

Syria: Pro-attack Media Commentators had Undeclared Defence Industry Links

US media failed to cite pundits' ties to defense industry in Syria strike debate

By [RT](#)

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Nearly two dozen of the commentators who appeared on major media outlets to discuss a possible US military strike on Syria had relationships with contractors and other organizations with a vested interest in the conflict, according to a new report.

The Public Accountability Initiative, a non-profit research group dedicated to “investigating power and corruption at the heights of business and government,” determined that [22 of the pundits](#) who spoke to the media during the public debate over whether the US should bomb Syria appeared to have conflicts of interest. Seven think tanks with murky affiliations were also involved in the debate.

Some analysts held board positions or held stock in companies that produce weapons for the US military, while others conducted work for private firms with the relationships not disclosed to the public.

Perhaps the most notable example is that of Stephen Hadley, a former national security advisor to President George Bush who argued in favor of striking Syria in appearances on CNN, MSNBC, Fox News and Bloomberg TV. He also wrote an editorial in The Washington Post with the headline, “*To stop Iran, Obama must enforce red lines with Assad.*”

Nowhere in those appearances was it disclosed, according to the report, that Hadley is a director with Raytheon, a weapons manufacturer that produces the Tomahawk cruise missiles the US almost certainly would have used had it intervened in Syria. Hadley earns an annual salary of \$128,5000 from Raytheon and owns 11,477 shares of Raytheon stock. His holdings were worth \$891,189 as of August 23.

“We found lots of industry ties. Some of them are stronger than others. Some really rise to the level of clear conflicts of interest,” Kevin Connor, co-author of the report, told The Washington Post. *“These networks and these commentators should err on the side of disclosure.”*

The report found that, out of 37 appearances of the pundits named, CNN attempted to disclose that individual's ties a mere seven times. In 23 appearances on Fox News there was not a single attempt to disclose industry ties. And in 16 appearances on NBC or its umbrella networks, attempts at disclosure were made five times.

Retired General Anthony Zinni, former Commander-in-Chief of US Central Command, made

multiple appearances on CNN and CBS. He is an outside director at BAE Systems, which is among the largest military service companies in the world and one that received \$6.1 billion in federal contracts in 2012, serves on the Advisory Board of DC Capital Partners, a private equity firm that invests in defense contractors, and a Distinguished Senior Advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Zinni advocated a strike not just on Syria, but told CNN's Candy Crowley that American hesitation in the Middle East has pushed US adversaries to act.

"Knowing the Iranians, they see everything as a potential opportunity to exploit," he said. "And I'm sure they are calculating much how they could take advantage of this and maybe push the edge of the envelope."

The retired general, speaking to the Post via email, said his membership is publicly available online.

"The media who contact me for comment should post any relevant info re my background including my board positions if they desire," he wrote.

This report comes after Syria researcher Elizabeth O'Bagy was fired from the Institute for the Study of War think-tank for lying about her credentials. Multiple US lawmakers, most notably Secretary of State John Kerry, cited an opinion piece O'Bagy wrote in the Wall Street Journal when calling for a military intervention. It was soon revealed that O'Bagy did not disclose her ties to a lobby group advocating for Syrian opposition forces when penning the column for the Journal.

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