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DOJ files baseless charges against black nationalists of conspiring with Russia

The Department of Justice has indicted four American and three Russian citizens on Tuesday on charges of conducting a “multi-year foreign malign influence campaign in the United States,” to “sow discord and spread pro-Russian propaganda.”



Matthew Olsen [Photo: Department of Justice]

Making clear the explicitly anti-democratic nature of the allegations the Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen of the Justice Department’s National Security Division said in a

statement that “Russia’s foreign intelligence service allegedly weaponized our First Amendment rights—freedoms Russia denies its own citizens—to divide Americans and interfere in elections in the United States.”

They might as well have written, “Americans have freedom of speech, as long as they are saying what we want them to.”

The DOJ accused Moscow of recruiting and funding US political groups, claiming they were acting as “unregistered illegal agents of the Russian government.” All seven people indicted could face prison terms ranging from five to ten years in prison if convicted.

The accusations take place as the Biden administration is further escalating the proxy war with Russia in Ukraine in the direction of deployment of NATO troops amid staggering battlefield losses for the Ukrainian military. Having already sunk \$114 billion into the war, and propose a record \$1 trillion military budget, and staked US imperialism’s whole reputation on the war, the administration is moving to silence domestic opposition towards the war.

The ruling class also seeks to use the war as a weapon against the developing strike movement in the United States, which includes most recently strikes among university workers, chemical workers, and teachers, as part of the international upsurge in the class struggle driven by attacks on living standards linked to the US-instigated war.

The DOJ claims that two Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) agents Aleksey Borisovich Sukhodolov and Yegor Sergeyevich Popov supervised a campaign to recruit, fund, and direct US political groups including the African People’s Socialist Party (APSP) and the Uhuru Movement in Florida, another black nationalist group. No evidence is provided for this.

All four indicted Americans—Omali Yeshitela, Penny Joanne Hess, Jesse Nevel and Augustus C. Romain Jr.—have residences in St. Petersburg, Florida and are tied to the APSP and the Uhuru Movement. Both leaderships of the respective movements have denied the allegations in the past.

The APSP headquarters were previously raided by heavily armed FBI agents as part of a 25-page indictment against Aleksandr Viktorivitch Ionov, a Russian citizen accused of the vague charge of “conspiracy to commit offense against the United States,” which amounted to a political frame-up. That indictment has been superseded by the current slightly longer indictment running at 37 pages.

The indictment again makes the claim that Ionov, as an agent of the FSB, funded the APSP and Uhuru Movement, and controlled them.

Underscoring the pro-war nature of the campaign being waged by the DOJ, the prosecutors claim that one objective of Ionov's supposed influence operation was to "create the appearance of American popular support for Russia's annexation of territories in Ukraine." The DOJ points to an alleged email between Ionov and Nevel which it claimed contained pro-Russian talking points, while Yeshitela and another APSP member "made statements of solidarity with the Russian government," according to the news release.

It also claims that the alleged "election interference" plot extended beyond the 2019 local election cycle in St. Petersburg, Florida, to include the 2020 presidential election.

St. Petersburg Mayor Ken Welch, a Democrat, supported the reactionary charges, saying "Petersburg does not support, condone or tolerate any foreign government engaging in activities to undermine or influence our elections."

The indictments follow baseless and to this day unproven allegations by sections of the government aligned with the Democratic Party that Russia interfered in US elections in 2016 in order to get Donald Trump elected. These formed the basis for the special counsel investigation that produced the Mueller Report, which failed to find any evidence of collusion between Trump and Moscow.

Acting Assistant Director Kurt Ronnow of the FBI's Counterintelligence Division said on the release of the indictment, "Today's announcement paints a harrowing picture of Russian government actions and the lengths to which the FSB will go to interfere with our elections, sow discord in our nation and ultimately recruit U.S. citizens to their efforts." He continued, "All Americans should be deeply concerned by the tactics employed by the FSB and remain vigilant to any attempt to undermine our democracy."

No foreign government is necessary to undermine what little remains of democracy in the US. The US government silences those who expose its crimes and has absolutely no moral grounds to excoriate anyone on the issue of democratic rights. It has relentlessly pursued journalist Julian Assange, locking him away in a UK prison and torturing him for more than a decade, and whistleblower Edward Snowden for exposing US war crimes and spying operations. Snowden was forced to flee to Russia to escape a similar fate.

The Biden administration supports witchhunting COVID-19 researchers in support of its war preparations against China, arrests journalists who report on anti-police violence protests, and those attempting to cover the crimes of US capitalism as in the case of the

poisoning of residents by Norfolk Southern in the aftermath of the Palestine, Ohio, derailment. It could also be added that among Washington's allies number bloodthirsty regimes that murder journalists, such as the Saudi regime. These are just a fraction of the outrages perpetrated by Washington.

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