

Republican Perspective

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by Ed Manning

INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY POLITICIZED?

“The history of the intelligence community is replete with violations of the trust of the American people.” James Clapper, Ex-Director of National Intelligence

John Gentry spent 12 years as a CIA analyst and currently is an Adjunct Associate Professor of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University. In a lengthy article in the quarterly *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Gentry took aim at the CIA and other US intelligence agencies. He said they have become bastions of political liberals with pro-Democratic Party views.

Gentry specifically directed his ire at CIA Director John Brennan, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, and former deputy CIA director Michael Morell. These intelligence leaders broke decades-long prohibitions of publicly airing their liberal political views in attacking President Trump.

Gentry worries that institutional political bias will undermine the role of intelligence agencies in providing objective reports in support of government leaders charged with making policy decisions. "A considerable body of evidence, much of it fragmentary, indicates that many CIA people have left-leaning political preferences, but less evidence shows that political bias influences CIA analyses," Gentry concludes.

He reached no definitive conclusion on whether intelligence reports and activities were politicized and found no proof "intelligence products have been politicized to mislead or to avoid helping President Trump." Yet, he concludes "bias may have crept into CIA analyses."

Gentry wrote that "in 2016 observers of US intelligence began to wonder if the CIA's once-firm prohibition on partisan politics had changed, and to ponder whether a new kind of politicization had arisen: namely, institutionally embedded, partisan bias." He said the actions of senior retired intelligence officials during the 2016 campaign that "universally" criticized then-candidate Trump and supported Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton were unprecedented.

"The attacks on Trump were unprecedented for intelligence officers in their substance, tone, and volume," he stated. "Critics went far beyond trying to correct Trump's misstatements about US intelligence; they attacked him as a human being."

Gentry challenged the thesis of books written by Clapper and former CIA Director, Michael Hayden. He said they justified their political attacks on Trump because of his

different world views. "For senior former intelligence officials to make such blatantly partisan statements is unprecedented," Gentry said.

Former deputy CIA Director, Michael Morrell's 2016 op-ed in the *New York Times* was another example showing intelligence agency bias. Morrell wrote his intelligence training had taught him that the nation would be safer with Clinton as president. "Morell's claim that his CIA career qualifies him to make political judgments about domestic issues is incorrect," Gentry said. "He was trained and authorized to 'make the call' about foreign intelligence issues within the classified, internal world of the US government."

The Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) was not spared by Gentry. He wrote that under Obama, editors of the DIA's primary current intelligence report were notified to "avoid specifically identified terms that might trigger criticism of administration policy." "That clearly stated policy of politicization provoked no apparent reaction of any sort from analysts," Gentry said. "DIA analysts seemed comfortable with politicization by omission."

His review of political contributions by known intelligence officials revealed that in 2016, 61.3 percent of all contributions were made to Democrats. He speculates that an influx of younger workers could influence the intelligence agencies culture. "They have recently been in colleges and universities, some of which have become conspicuously illiberal through the strongly leftist outlooks of their faculty and administrators," he said. As a Columbia professor, he should know.

The anti-Trump "resistance" by Democrats refusing to deal with Trump on any issue also contributed to the problem with intelligence officials. "This attitude is incompatible with a core principle of established democracies, the acceptance of a change in power after losing an election," Gentry said.

Several former intelligence and executive branch officials agreed with Gentry. Kenneth deGraffenreid, former White House National Security Council intelligence director in the Reagan administration, is one. "The proper role of intelligence is perverted further when some in the intelligence bureaucracy believe their role is to provide a check on the actions of elected leaders and see their job as figuratively poking a finger in the policymaker's eye," he said.

Charles "Sam" Faddis, a former CIA operations officer, said countering politicization is a critical question. "A secret service that involves itself in partisan politics is a threat to the republic," Faddis said. Former CIA operations officer Brad Johnson: "From Trump's election to this date, a common topic of conversation in the hallways of CIA headquarters at Langley is how best to 'resist' with no fear of backlash and no recognition of just how wrong it is," said Johnson, head of the group Americans for Intelligence Reform.