

OPINION

Opinion articles do not necessarily represent the views of the Portland Observer. We welcome reader essays, photos and story ideas. Submit to news@portlandobserver.com.

Trump Mob is More Tattered by the Day

The stinky cheese in the White House

BY TOM H. HASTINGS

Maria Butina, rat. She is Russian, she was caught as a foreign agent who never registered. She pled guilty to spying for Russia and conspiracy to hijack the National Rifle Association, and presumably is spilling the beans in order to reduce the consequences of her nefarious activities helping funnel the NRA millions of dollars plus a loud endorsement to Trump.

Michael Cohen was a rat whose cooperation might have at least reduced his penalties, which included a million dollars or so in fines plus three years in prison. He was Donald J. Trump's lawyer and fixer for years, and confessed to many criminal activities, all done in the service of, and at the direction of, Trump.

Even the National Enquirer -- paid by Trump to kill a story about his "alleged" extramarital affair with Playboy playmate Karen McDougal -- has turned state's evidence, via its parent corporation, in order to gain immunity from prosecution for vio-



lations of federal election laws.

Mike Flynn, Big Rat. He lied to the FBI, to the public, to Vice President Pence and to Congress. He subsequently met and presumably divulged a great deal to the Mueller special counsel team in 19 sessions, more than 60 hours of spilling the sacks of beans he had been hoarding.

The Mueller team now has 33 rats that have flipped, plus three corporations involved in violations of election, bribery, and illegal hush money activities. Infestation Alert!

Let's be clear about these rats. None were struck with an attack of conscience that caused them to come forward. Each one, every one, was caught. All of them decided to cooperate only after the government prosecutors had the goods on them. These are not praiseworthy people. I mean, Flynn was the one initiating and leading chants of "Lock Her Up" at Trump campaign rallies.

And while one story seems to be about sex and another seems to be about working with Russians to steal the 2016 election for Trump, they are in the end the same. It all comes down to election theft and crushing democracy.

The National Enquirer and Cohen were busy trying to cover up Trump's cheating on his wife with porn stars so that presu-

ably white evangelicals would still vote for him -- covering up the huge hush payments that were made right before the 2016 election.

Flynn met with Sergey I. Kislyak, the Russian ambassador to the United States at the time of the transition, assuring him that Trump would end those pesky sanctions on Russia that Obama placed when Putin invaded and stole Crimea. That was the Russian bet: elect Trump and sanctions go away, as well as NATO weakens.

Flynn, as Trump's ally in the campaign and then as head of the National Security Agency, did all that, acting as an agent of a hostile foreign dictator, even as another of their Russian agents, Butina, was being directly handled by Vladimir Putin's buddy, oligarch banker Alexander Torshin.

Ah, the rat system. It is how the po-po and the prosecutors get damning information on defendants, those threatened with prosecution, and all their criminal associates. Flipping rats.

George Papadopoulos was one of those small-time rats who performed so poorly that the FBI simply recommended that he get no break at all. Lousy rat. He was the drunk who first bragged at some bar in Australia that the Trump campaign was getting massive tech help from the Russians, who illegally hacked and stole

Hillary's emails, shunted them to Julian Assange and his Wikileaks, who then acted on his obsessive hatred of Hillary and released them to the world. Thanks, Julian! You gave us Trump, you ratty twerp. Showing great faith in his version of American kleptocracy, Papadopoulos announced he will be running for Congress in 2020. Go, Republican Rats!

Trump is just surrounded by rats, isn't he? The Big Stinky Cheese in the White House, with the rats all gnawing at his fetid manner of power-wielding.

I wonder if we'll get to the "Sorry and so long, Dad" point? I mean, Donald Jr. and Ivanka have no presidential immunity and they are check-signers in the Trump organization, which is tantamount now to a RICO violation, as we see the money trail to campaign finance laws exposed for all to see. Organized crime is becoming less organized as key criminals bail, one-by-one, leaving the Trump mob more tattered by the day. 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue is becoming known as felony flats, a home to future cell blockers whose best chance at staying out from behind bars is to open up about the Capo. Don Trumpleone...Lock. Him. Up. What a rat.

Dr. Tom H. Hastings is PeaceVoice director and on occasion an expert witness for the defense in court.

Capitalizing on the Racial Strife in America

Russia's secret weapon

BY OSCAR H. BLAYTON

It is clear now that the 45th president of the United States is knowingly or unwittingly a tool of the Russian government. But for many years before the dumpster fire in the White House came into office, the Kremlin has been wielding a secret weapon against the "land of the free."

This weapon is "secret" not because it is hidden, but because a large segment of the American public refuses to acknowledge its existence.

Recent news stories have focused on Russian hackers who have attempted to manipulate the sense of injustice that burdens black Americans, but these stories fail to fully point out the comprehensive racial injustice that is inherent in America's DNA.

The focus of these stories is on the Russian meddling because that is of more concern to those media outlets than the racial injustice spotlighted by the Russian trolls. Typically, many

Americans can be outraged by the use of American hypocrisy as a political tool but have little concern for the hypocrisy itself. These hypocrites see enraged African Americans as playing into the hands of the Russians. But they are

the ones who support both the police officers who murder unarmed black men and the politicians who conspire to disenfranchise black voters -- scenarios that provide fertile ground for effective Russian intervention.

A brief review of history can pull the curtain back on how America's racial hatred has played into the hands of the Soviet state and later the Russian government.

In 1946, after African Americans returned home from fighting against tyranny abroad during World War II, two black couples were lynched in Georgia. Moved to act, noted performer and activist Paul Robeson asked President Harry Truman to call for an anti-lynching bill. Truman told him that the time "was not right" to propose such a bill. On Dec. 17,

1951, Robeson presented to the United Nations an anti-lynching petition directed at the United States titled "We Charge Genocide." A year later, Robeson was awarded the International Stalin Prize by the Soviet Union.

Paul Robeson's career and political activism spanned several decades and cannot be fully addressed in this article, but without question, Robeson's quest for justice for all people put him at odds with the American power structure, and the Soviet Union sought to take advantage of that.

Before Robeson, there was the case of the Scottsboro Boys. These nine African American youths, two of whom were only 12 and 13 years old at the time, were wrongfully accused of raping two white women in Alabama in 1931. Posters denouncing the blatantly unfair criminal proceedings against the Scottsboro Boys appeared in Russia and Americans were enraged, not by the unfair criminal proceedings, but by the fact that the Russians were denouncing the injustice.

In her book published in 2000, Mary Dudziak clearly laid out evidence that between 1945 and 1965 American officials re-

alized that the country's racial problems were ruining its image abroad. Of greatest concern was the message being projected to the newly independent African and Asian nations.

President Dwight Eisenhower was not committed to civil rights until Secretary of State John Foster Dulles explained to him how the violent opposition to desegregating Central High School in Little Rock, Ark., was being witnessed around the world, exposing the lie of American fairness.

Like Eisenhower, President John F. Kennedy had no disquiet over racial injustice, but after it was made clear that the world had witnessed the church bombing and extreme police brutality in Birmingham, Ala. and the spectacle of Alabama Gov. George Wallace blocking a young black woman from entering University of Alabama, Kennedy realized that the country's international image was giving credence to the Russian accusations of hypocrisy.

During this same time, diplomats from newly independent African nations were sending word back to their governments about the racism they were en-

countering from many white Americans. And every instance of racism and overt white supremacy was ammunition for the Soviet media.

No one should deny that the Soviet Union -- and now, Russia -- has tried over the years to capitalize on the racial strife in America in order to advance its own geopolitical interests. But the fact that Russia points out the obvious does not negate the obvious. America is, and has been during its entire existence, a nation state founded on racism and white supremacy. And as long as America continues to function on systemic racism, Russia will continue to use that fact to its advantage.

Americans should never allow any foreign government to try to interfere with its democratic process. But, each time a Philando Castile or a Sandra Bland or a Travon Martin suffers an injustice in the United States, we must ask ourselves, "Who are we protecting American democracy for?"

Oscar H. Blayton is a former Marine Corps combat pilot and human rights activist who practices law in Virginia.