

Sinking Mike Pompeo: Tucker Carlson, Assange and Trump

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Global Research, December 29, 2024

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Law and Justice](#)

***Mike Pompeo's** role in the first Trump administration as both director of the Central Intelligence Agency and US Secretary of State will be forever associated with the venom and desperation he had in targeting **Julian Assange**, a publisher who drove him to distraction and engendered mania. As the chief founder of WikiLeaks, Assange had regularly published troves of classified documents uncovering the messy muddles, messes and more sinister features of the US imperium.*

When WikiLeaks published the [CIA Vault 7 files](#) in March 2017, disclosing a suite of hacking tools used by the organisation, Pompeo became insensible. CIA operatives [had thought themselves](#) invulnerable to such publishing revelations, unlike their wobbly counterparts in the State Department and the Pentagon. The [report](#) from the CIA's WikiLeaks Task Force might have encouraged some of the bureaucratic boffins in government to improve: WikiLeaks had, effectively "brought to light multiple ongoing CIA failures", a fault that enabled a CIA employee to pilfer 180 gigabytes of information, constituting "the largest data loss in CIA history".

The report goes on spelling out the need for reform. "We must care as much about securing our systems as we care about running them if we are to make the necessary revolutionary change." That said, all bureaucracies treat the exposure of failings through an external airing as treasonous, a compromise that rents the thick cloak of secrecy. Most importantly of all, it often shows officials as clumsy, doltish and undeserving of their position.

An avenging Pompeo, flushed with spite, went on a crusade against leakers and those aiding them, seeking more serious measures against WikiLeaks. In his April 2017 speech to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, he first [designated](#) WikiLeaks a "hostile non-state intelligence service", a classification that lowered the threshold in terms of what was permissible against a publishing outlet. Implicit was the suggestion that the United States, through its various channels, would actively and aggressively pursue the organisation as an information guerilla misfit prey to foreign powers.

Pompeo even emitted a few smoke signals that Assange would not be able to avail himself of those blessed protections available under the First Amendment to the press. "Julian Assange has no First Amendment freedoms. He's sitting in an embassy in London. He's not a US citizen." In time, a seedy term intended to diminish, if not scuttle the notion of press protections, began circulating in the chatter of Espionage Land: information broker.

In that most revealing [Yahoo News report](#), published in September 2021, Pompeo and various other agency chiefs were, in the words of a former Trump national security official, "completely detached from reality because they were so embarrassed by Vault 7". Within

months, the US intelligence community was monitoring the communications and movements of targeted WikiLeaks personnel. Audio and visual surveillance of Assange was avidly pursued.

Some few months after revealing his intentions regarding WikiLeaks, Pompeo [decried](#) the emergence of a cult of “worship” that had grown around “Edward Snowden, and those who steal American secrets for the purpose of self-aggrandizement or money or for whatever their motivation may be”. Typical of Pompeo: the information disclosed was irrelevant to motivation, the central tenet of the US Espionage Act of 1917.

Be it through means conventional or otherwise, the WikiLeaks publisher, then a political asylee in London’s Ecuadorian Embassy, was to be extradited to the United States and tried, or, short of that, abducted or assassinated. (Under a plea deal, Assange was eventually convicted [under one count](#) of conspiracy to obtain and disclose national defence information under the Espionage Act.)

As the noble scribblers at *Yahoo News* go on to reveal at some length, using material gathered from interviews with more than 30 former US officials, various scenarios, encouraged by Pompeo, were encouraged. Discussions took place on whether it was possible to extrajudicially remove Assange from the Ecuadorian Embassy under the CIA’s operational doctrine of “offensive counterintelligence”. Three officials also reveal that killing the publisher was discussed at various meetings as a possibility. At points, the cooling restraints on such heated lunacy were placed by various National Security Council lawyers.

With the return of **Donald Trump** to the White House, whose campaign was aided, in no small part, by various figures sympathetic to Assange’s publishing efforts, the eyes shifted, once again, to Pompeo. Would the now leaner figure (he [boasted](#) in 2022 to shedding 90 pounds over six months) make a return, probably as Defense Secretary? Not if **Tucker Carlson** could help it.

The former Fox News host made sure to get to Trump’s ear during the election campaign to remind him about Pompeo’s soiled résumé. In a *Wall Street Journal* [piece](#) this month, Carlson’s efforts at reputational sabotage are mentioned. Certain neoconservative markings of Pompeo were pointed out: a tendency towards warmongering; the obsession with Assange and a contemplated plot to assassinate him. Donald Trump Jr., the eldest son of the president-elect, also threw in his lot, warning that bringing those like Pompeo into the fold again would hamper his father’s free hand. The Make America Great Agenda was not to be cramped.

The *WSJ* piece was hardly sensational. Carlson had publicly aired his dislike for Pompeo in an [April interview](#) on The Joe Rogan Experience podcast. As CIA director, “he plotted the murder of Julian Assange. So he is a criminal as far as I’m concerned.”

Carlson also spoke of receiving threatening calls from Pompeo’s lawyers after speaking about the JFK files on his Fox News show. “His lawyer called me and said, you know, you should know that anyone who tells you the contents of classified documents has committed a crime.” In Carlson’s opinion, Pompeo “pressed” the president to keep documents relevant to the CIA’s involvement in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy “secret”. Be that as it may, Carlson’s account from Pompeo’s lawyer on discussing classified documents certainly tallies with the worldview of the secrecy goon himself.

At the moment, there is much ado about Trump's various appointments. They constitute a Flemish painting of characters: the vulgar and the violent; the self-contradictory and the untrained; the stained and the falsely pure. They are threaded by a suspicion that the National Security State has become a canker on the Republic's foundations. They are also unlikely to dismantle it, whatever the aspirations. Keeping Pompeo out of the stable, however, could be seen as a work in progress.

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