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From: Joe Pompeo - POLITICO Media
Sent: Wed 6/7/2017 9:41:24 AM
Subject: Morning Media: Intercept tradecraft under microscope — Leak heat rising — 'Consistently negative' outlook for newspapers

By Joe Pompeo | 06/07/2017 05:39 AM EDT

With Cristiano Lima and Alex Weprin

EXPERT ANALYSIS: "The source, Reality Winner, would have been lead suspect no matter what. Only 6 people viewed the Russia doc & she had emailed Intercept. But @theintercept made egregious mistakes that doomed its source. The FBI affidavit spells them out. ... Normal people don't know all this, but journalists should. And @theintercept does. Which makes it hard to accept this catastrophic failure of source protection. Reporters & editors didn't consult experts right at hand. That too is something @theintercept would denounce with contempt if happened elsewhere. Everyone makes mistakes, but this was a bad one."

That's long-time national security journalist Barton Gellman -- whose reporting on Edward Snowden's NSA revelations in 2013 earned The Washington Post a shared Pulitzer Prize with The Guardian -- in a Twitter thread yesterday criticizing The Intercept for its handling of a story ("[TOP-SECRET NSA REPORT DETAILS RUSSIAN HACKING EFFORT DAYS BEFORE 2016 ELECTION](#)") that appears to have come together via reporting that at least partly compromised its alleged anonymous source, a 25-year-old government-contractor-whistleblower who has quickly become a totem of anti-leak jihad in the Trump era.

I chatted with some other veteran intelligence reporters yesterday, and they agreed with Gellman's assessment. ("It was bad. No way around it.") A few additional takeaways I came away with:

1. Journalists in these circles feel like if the tables were turned, and it was a legacy outlet like The New York Times or The Washington Post that came under scrutiny for this, The Intercept would be among the first to throw a stone.
2. An alternate way a story like this might have been handled: Report out and corroborate with sources the details of the document without actually sharing the document, so that the story doesn't necessarily have to rely primarily on the document. Then make a cautious determination about whether it would be worth publishing the document itself.
3. This sh-t is hard, and it doesn't mean the crew over at The Intercept are bad journalists. Also, keep in mind that the apparent source in this case apparently made some mistakes that made it all too easy for the feds to pick up a trail.

THE INTERCEPT SAID YESTERDAY: "Winner faces allegations that have not been proven. The same is true of the FBI's claims about how it came to arrest Winner. We take this matter with the utmost seriousness. However, because of the continued investigation, we will make no further comment on it at this time." [Full statement](#).

A Morning Media reader weighs in: "I don't accept needing to confirm authenticity of the 'actual' document as an excuse given what is at stake -- and the fact that this would have been a hot story even if it had been paraphrased or read to them over the phone a la the Comey memos."

Meanwhile: ["WikiLeaks offers \\$10,000 to get Intercept reporter fired"](#)

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MAKE NO MISTAKE, THE HEAT IS RISING - [Cory Bennett in POLITICO](#) : "[T]he Obama administration's aggressive use of the century-old Espionage Act brought prison terms for defendants like Chelsea Manning ... and turned Snowden into a hunted fugitive. The Obama-era Justice Department also scored the first ever prison sentence for a CIA officer ... But leaks have taken on special political importance during Donald Trump's presidency, which has been rocked by a series of unauthorized disclosures ... Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions have inveighed against these disclosures. Trump has vowed on Twitter that 'low-life leakers ... will be caught,' and Sessions said in April that 'whenever a case can be made, we will seek to put some people in jail.'"

CNN'S Brian Stelter: "[F]our veteran Washington reporters told CNN that they sense -- based on what their sources are noticing at work -- that leak hunts are taking place. ... One of the longtime reporters who spoke on condition of anonymity said he has perceived a White House effort to 'smoke out' sources ... Another national security reporter said the Obama administration was 'terrible' in terms of prosecuting leakers ... Now, with Trump, 'there is this kind of unknown. It's hard to know how far they'd go.'" More: ["Reporters worry about aggressive leak investigations in Trump era"](#)

WILL TRUMP UNBLOCK TWITTER ACCOUNTS IN SPIRIT OF FIRST

AMENDMENT? Don't hold your breath, [but the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University is demanding that he do so](#) : "In a letter sent today to President Trump, the Knight First Amendment Institute asked the President to unblock the Twitter accounts of individuals denied access to his account after they criticized or disagreed with him, or face legal action to protect the First Amendment rights of the blocked individuals. The President's Twitter account ... is a 'designated public forum' subject to the First Amendment, according to the Knight Institute. The First Amendment bars the government from excluding individuals from a designated public forum because of their views."

EPIC L.A. TIMES ANTI-TRUMP EDITORIALS BEING TURNED INTO A BOOK -

"Our Dishonest President," based on the [six-part opinion series of the same name](#) , will hit shelves July 4 courtesy of the Berkeley-based indie publishing house Heyday. The book -- also to be available as a digital title -- will include an introduction from LAT editor in chief/publisher Davan Maharaj and editorial page editor Nicholas Goldberg, who said yesterday in a prepared statement, "The United States is in the hands of a president whose character and temperament are

dangerous, and our editorials lay out clearly why we took a stand on this."

HERE COMES COMEY - via WaPo: "Glued even more than usual to the cable news shows that blare from the televisions in his private living quarters, or from the 60-inch flat screen he had installed in his cramped study off the Oval Office, [Trump] has fumed about 'fake news.'"

MUST READS:

-- "Reality Winner, N.S.A. Contractor Accused of Leak, Was Undone by Trail of Clues" [NYT]

-- "How Donald Trump Shifted Kids-Cancer Charity Money Into His Business" [Forbes]

-- "The Revolution Began" [Harper's]

-- "California Über Alles: How the resistance is leaving its heart on the Left Coast" [The Baffler]

-- "The young Japanese working themselves to death" [BBC]

BREITBART HAS LOST HUNDREDS OF ADVERTISERS IN JUST A COUPLE OF MONTHS - That's according to Digiday, which reports there were "just 26 brands appearing on Breitbart in May, down from a high of 242 in March." As Vanity Fair observed recently, the right-wing news behemoth also has been grappling with a traffic decline (Breitbart's response: "Vanity Fair Busted Pushing Traffic Ranking Hoax"), on top of the similarly problematic advertiser blacklists and marketer education campaigns. Still, few conservative web publications are as prominent as Breitbart right now, and with the backing of the billionaire Mercer family, don't expect them to fizzle out anytime soon.

GOOD TIMING - When you're a monthly magazine that maps out features eons ahead of its eventual street date, it's always nice when a profile subjects delivers up a fresh news peg shortly before you're ready to go to press. Lucky for Esquire, Bill Maher dropped the n-word on his show last week as the editors were preparing for the release of their August 2017 issue, featuring a Maher profile that had been in the works for months. They were able to shoehorn the controversy into the lead and roll out the piece, by Stephen Rodrick, ahead of schedule yesterday online, with an ultra-timely hook: "Bill Maher Knows Exactly What He's Doing. Just Ask Him."

Fun fact: "He attended Pascack Hills High School in Montvale, New Jersey, in the early 1970s." Me too! (But in the '90s, not the '70s.) Love the yearbook photo Esquire got its hands on. Shoutout to fellow alums Dana Bash of CNN and Kerri Green from "The Goonies" -- and to New Yorker EIC David Remnick, who went to our sister/rival high school, Pascack Valley.

SOUND BITES:

-- "The prosecution of any journalistic source without due consideration by the jury as to the harm or benefit of the journalistic activity is a fundamental threat to the free press. As long as a law like this remains on the books in a country that values fair trials, it must be resisted."
[Edward Snowden]

-- "Donald Trump has been the greatest thing for your industry. Your industry was dying before Donald Trump became President." [[Chris Christie](#)]

-- "Mr. President, it's not the fake news media that's your problem, it's you." [[Neil Cavuto](#)]

-- "Fahrentholding. Verb. To grab onto a story and politely but aggressively follow it to the bitter end. With receipts." [[Soledad O'Brien](#)]

CHEERFUL HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE NEWSPAPER PORTION OF PWC'S GLOBAL MEDIA OUTLOOK FOR 2017-2021, OUT TODAY:

-- "The US news publishing outlook is set to remain consistently negative"

-- "Total newspaper revenue has fallen from US\$33.3bn in 2012 to US\$29.6bn in 2016 and is forecast to decline at a -4.1%"

-- "Average daily print circulation has fallen by 13% between 2012 and 2016, and is forecast to reduce by almost 21% by 2021"

-- Good news: "Adoption and consequential digital newspaper circulation revenue has doubled since 2012, to US\$664mn in 2016. ... the parallel contribution from digital newspaper revenue will offset the print circulation revenue decline"

-- Bad news: "But this trend will be short-lived. Growth in digital newspaper circulation revenue is slowing down, forecast to be 8.5% year-on-year in 2017 as compared to 11.5% in 2016."

-- "The US market is now suffering from a growing fear that it has approached a cliff edge for print advertising. ... In the years ahead, US newspapers will lose print newspaper advertising revenue at the third-fastest rate in the world"

-- "For publishers, hopes of ultimate Internet transformation are turning into a creeping and multi-level digital malaise. Total digital newspaper revenue is plateauing. At just 2.7% CAGR, the US, the world's most advanced technology superpower will now see the world's slowest rate of digital newspaper revenue growth."

A PUBLIC EDITOR THAT WASN'T: BILL GRUESKIN - Since media/journalism obsessives are still digesting and dissecting The New York Times' controversial decision to eliminate its public editor role, I thought it would be worth floating one of the possible public editors that could have been. A couple of people with knowledge of the matter were telling Morning Media recently that Grueskin, a former longtime Wall Street Journal editor and professor at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism, has been a regular on the shortlist, and that he'd been on the radar for the job that went to Margaret Sullivan in 2012 and to Liz Spayd in 2015. Sullivan's tenure was by and large a popular one; Spayd's, not so much. How do you all think Grueskin would have done?

SOUNDTRACK: Brian Eno, "Here Come the Warm Jets"

EXTRAS:

-- Sarah Ellison: "With Ailes Gone and Megyn Kelly Reborn, a Shell-Shocked Fox News Looks Like an Episode of The Leftovers" [Vanity Fair]

-- Scott Pelley will anchor "CBS Evening News" through June 16. [TV Newser]

-- Notes from Heather Nauert's first State Department press briefing. [TV Newser]

-- James Poniewozik: "The Trump Administration Shakes 'House of Cards' Hard" [NYT]

-- "HomePod, death to autoplay, and a smarter Apple News: These are the key Apple updates for publishers" [NiemanLab]

To view online:

<http://www.politico.com/media/tipsheets/morning-media/2017/06/07/intercept-tradecraft-under-microscope-leak-heat-rising-consistently-negative-outlook-for-newspapers-001286>

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