar to the FBI. All of the FBI agents involved said that was not true. When Salon asked if the Bikowsky’s testimony was accurate, the CIA evaded the question.

Upward Failure

But that is not all. O’Connor and Nowosielski noted that Bikowsky is associated with another egregious CIA blunder. In 2011,

the AP reported that Bikowsky was at the center of “the el-Masri incident,” in which an innocent German citizen was renditioned (a euphemism for kidnapped) by the CIA in 2003 and held under terrible conditions (a euphemism for tortured) in a secret Afghan prison. The AP characterized it as “one of the biggest diplomatic embarrassments of the U.S. war on terrorism.” It was no doubt something more to Khaled el-Masri. Despite that episode Bikowsky was promoted.

In most governments, kidnapping and torturing an innocent man would merit dismissal and sanctions. Not at CIA.

On Twitter, former CIA officer John Sipher said this about Scheur and Bikowsky.

“He’s a mess. Retired 16 years ago. I wouldn’t be surprised if he’s in the middle of the Q nonsense. According to press reports, his wife should have been fired for cause years ago.”

But the point, of course, is that she wasn’t fired. She thrived in an unaccountable institutional culture that sanctions lawlessness and upward failure. So did her husband.

Murderous Imagination

And just because Scheur, individually, is a mess, that doesn’t necessarily mean others at CIA don’t share his brand of madness. His wife is a success by agency standards. Scheur can be a reasonable sounding fellow. His blog, Non-Intervention, stakes out a principled position about the U.S. role in the world.

I certainly do believe that we are engaged in far too many wars; that most of them are unnecessary; and that almost all of them are the consequence of Washington, D.C.’s rabid post-1945 interventionism. To the extent that Washington [D.C.] — under both

Democrats and Republicans — stops intervening in overseas affairs that are of neither genuine concern to the United States nor threats to U.S. interests, we will find ourselves in far fewer wars.

Yet, while sounding rational, Scheur continues to spew insanity. He seems to sincerely believe that QAnon's mashup of conspiracy theories, insults, and memes, is a source of reliable intelligence.

Last year, he wrote about the Democratic party's opposition to Trump:

In addition to the irrefutable fact that QANON data have been overwhelmingly accurate, a review of the clear facts about the leading insurrectionists' behavior and intentions add luster to the savage house-cleaning that is approaching, per QANON, commonsense, the Constitution's provisions, and answered prayers.

This is not just trolling. Coming from an operations officer with a record of taking illegal action, this rhetoric is the stuff of fascist dreams.. "The savage house-cleaning that is approaching." For Scheur, it will be justified by the Constitution. It will be an "answered prayer," a divine development.

Are Scheur and his wife representative of other CIA officers? Not in my experience. But they were certainly in the mainstream of the CIA when it came to the alleged necessity of torture and rendition.

The intelligence profession has a built-in bias in favor of paranoia, as the career of counterintelligence James Angleton shows. And the insular culture of the CIA has bred dangerous madness before. Sidney Gottlieb, the genial mastermind of MKULTRA can be fairly described as a countercultural war criminal. In his day, he was utterly respectable. So it's not far-fetched to wonder if Scheur could have fellow-travelers inside the agency. Scheur's imagination is Manichean and murderous. Here's sample from his blog.

It ought to give QANON deniers (AKA: coup-ists, insurrectionists) plenty to think about as they wait for their own inevitable and personal hell to arrive. (Maybe all of the following, gallows-headed traitors will write a Q on their palm and claim innocence by insanity?)

According to Scheur, if you refuse the religion of QAnon you are disloyal to the United States.

Are there other Michael Scheurs still wielding power and influence in the upper ranks of the CIA? Presumably not, but who knows? Any exceptions could be dangerous.

Savage House-Cleaning

We have seen many Trump critics emerge from the U.S. intelligence community: John Brennan, Michael Morrell, James Clapper and many others. Trump castigates them implausibly as “radical left deep state cabal.” In truth, the intelligence community is less a conspiracy than a secretive political faction that pursues its interests like other Washington factions.

While Brennan and Co. have more than their share of policy crimes/mistakes and public lies (incisively dramatized in the movie, The Report), they represent a class of senior government officials who are rightly appalled by Trump’s ignorance, self-dealing, and lawlessness.

We have heard far less about Trump supporters within the intelligence community. Scheur and former DIA director Michael Flynn are the best known but there may be others.

Senior CIA officials inevitably gravitate towards the president’s policy preferences, if only to keep their jobs. During the State of the Union address in January, CIA director Gina Haspel leapt to her feet to applaud Trump’s call for cracking down on sanctuary cities that protect undocumented immigrants.

Just as Scheur has gone full QAnon, Haspel went full MAGA, at least for an evening. It’s scary, but not unreasonable, to think there might be a like-minded cohort in Langley.

If Trump Wins

Can Trump find allies in the intelligence community to preserve his grip on power? He’s certainly trying. just as the former spy chiefs are campaigning hard against him. (It’s no surprise that former deputy CIA director Avril Haines has emerged as a top adviser to Vice President Joe Biden.)

Trump has installed loyalist John Ratcliffe as director of national intelligence. Ratcliffe first came to Trump’s attention after he called for the prosecution of the Washington Post for publishing a leak about Michael Flynn in January 2017.

And Ratcliffe is not alone. When Trump showed up at CIA headquarters the day after his inauguration and gave a campaign speech in front of a wall dedicated to CIA employees killed in the line of duty, Brennan said his performance was “despicable.”

But there was plenty of hooting and hollering in CIA auditorium that day, according to Politico. “The self-selected crowd [of 400 CIA employees] repeatedly interrupted

Trump cheering and clapping,” No doubt many of those people remain at the CIA. No doubt, some have been promoted. Some may want to cheer Trump again.

If Trump wins reelection, the CIA’s future will be up for grabs. One CIA former, with a wife in a senior position, is telling us very clearly what Trump’s second term agenda should be: a savage house-cleaning, targeting of current and former government officials for capital punishment, a campaign Michael Scheur says would be justified by the Constitution, God, and QAnon.

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