

OPINION

Op-ed: 'Trump fired Coats for telling the truth'

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Trump's silencing the intelligence community is effectively turning the intelligence community into a group of yes men.

"You can't handle the truth," Jack Nicholson shouted in "A Few Good Men." President Trump is silencing the intelligence community and shifting it into an apparatus full of "yes men" that will ignore the Russian threat and global climate change, manufacture a crisis at the border, and lie about the realities of Iran, North Korea, and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) thereby creating more global insecurity. The president's blocking facts victimized former Director of National Intelligence, Indiana's Dan Coats, and if he does not change course, will affect his new National Security Adviser, Robert O'Brien.

Trump created a scapegoat in the firing former Indiana senator, Coats, blaming him for intelligence not matching up with Trump's distortions. When Coats said North Korea and Iran generated worse threats than before, it was the last straw for Trump.

Trump built up to the forced resignation of Coats by stripping away former CIA Director John Brennan's security clearance, explaining in a White House press statement that Brennan said, "a series of unfounded and outrageous allegations, wild outbursts on the internet and television, about this Administration."

In actuality, what Brennan said was criticism of the Trump administration, stating how Trump's policies are detrimental to the United States. In Brennan's statements he did not release classified information or signify that he was unable to perform his duties. This is a simple case of Brennan's security clearance being removed because his statements did not fit into the president's extremely distorted perception of the world.

When Trump fired former Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James Comey, the president made great efforts to masquerade his firing as being for legitimate reasons. For instance, in a White House statement Trump explained that he was firing Comey due to the recommendations of the attorney general and deputy attorney general. However, in an interview with NBC News Trump later explained that he would have fired Comey for the Russia thing "regardless of recommendation."

Another reason Trump gave for firing Comey was that the FBI's rank and file had lost confidence in the director, but there is not much evidence of this. McCabe, an official Trump removed from the position of deputy director of the FBI, even explained that it wasn't accurate that the rank and file lost confidence in Comey. Former FBI deputy general counsel Ernie Babcock also said that Comey "created an atmosphere of integrity and transparency."

Trump made many less excuses when Coats left the administration and it was much more obvious that this was an issue over Trump disagreeing with what Coats and the intelligence community were saying than a matter of Coats actually doing something wrong. In more simple words, Trump fired Coats for telling the truth. What especially

infuriated Trump was Coats' testimony regarding the Worldwide Threat Assessment, which was given before the Senate Intelligence Committee. Once again, the Worldwide Threat Assessment was a case of the intelligence community going against Trump's worldview, so of course it led to someone getting fired.

The testimony given by Coats and others made several points that completely contradicted the narrative that Trump and his administration have been peddling. These points included explaining that ISIS was not on the verge of defeat, that global climate change exists and is a genuine national security threat, that the North Koreans will not give up their nuclear weapons because they see them as being essential to survival, and that Iran was not trying to obtain nuclear weapons.

Trump fired Coats a few months after the testimony and initially announced that he was appointing Republican Texas Rep. John Ratcliffe, who has a reputation of being partisan and someone that will likely just tell Trump what he wants to hear, to the post of director of national intelligence. Media uncovered that Ratcliffe lied on his resume about prosecuting any terrorists before he was in Congress — he had not. After backlash, Trump decided not to appoint Ratcliffe to director of national intelligence and named Joseph Maguire acting director of national intelligence — one of a myriad of "acting" cabinet posts because Trump does not want to face Senate confirmations.

Trump's silencing of the intelligence community is effectively turning the intelligence community into a group of yes men who just tell the president what he wants to hear, regardless of seriously inaccurate intelligence decisions and bad counterintelligence operations based on fabrications not fact.

The United States' leadership in intelligence was already being questioned because of the Bush administration's propaganda about Iraqi WMD's that did not exist. Obama's rational approach was making repairs.

Now that we are wasting money on countering fabricated threats and conducting negotiations that will go nowhere, the world knows not to trust what the President says. North Korea could develop nuclear weapons, ISIS could resurge and regain territory, global climate change could continue to grow, and unnecessary actions could be taken against Iran. The only guarantee of bringing yes men into government is the feeding of the president's grandiosity.

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