



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on January 5, 2017

Trump Plans Changes for Intelligence Agencies

At least to some extent, America's intelligence agencies have sided with the Obama administration in the charge that the Russians interfered in the presidential election — on the side of Donald Trump against Hillary Clinton — and the president-elect is planning to restructure and scale them back, charging that they have become both politicized and bloated.

It is not yet clear the exact actions that Trump is planning, but it appears that he wishes to cut staff at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), based in Langley, Virginia, and move more agents out of their headquarters and into field offices around the world.

Trump is expected to meet with intelligence officials on Friday in New York so that he may be briefed on the evidence that they argue proves the Russian government hacked Democratic e-mails.

One staffer at the White House was reported to have said Trump's taking on the U.S. intelligence community so directly is unwise, predicting that Trump will get the worst of it in any confrontation with the CIA. "It's appalling. No president has ever taken on the CIA and come out looking good."

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But it is unprecedented that the intelligence agencies would launch an assault upon the incoming president, essentially saying that a foreign power aided him in his election.

For his part, Trump denies that he is an enemy of the U.S. intelligence agencies. "The media lies to make it look like I am against 'Intelligence' when in fact I am a big fan," Trump said. While Trump may indeed be a "big fan" of the gathering of information by agencies such as the CIA, he is understandably angered at their insistence in supporting the contention of President Obama and Hillary Clinton that the Russians are to blame for the release of e-mails damaging to the campaign of Clinton — thus casting doubt on the legitimacy of his election.

He has made no secret that he intends to replace James Clapper, the national intelligence director, and that he intends to replace the director of the CIA, John Brennan. Brennan issued a statement to employees of the CIA that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agreed with the agency's conclusion that Russia's goal was to make Trump, rather than Clinton, president. Brennan said, "There is strong consensus among us on the scope, nature, and intent of Russian interference in our presidential election."

The Department of Homeland Security weighed in, as well, releasing a report prepared jointly with the FBI, alleging that cyberattacks into the DNC e-mail accounts were perpetrated by hackers associated with the GRB (Russia's military intelligence agency), and the FSB (essentially the successor to the Cold War-era KGB).





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While Obama was expected to receive a briefing today (in advance of the briefing for Trump on Friday) on evidence that the Russians were responsible for turning over hacked e-mails to WikiLeaks, he has already implemented sanctions against the Russians, including the expulsion of several diplomats. One could certainly take it that Obama has already determined the Russians are guilty as charged — before the briefing. Russian President Vladimir Putin, a former high-ranking official with the Soviet KGB, has denied hacking any Democrat e-mails, but has also declined to retaliate against American diplomats in Russia. For that, Trump has referred to Putin as “very smart.”

It is clear that Trump will have a battle in taking on the CIA and other intelligence agencies, as there is an intelligence establishment that has been constructed over several decades, back to the creation of the CIA during the Truman administration. Paul Pillar, who was with the CIA for 28 years and retired in 2005 early in the second Bush term, seemed to express the “bipartisan” view of the intelligence community against changes, when he said, “I’m rather pessimistic. This is indeed disturbing that the president should come in with this negative view of the agencies coupled with his habits on how he absorbs information and so on that don’t provide a lot of hope for change.”

Considering that Trump, like any other president, would be expected to take action based on information provided to him by the intelligence agencies, it seems imperative that any such information be free from partisan bias and that it be accurate. History provides examples of failures of the CIA to provide information that was always accurate.

During the Carter years, the CIA opined that the Shah of Iran was secure in his throne for the next 20 years (about a year before he was ousted during the Iranian revolution of 1979). And of course, the American intelligence agencies certainly were not stellar when they concluded that large amounts of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) were stockpiled inside of Iraq in the lead-up to the Iraq War of 2003. And if the bulk of the WMDs, such as chemical and biological weapons, were moved to Syria before the U.S. invasion, as some theorize, the CIA and other American intelligence agencies certainly did not detect it.

If Trump is serious about shaking up the CIA, Homeland Security, and other U.S. intelligence agencies, it is likely the battle between the president-elect and those agencies will only intensify after he is sworn in as the 45th president on January 20.



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