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Is Obama Being Threatened by US Hawks with ‘Security Risks’?

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10/10/2014



Are a rash of media disclosures showing how President Barack Obama’s personal security has been endangered aimed at intimidating him into toeing the Pentagon’s warpath on Syria and in Ukraine?

On the face of it, the disclosures mainly published in the Washington Post have portrayed the presidential Secret Service as bungling and incompetent.

Last week the director of Obama’s security detail Julia Pierson was forced to resign (that is, sacked) amid a hue and cry on Capitol and the White House over several blunders. House of

Representatives speaker John Boehner said then: «The secret service is beset with a culture of complacency and incompetence».

This week the Washington Post revealed more damaging information: that White House aides were also compromised in covering up the «hooker scandal» dating back to April 2012, when more than 20 of the presidential security team were sacked or punished for partying in a hotel ahead of a major political summit in Cartagena, Colombia.

The latest twist on that scandal plus the recent disclosures of other breaches in President Obama's personal security appear to be aimed at not merely exposing incompetence, but, more significantly, at undermining Obama's confidence in the people who are assigned to protect his life, including his own White House aides.

The previous security scandal to rock the White House emerged within hours of Pierson being sacked on October 1 when it was reported that a convicted armed man was allowed to enter an elevator alongside the president while he was on official business in Atlanta, Georgia, last month.

That incident, on September 16, occurred when a private security contractor working at the building where Obama was visiting was able to mingle among the president's Secret Service bodyguards. It was only after the agents noticed the man acting strangely, by persistently taking a cell phone video of Obama while riding the elevator, that they reportedly realised the security breach in their midst.

It turned out that the man, who has not been named, was armed with a gun and had three previous convictions for assault.

Obama reportedly found out about this security breach only «within minutes» of the story being published last week. That he was not informed about it by his own security people, but rather only learned of it in the newspapers must be very unsettling for the man who is supposed to be most heavily protected in the world.

As the Washington Post reported: «Extensive screening is supposed to keep people with weapons or criminal histories out of arm's reach of the president. But it appears that this man, possessing a gun, came within inches of the president after undergoing no such screening.»

Representative Jason Chaffetz, who heads a House subcommittee overseeing the Secret Service, expressed outrage over the incident and the grave risk that it posed to Obama's safety.

«You have a convicted felon within arm's reach of the president, and they never did a background check,» Chaffetz said. «Words aren't strong enough for the outrage I feel for the safety of the president and his family.»

Three days after that embarrassing debacle, on September 19, another major security lapse occurred, this time at the White House in Washington DC, when a man armed with a knife was able to scale the perimeter fence and enter the North Portico door before finally being

apprehended in the East Wing. The intruder was named as Omar Gonzalez, a 42-year-old Iraq war veteran said to be suffering from psychological trouble.

These are just two high-profile instances of President Obama's personal safety being compromised that have emerged over the space of a few weeks. According to the Washington Post, there have been three times as many threats on Obama's life compared with his predecessors.

Of course, the fact that he is the first black occupant of the White House could make him a target for all sorts of crank enemies. The first lady, Michelle Obama, has previously publicly expressed fears of a racially motivated attack on her husband.

Also revealed for the first time last week by the Washington Post was a shooting incident at the White House back in November 2011. On that occasion, a man armed with a semiautomatic rifle sprayed the upper floor residence with at least seven bullets, smashing a window only «steps away» from the first family's living room. In an extraordinary security lapse, the shooter was able to drive away from the White House and was only picked up several days later.

Obama's youngest daughter Sasha was in the residence at the time of the shooting along with Michelle's mother. When the president found out about that breach, he was reportedly furious and demanded a radical shake-up in procedure.

The Washington Post quoted William Daley, White House chief of staff at the time, as remarking on that attack: «It was obviously very frightening that someone who didn't really plan it that well was able to shoot and hit the White House and people here did not know about it until several days later.»

However, the question arises: is there something more sinister to this spate of recent revelations concerning the president's safety which appear to place him as singularly vulnerable?

Is there something more significant to the rash of disclosures than mere incompetence among the president's security detail? Are powerful people within the US government perhaps trying to send Obama a grim warning?

We should bear in mind that the US-led military intervention in Iraq and Syria and the growing confrontation with Russia over Ukraine seem to have entered a critical phase. The US military-industrial complex is pushing for a full-scale and relentless intervention in the Middle East, as well as ever-increasing tensions over Ukraine by goading the reactionary Kiev regime into antagonising Russia.

With billions of dollars at stake from arms sales, business reports have noted that America's top weapons companies, such as Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and Raytheon, are soaring in their stock market values. Every fighter jet sortie in Iraq and Syria, every missile launched, every warship despatched to the Black Sea is rallying stupendous profits for these companies.

As a recent headline on Bloomberg News noted: 'Syria-to-Ukraine Wars Send US Defence

Stocks to Records’.

The Bloomberg reported found that the average share price increase for top American weapons firms has increased by 19 per cent over the past year compared with the 2.2 per cent on Standard and Poor’s Industrial 500 Index.

Future sales of Pentagon hardware to America’s Arab allies, in particular Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, are another huge multiplier of lucrative business.

And the US military-industrial complex is once again rolling out its paid pundits and politicians clamouring for war, as well as pushing the strategic regime-change objective against the Assad government in Syria.

Recall that last year, there was a similar paroxysm for all-out military intervention in Syria among the Washington neocons. But much to their intense annoyance then, Obama «wimped out» on that war drive, largely due to massive public protest around the world and also to Russian president Vladimir Putin’s diplomatic intervention over Syria’s chemical weapons disposal.

This time around, however, the American military-industrial complex and its neocon cheerleaders seem to be hellbent on making sure the opportunity for war on Syria and elsewhere is not squandered. They see Obama’s wimpish tendency as a «weak link».

Hence it is noticeable that America’s military brass, including General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and former CIA director Leon Panetta have of late embarked on media briefings that appear to be laying down markers to Obama, warning him not to cave in on escalating the US-led air strikes and eventual ground war in Syria.

Ever since the CIA-backed assassination of John F Kennedy in November 1963, all US presidents must surely be aware that they are at the mercy of their own «deep government» – the dark forces operating in Washington that are beholden to the military-industrial complex and its closely aligned foreign policy hawks.

According to former CIA analyst Ray McGovern, Obama has previously confided to his inner circle of associates a fear that his personal security could be one day placed in jeopardy by political enemies within his own government. This could be what Michelle Obama is really referring to about her husband’s possible assassination; not so much that the person pulling the trigger is a racist nutcase or rightwing chauvinist, but rather that the people supposed to be protecting the president could deliberately leave him vulnerable.

According to James W Douglass and other biographers of President Kennedy, JFK in the weeks leading up to his assassination in Dallas on November 22 1963 felt that his own Secret Service was plotting against him. Kennedy knew well that the Pentagon had a number on him because of his opposition to their hawkish ambitions towards Cuba, Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

American presidents thereafter must know that they owe their survival to dark forces within their

own ruling class. If these forces can blow a president's head off in broad daylight, as they did in Dallas with Kennedy, then any «executive action» deemed by them is possible.

Over the past month since Obama gave the go-ahead for air strikes against the IS terror group in Iraq, which have now been ramped up into Syrian territory, it is remarkable that his rhetoric has shifted to a much more militaristic pitch. In August, Obama was saying there is no «American military solution» in Iraq against the Islamic State terrorists. Now, he is calling for a long campaign of aerial bombing «lasting years» to destroy «the network of death».

An insidious media campaign orchestrated by American secret government forces using their favoured mouthpiece, the Washington Post, in which presidential security is suddenly highlighted for being at grave risk, could be the efficacious way to ensure that Obama does not confound their cardinal military plans in the Middle East and toward Russia, with a possible last-minute diplomatic cop-out.