

**Testimony of Sharyl Attkisson, Sinclair's Full Measure
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I've been a nonpartisan journalist for nearly 40 years in local news, CNN, CBS, PBS and the national station group Sinclair. I've watched a dramatic devolution in our industry as we've allowed ourselves to be transformed into tools of political and cooperate interests pushing narratives, manipulating and shaping information on the news and online, and seeking to shape public opinion rather than report facts and various views.

In this media landscape, we've allowed some of the biggest and most important stories of our time to be covered in a fantastical and one-sided, often inaccurate and incomplete way, while important violations of law and constitutional rights go unchallenged.

Tools of intelligence-gathering and law-enforcing, which are meant to protect Americans, are routinely used to instead spy on them, to gather information that isn't the government's business, and, in some instances, it appears, to punish or silence those with whom they disagree — personal and political foes, in and out of government.

And partly because the news media has dropped the ball, they are unaccountable, operating in an extra-constitutional structure that continues from administration to administration meaning this is not a partisan issue.

We have to confront the fact that our intelligence structure and some inside our federal agencies have proven more powerful than Congress, the legislative or judicial branches... have become more influential with the media... and have proven largely immune from prosecution and oversight.

Even the President of the United States— whoever it may be— who appoints the leaders in this structure, who directs the national priorities, who serves as commander in chief— plays second fiddle to this structure.

Some highlights: In 2001, under FBI Director Robert Mueller, new Woods procedures were imposed to address FBI abuses after agents repeatedly got caught submitting false information to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to wiretap or spy on U.S. citizens. The FBI to the very top, is now required strictly verify each fact in a wiretap application or remove it. 18 years later, the FBI routinely got caught routinely violating those rules including in the improper wiretap of Trump campaign associate Carter Page. Yet nobody has been held accountable— we don't even know who specifically is responsible.

In 2001, Joe Nacchio, CEO of telecom giant Qwest, said that after he refused to spy on his phone customers for the National Security Agency (NSA) without a warrant in February of 2001, the government retaliated by yanking a contract worth hundreds of millions of dollars, filing an insider trading case against him, and he went to prison.

In 2002, in Salt Lake City, Utah a National Security Agency whistleblower named Thomas Drake said the NSA was “fine [tuning] a new scale of mass surveillance” and secretly conducted “blanket surveillance” of “virtually all electronic communications going into or out” of the area during the Winter Olympics. NSA Intel officials denied it.

Intelligence officials got caught listening in on members of Congress— sometimes political rivals— speaking with American-Jewish groups and foreign officials, and even leaking actual recordings of their conversations, including Democrats Jane Harman and Dennis Kucinich.

FBI whistleblower Shamai Leibowitz stepped forward and accused intel agencies of serious constitutional violations and illegal “abuse of power.”

In 2010, internal emails from a “global intelligence company” executive stated: “Brennan is behind the witch hunts of investigative journalists learning information from inside the beltway sources. Note -- There is specific tasker from the [White House] to go after anyone printing materials negative to the Obama agenda (oh my.) Even the FBI is shocked.” John Brennan was a homeland security adviser and went on to become CIA director... where the CIA got caught improperly accessing Senate Intelligence Committee computers. Brennan denied it but when an Inspector General report revealed the truth, Brennan apologized. All was forgiven.

In 2013, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper falsely told Congress that intel officials were not collecting mass data on tens of millions of Americans. NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden soon revealed the government had, in fact, been gathering and storing data from ordinary Americans’ phone records, email and Internet use. When caught, Clapper apologized and said he’d misunderstood the question. All was forgiven.

Journalists have been targeted, too. Government agents initiated secret surveillance and subpoenas against then Fox News reporter James Rosen and 20 Associated Press reporters. They also secretly hacked into and monitored my computers and— in the same effort— accessed CBS computers where I worked, which CBS publicly announced in 2013. To this day, the Department of Justice is still defending the guilty agents.

Less than two weeks before the 2016 election, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court’s lead judge secretly slammed Obama intel officials over a series of surveillance violations she’d just learned about. The judge accused the NSA of “institutional ‘lack of candor’” and declared: “This is a very serious Fourth Amendment issue.” Crickets.

In 2016 and even after Trump was elected, Obama administration officials made “unmasking” requests of US citizens’ names, including senior Trump transition officials under surveillance at Trump tower. In early 2017, the CIA, NSA and FBI thumbed their nose at Congress and refused requests to provide a list of unmasking requests made by Obama officials. The subject was more or less dropped with no resolution.

In May 2017, former FBI Director James Comey secretly orchestrated a “leak” to The New York Times of negative memos he said he wrote contemporaneously about President Trump. When the Inspector General later referred Comey to the Department of Justice for possible charges for

allegedly mishandling classified anti-Trump information, the DOJ said Comey didn't mean any harm and all was forgiven.

More than a dozen criminal referrals from the House and Senate to the Department of Justice — have apparently been ignored.

At the FBI, there were repeated losses of information or evidence from cell phones. We're told it was all just a series of glitches or accidents. Nobody was held accountable.

Inspector General Michael Horowitz concluded the FBI committed egregious errors in targeting Trump associates for investigation and surveillance during the 2016 campaign. He stated: "We are deeply concerned that so many basic and fundamental errors were made by three separate, hand-picked investigative teams on one of the most sensitive FBI investigations." Even so, there's been little to no accountability. In fact, the single charge that came from all of it quite recently was an FBI lawyer who allegedly doctored a document for an improper wiretap against Trump campaign associate Carter Page, as if he were a Russian spy. The media? They don't see a problem. To them: Trump is still the villain.

In a speech and Congressional testimony in 2017, FBI Director Christopher Wray falsely claimed there's never been "evidence of any kind of abuse of power" under surveillance authority known as "702," although the court has documented numerous examples. No questions asked.

After WikiLeaks's Julian Assange published factually accurate documents revealing everything from questionable intelligence surveillance tactics to embarrassing if not shocking inside disclosures from the Democratic National Committee and Clinton campaign, the media is convinced to follow the shiny ball thrown the other way: Assange should be prosecuted.

After revealing the power of an important abuses by our intel community, the NSA's Edward Snowden said: "You can't come forward against the world's most powerful intelligence agencies and be completely free from risk because they're such powerful adversaries that no one can meaningfully oppose them. If they want to get you, they'll get you in time." Instead of the media diving into what he revealed, they followed the shiny ball thrown the other way: Where is Snowden hiding? He's a traitor.

There was the warning that President-elect Donald Trump received from the Democrats' Senate leader Chuck Schumer after Trump criticized sitting intelligence officials. "You take on the intelligence community — they have six ways from Sunday at getting back at you."

The public watches and sees. They see that those who seek to expose and fight these abuses are the ones who pay a price; not those who may be guilty. The NSA's Thomas Drake was prosecuted for mishandling documents. The FBI's Shamai Leibowitz was prosecuted for leaking to the media. Edward Snowden is charged with felonies in his absence from the U.S. Julian Assange is charged with conspiracy to commit computer intrusion.

But When Clapper and Brennan provide false information, and conduct spying on US citizens and Congress; when Comey is referred by the Inspector General for charges; when Wray testifies there have been no surveillance abuses— all is overlooked or forgiven with latitude that is never afforded the targets of their campaigns. They were confused, didn't understand the question, didn't understand the rules, didn't mean any harm. If you're not on their team: you're a criminal and will be prosecuted— for something.

And where are we in the news media? We're taking sides rather than revealing the facts wherever they lead. The media censors information, views, studies— anything that certain powerful interests don't wish the public to see. They see themselves as the deciders, the filters, the ones to keep the public's tender eyes and ears from seeing, hearing and reading that which they shouldn't see, hear, read or believe. They even claim to know the ultimate truth on that which they cannot possibly know, or on facts that are in dispute, or on evolving information and science.

All of this matter more than it seems. There is a crisis in confidence in America's institutions. Some years ago, several members of Congress said they were convinced not to more aggressively attack some of the problems I've described at the FBI and in our intel community because they were led to believe it would destroy confidence in our public institutions.

But the fact that we've arrived here has done just that. Among many, there's a lack of trust in Congress, the media, health officials, the Department of Justice, our elections process. Now, even at times when Congress may be doing the public good, the media may be telling the truth, health officials may be giving good advice, the Department of Justice may be doing the right thing, or the elections aren't fraudulent— the public doesn't buy the story we're telling.

We've created this environment... and then we look at the public, whipsawed between alternate realities presented in the news and online... and ask why they're mistrustful, as if it's their doing, not ours.