

# The Assault on Whistleblowers and Spinning the War on Syria

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Without whistleblowers, the mainline media outlets are more transfixed than ever with telling the official story. And at a time like this, the official story is all about spinning for war on Syria.

Every president who wants to launch another war can't abide whistleblowers. They might interfere with the careful omissions, distortions and outright lies of war propaganda, which requires that truth be held in a kind of preventative detention.

By mid-week, media adrenalin was at fever pitch as news reports cited high-level sources explaining when the U.S. missile attacks on Syria were likely to begin, how long they might last, what their goals would be. But what about other (potential) sources who have documents and other information that contradict the official story?

It's never easy for whistleblowers to take the risk of exposing secret realities. At times like these, it's especially difficult — and especially vital — for whistleblowers to take the chance.

When independent journalist I.F. Stone said "All governments lie and nothing they say should be believed," he was warning against the automatic acceptance of any government claim. That warning becomes most crucial when a launch of war is imminent. That's when, more than ever, we need whistleblowers who can leak information that refutes the official line.

There has been a pernicious method to the madness of the Obama administration's double-barreled assault on whistleblowers and journalism. Committed to a state of ongoing war, Obama has overseen more prosecutions of whistleblowers than all other presidents combined — while also subjecting journalists to ramped-up surveillance and threats, whether grabbing the call records of 20 telephone lines of The Associated Press or [pushing to imprison](#) New York Times reporter James Risen for not revealing a source.

The vengeful treatment of Bradley (now Chelsea) Manning, the all-out effort to grab Edward Snowden and less-publicized prosecutions such as the [vendetta](#) against NSA whistleblower Thomas Drake are all part of a government strategy that aims to shut down unauthorized pipelines of information to journalists — and therefore to the public. When secret information is blocked, what's left is the official story, pulling out all the stops for war.

From the false Tonkin Gulf narrative in 1964 that boosted the Vietnam War to the fabricated [baby-incubators-in-Kuwait tale](#) in 1990 that helped launch the Gulf War to the reports of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction early in this century, countless deaths and unfathomable suffering have resulted from the failure of potential whistleblowers to step

forward in a timely and forthright way — and the failure of journalists to challenge falsehoods in high government places.

There are no “good old days” to point to, no eras when an abundance of whistleblowers and gutsy reporters thoroughly alerted the public and subdued the power of Washington’s war-makers. But we’re now living in a notably — and tragically — fearful era. Potential whistleblowers have more reason to be frightened than ever, and mainline journalists rarely seem willing to challenge addiction to war.

Every time a president has decided to go to war against yet another country, the momentum has been unstoppable. Today, the craven foreshadow the dead. The key problems, as usual, revolve around undue deference to authority — obedience in the interests of expediency — resulting in a huge loss of lives and a tremendous waste of resources that should be going to sustain human life instead of destroying it.

With war at the top of Washington’s agenda, this is a time to make our voices heard.

([To email your senators and representative, expressing opposition to an attack on Syria, click here.](#)) A loud and sustained outcry against the war momentum is essential — and so is support for whistleblowers.

As a practical matter, real journalism can’t function without whistleblowers. Democracy can’t function without real journalism. And we can’t stop the warfare state without democracy. In the long run, the struggles for peace and democracy are one and the same.

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