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The Terrorism Pretext: Mass Surveillance is All About Money and Power

by Bill Blunden

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“We are under pressure from the Treasury to justify our budget, and commercial espionage is one way of making a direct contribution to the nation’s balance of payments”

-Sir Colin McColl, former MI6 Chief

For years public figures have condemned cyber espionage committed against the United States by intruders launching their attacks out of China. These same officials then turn around and justify America’s far-reaching surveillance apparatus in terms of preventing terrorist attacks. Yet classified documents published by WikiLeaks reveal just how empty these talking points are. Specifically, top-secret intercepts prove that economic spying by the United States is pervasive, that not even allies are safe, and that it’s wielded to benefit powerful corporate interests.

At a recent campaign event in New Hampshire Hillary Clinton accused China of “trying to hack into everything that doesn’t move in America.” Clinton’s hyperbole is redolent of similar claims from the American Deep State. For example, who could forget the statement made by former NSA director Keith Alexander that Chinese cyber espionage represents the greatest transfer of wealth in history? Alexander has obviously never heard of quantitative easing (QE) or the self-perpetuating “global war on terror” which has likewise eaten through trillions of dollars. Losses

due to cyber espionage are a rounding error compared to the tidal wave of money channeled through QE and the war on terror.

When discussing the NSA's surveillance programs Keith Alexander boldly asserted that they played a vital role with regard to preventing dozens of terrorist attacks, an argument that fell apart rapidly under scrutiny. Likewise, in the days preceding the passage of the USA Freedom Act of 2015 President Obama advised that bulk phone metadata collection was essential "to keep the American people safe and secure." Never mind that decision makers have failed to provide any evidence that bulk collection of telephone records has prevented terrorist attacks.

If American political leaders insist on naming and shaming other countries with regard to cyber espionage perhaps it would help if they didn't sponsor so much of it themselves. And make no mistake, thanks to WikiLeaks the entire world knows that U.S. spies are up to their eyeballs in economic espionage. Against NATO partners like France and Germany, no less. And also against developing countries like Brazil and news outlets like Der Spiegel.

These disclosures confirm what Ed Snowden said in an open letter to Brazil: terrorism is primarily a mechanism to bolster public acquiescence for runaway data collection. The actual focus of intelligence programs center around "economic spying, social control, and diplomatic manipulation." Who benefits from this sort of activity? The same large multinational corporate interests that have spent billions of dollars to achieve state capture.

Why is the threat posed by China inflated so heavily? The following excerpt from an intelligence briefing might offer some insight. In a conversation with a colleague during the summer of 2011 the EU's chief negotiator for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, Hiddo Houben, described the treaty as an attempt by the United State to antagonize China:

"Houben insisted that the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which is a U.S. initiative, appears to be designed to force future negotiations with China. Washington, he pointed out, is negotiating with every nation that borders China, asking for commitments that exceed those countries' administrative capacities, so as to 'confront' Beijing. If, however, the TPP agreement takes 10 years to negotiate, the world—and China—will have changed so much that that country likely will have become disinterested in the process, according to Houben. When that happens, the U.S. will have no alternative but to return to the WTO."

American business interests are eager to "open markets in Asia" and "provide the United States with unprecedented opportunities for investment." At least, that's how Hillary Clinton phrased it back when she was the Secretary of State. China represents a potential competitor and so American political leaders need an enemy that they can demonize so that they can justify massive intelligence budgets and the myriad clandestine operations that they approve. The American Deep State wishes to maintain economic dominance and U.S. spies have been working diligently to this end.