

## **South of the Border** **(occasional snippets from)**

**Nick Must**

\* *new* \*

### **Neon and day-glow guns 'R' us.**

Former NSA contractor Reality Winner<sup>1</sup> is currently incarcerated pre-trial for alleged leaking to the press of details on American intelligence agencies investigations into foreign interference during the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election. Much of the media coverage has included humorous references to Ms Winner's claim that she successfully removed the report from her office because she stashed it in her tights.<sup>2</sup> Amusing as this old-skool method of smuggling might be, I discovered something even funnier in the FBI transcript of their first encounter with Ms Winner.

When a phalanx of FBI agents arrived at Ms Winner's house to execute a search warrant, they asked her some preliminary questions before actually entering the property. One was about her pets and how aggressive they may be in the perceived situation. Another was whether she possessed any firearms and, indeed, she did. In addition to a 'traditional' Glock handgun and a shotgun, there was a *pink* AR-15.<sup>3</sup> Yes, a pink version of the semi-automatic rifle that has been central to the gun control debate recently. It has struck me that, if only all firearms were coloured this way, perhaps some of the 'machismo' that goes with the ownership of firearms might be dissipated. This would be a good policy to employ in combination with the half-humorous proposal, from comedian Chris Rock, that the best form of gun control would be for bullets to cost at least \$5,000 each.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Although born in 1991, she has surely been bestowed with the most 21st Century of names.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, 'Angst in her pants: Alleged US govt leaker Reality Winner stashed docs in her pantyhose' by Shaun Nichols for The Register at <<https://tinyurl.com/y8pjuav8>> or <[https://www.theregister.co.uk/2017/09/28/pantyhosed\\_reality\\_winner\\_snuck\\_docs\\_out\\_in\\_her\\_skivvies/](https://www.theregister.co.uk/2017/09/28/pantyhosed_reality_winner_snuck_docs_out_in_her_skivvies/)> .

<sup>3</sup> See the top of page 7 of the transcript available via Politico at <<https://www.politico.com/f/?id=0000015e-c5e7-ddab-a57f-cfe7d5b50002>>. If this url doesn't work when clicked, copy it and paste it into a new browser window. It works that way.

<sup>4</sup> Of course the clip is available on YouTube. See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZrFVtmRXrw>> .

\* new \*

## Cambridge vs Oxford – the Analytica battle

Cambridge Analytica didn't just steal data, they even stole the idea for their name! There's been an Oxford Analytica for over 40 years!<sup>5</sup>

\* new \*

## Failing. . . upwards?

If you work in, or are familiar with, technology companies you may already have heard of the term 'failing upwards' – particularly used with regard to internet start-ups. It describes the continual career advancement of those who have been responsible for costly failures. There's even a regular conference – FailCon – dedicated to the theme.<sup>6</sup> Don't get me wrong: I understand the concept that, in order to have the chance to hit the mother lode, one might need to take a dozen or more shots that will have missed the target.

In politics and government, however, one might think the concept was anathema. Not so, it would seem. Our current Prime Minister surely owes her position more to the inability of her opponents to definitively stick the boot into each other and fill a power vacuum. This did not require any particular skill from her, apart from the ability to sit on her hands and wait. In the back-rooms of politics, the situation is the same. Lynton Crosby – the Australian election svengali – has worked for the Tories for a number of years now. His 'dead cat' strategy<sup>7</sup> has regularly proven counter-productive. Yet his firm Crosby Trexton was paid £18.6m for their part in the 2017 Conservative election campaign. Yes . . . £18.6m for *that* campaign – the one that reduced the government's majority to a thread.

Top of the tree for failing upwards must surely be the current U.S. President, Donald Trump. He's a serial failure in business<sup>8</sup> and his tremendous

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<sup>5</sup> See 'The other Analytica' by Laurens Cerulus for Politico.eu at <<https://www.politico.eu/article/oxford-analytica-geopolitical-expertise-consultancy/>>.

<sup>6</sup> One of their strap lines is, 'Stop being afraid of failure and start embracing it.' See <<http://thefailcon.com/about.html>>.

<sup>7</sup> An excellent summary of how this tactic is used was provided by Jess Phillips (Labour MP for Birmingham, Yardley) in the Huffington Post. See <<https://tinyurl.com/y9b4x362>> or <[https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/jess-phillips/jess-phillips-dead-cat-strategy\\_b\\_9771246.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/jess-phillips/jess-phillips-dead-cat-strategy_b_9771246.html)>.

<sup>8</sup> *Time* magazine listed a top 10 of those failures at <<http://time.com/4343030/donald-trump-failures/>>

appetite for litigation is a questionable tactic, as it often doesn't pay off.<sup>9</sup> As regards his monetary worth, a 2015 story from *Fortune* noted that 'Donald Trump Would Be Richer If He'd Have Invested in Index Funds'.<sup>10</sup> The article further stated that the net worth of both Bill Gates and Warren Buffet had 'beaten the stock market's growth' over the previous twenty-seven years, which Trump's had not.<sup>11</sup>

In terms of management style, the Trump method has been relentlessly analysed. Most interestingly, *The Psychology Of Managerial Incompetence: A Sceptic's Dictionary Of Modern Organizational Issues*<sup>12</sup> includes reference to three different managerial styles – the 'kipper' (who is two-faced, natch), the 'seagull' (who flies in and dumps on everyone before flying away again) and the 'deranged'. Further details on the 'deranged' style closely match Trump.

'Some managers are not just incompetent, they are pathologically deranged. Style and decisions are based on satisfying neurotic needs. They can easily lead an organisation into disaster.'

Further, in the 'temper tantrum method', the deranged style of manager 'appears insulted or outraged. All of this is intended to distract from the fact that the boss has no idea what to do.'

Finally, in the world of the spooks we come to Gina Haspel, who:

' . . . personally supervised the torture of a CIA detainee in 2002 leading to at least three waterboard sessions, subsequently drafted the cable that ordered destruction of the videotape evidence of torture, and served as a senior CIA official while the Agency was lying to itself. . . about the effectiveness of torture in eliciting useful intelligence. . . .' <sup>13</sup> (emphasis added)

One could even say she was a real cheerleader for enhanced interrogation

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<sup>9</sup> See for example 'Donald Trump Loses Libel Lawsuit Over Being Called A "Millionaire"' by Eriq Gardner for The Hollywood Reporter, September 2011 at <https://tinyurl.com/ybx7uvh3> or <<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/thr-esq/donald-trump-loses-libel-lawsuit-232923>>.

<sup>10</sup> <<http://fortune.com/2015/08/20/donald-trump-index-funds/>>

<sup>11</sup> Gates' grew by 7,173% and Buffet's by 2,612% whereas, in comparison, Trump's net wealth grew by 1,336% (see the link in footnote 9).

<sup>12</sup> Professor Adrian Furnham, *The Psychology Of Managerial Incompetence: A Sceptic's Dictionary Of Modern Organizational Issues* (London: Whurr Publishers Limited, 1998)

<sup>13</sup> See 'Gina Haspel's CIA Torture File' by Tom Blanton and John Prados for the National Security Archive at <<https://tinyurl.com/ycb6rgut>> or <<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/intelligence-torture-archive/2018-04-26/gina-haspels-cia-torture-file>>.

methods. Where did that get us? Nowhere.<sup>14</sup> But on the failing upwards principle, at time of writing she was Acting Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

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## **JFK news**

On my mobile smartphone I use the Google Chrome browser which provides suggested news stories. It's very rare for me to follow any of those links but I did with one recently, a story from the *Guardian* on the family of one Charles Thomas. He was a CIA officer in the 1960s and was stationed at the U.S. embassy in Mexico City. Essentially, the adult children of the late Mr Thomas are hoping that President Trump will release documents produced by the Mexico City CIA station that would shed some light on the suicide of their father. Sad as any suicide is, there was one aspect of the *Guardian* report that did make me laugh.

'In internal memos not made public until years after his death, Thomas told supervisors such information from Mexico could undermine the findings of the presidential panel that determined in 1964 that Oswald acted alone.'<sup>15</sup>

The general thrust of the article was that this might finally be an opportunity to debunk the Warren Commission! There *was* a conspiracy, the *Guardian* article claimed, based around Oswald and the pro-Castro Cubans with whom Oswald is alleged by some to have associated with during his stay in Mexico City. *Quelle surprise* . . . the author of the article, I finally noticed, was Philip Shenon – whose thesis about Oswald and the pro-Castro Cubans was solidly debunked in *Lobster 74* by William Kelly.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See 'Report Portrays a Broken C.I.A. Devoted to a Failed Approach' by Scott Shane for *The New York Times* at <<https://tinyurl.com/y8ghkddc>> or <<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/10/world/senate-torture-report-shows-cia-infighting-over-interrogation-program.html>>.

<sup>15</sup> See Philip Shenon, 'JFK documents could show the truth about a diplomat's death 47 years ago', *Guardian*, 22 April 2018 <<https://tinyurl.com/yak8bysl>> or <<https://amp.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/apr/22/jfk-documents-could-show-the-truth-about-a-diplomats-death-47-years-ago>>.

<sup>16</sup> See William Kelly, 'Phil Shenon – a cruel and shocking twist', in *Lobster 74* at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster74/lob74-phil-shenon-jfk.pdf>>.

## Fake money matters

Sixteen years ago I watched with interest a television news report by the BBC's John Simpson on the fall of Kabul in Afghanistan. One part of that report has particularly stayed in my mind. For a brief moment in the video, sacks of currency – Simpson called them 'bales of banknotes' – were seen on the floor of a helicopter. This money, in the local Afghani currency, was being carried by the U.S. Special Forces (SF)<sup>17</sup> and used to 'encourage' more local warlords to join the Northern Alliance and the fight against the Taliban. These warlords included General Abdul Rashid Dostum (now the Afghan Vice-President) who had a close working relationship with US SF Operational Detachment Alpha 595.<sup>18</sup>

The money that John Simpson's BBC report shows are in the 10,000 Afghani denomination which would, at the time, have had an approximate value of \$150 per banknote. A conservative estimate would be that there was the equivalent of one million dollars in that chopper alone. Less than a year later, the *LA Times* was reporting that 'CIA payoffs played a critical role in persuading commanders from the Northern Alliance and other opposition groups to provide proxy fighters last fall to help oust the Taliban'.<sup>19</sup> It was also later confirmed by former Central Intelligence Agency officer Gary Berntsen that American forces entered the conflict in Afghanistan with several million dollars worth of cash.<sup>20</sup>

General David H. Petraeus is renowned for a quote from towards the end of his time as commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan. He is reported to have said that, in terms of Counter Insurgency (COIN) operations, 'Money is

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<sup>17</sup> The personnel in question would have been either U.S. Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha or C.I.A. Special Activities Division, or a combination of both. The Newsnight report is available on Youtube at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQ9V5PvMtZQ>> and the specific section to which I refer is at 32m 05s.

<sup>18</sup> See <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/campaign/interviews/595.html>> According to recent reports, the acquisition of a government position has not lead to Dostum dropping his warlord persona. See Mujib Mashal and Fahim Abed, 'Afghan Vice President Seen Abducting Rival', *New York Times*, 27 November 2016 at <<https://tinyurl.com/yba7s5oe>> or <<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/27/world/asia/afghan-vice-president-is-accused-of-assaulting-rival-and-taking-him-hostage.html>>

<sup>19</sup> See Rone Tempest and Bob Drogin, 'Operation Enduring Payouts', *Los Angeles Times*, 1 June 2002 <<http://articles.latimes.com/2002/jun/01/world/fg-cash1>>.

<sup>20</sup> Gary Berntsen and Ralph Pezzullo, *JAWBREAKER: The Attack on Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda - A Personal Account by the CIA's Key Field Commander* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2005)

my most important ammunition in this war.<sup>21</sup> Even more tellingly, the U.S. Center for Army Lessons Learned<sup>22</sup> published the 'Commander's Guide to Money As a Weapons System' (MAAWS) in April 2009. Therein it is stated that 'Coalition money is defeating COIN targets without creating collateral damage, by motivating anti-government forces to cease lethal and non-lethal operations....'.<sup>23</sup> By 'motivating' it's fairly obvious they mean bribing.

With regard to the money John Simpson saw in the helicopter, I've always wondered how the U.S. military got hold of such a huge amount of a local currency – particularly one as unstable as the Afghani obviously was at that time. In the geopolitical whirlwind that had followed the attacks on the Twin Towers only nine weeks before, sufficient banknotes could not have been accumulated through legitimate means – e.g. via bank institutions and currency exchange houses. The only logical conclusion is that the Afghani notes that were being used by the United States SF were counterfeit. It also can't be supposed that such a large amount of counterfeit money was sourced from within Afghanistan. They surely had to have been produced by a covert branch of the American Government; and that wasn't the first time this has happened.

According to a May 1987 report in the *Washington Post*, the CIA had an 'ultra-secret program to counterfeit millions of dollars in Afghan money' as part of the funding effort to support the Mujahideen who had been fighting against the Soviet occupiers since 1979. In an earlier article, the same reporters had stated that the covert funding program was riddled with fraud and that only about 30% of the Congressionally approved money was actually reaching the fighters.<sup>24</sup> The very opening paragraph of the first chapter of veteran journalist Robert D. Kaplan's *Soldiers of God: With Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan* has similar details regarding the CIA counterfeiting operation. It was, he claims, a plan to fund the locals who were fighting the red menace:

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<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., William R. Polk, 'Will We Learn Anything from Afghanistan?', *The Atlantic*, 23 February 2013 at <<https://tinyurl.com/y8vjy7u3>> or <<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/02/will-we-learn-anything-from-afghanistan-william-r-polk-part-1/273448/>>.

<sup>22</sup> Despite sounding like an oxymoron, such an organisation does exist: it's at the West Point Military Academy

<sup>23</sup> See the introduction on p. 2 of the PDF copy online at <<https://tinyurl.com/y9xad5o6>> or <[https://www.usma.edu/cnrkd/SiteAssets/SitePages/Government%20Publications/CALL%20MAAWS%20Handbook%2009-27%20\(APRIL%2009\).pdf](https://www.usma.edu/cnrkd/SiteAssets/SitePages/Government%20Publications/CALL%20MAAWS%20Handbook%2009-27%20(APRIL%2009).pdf)>.

<sup>24</sup> See the pair of *Washington Post* articles by Jack Anderson and Dale van Atta, 'CIA counterfeiters aid Afghan rebels' (4 May 1987) and 'CIA mismanages Afghan rebel aid' (29 April 1987)

‘. . . millions of counterfeit afghanis had been printed in order to wreck the Kabul regime’s economy and allow the mujahidin to buy weapons and ammunition on the open market on the Northwest Frontier.’<sup>25</sup>

By the 1980s the CIA had been forging other people’s money for decades. In preparation for the Bay of Pigs, for example, the CIA provided the Cuban exiles with forged copies of the Cuban twenty Peso note.<sup>26</sup> Writing in the August 1979 edition of *The Atlantic* magazine, Thomas Powers’ article ‘Inside the Department of Dirty Tricks’ (which mostly dealt with Richard Helms, the Church Committee and the mid-70s revelations of CIA assassination programmes), mentions how the CIA’s infamous Operation Mongoose partly involved an element of economic warfare, including ‘. . . efforts to disrupt the Cuban economy by contaminating sugar exports, *circulating counterfeit money* and ration books, and the like.’ (emphasis added)<sup>27</sup>

### **Paul Staines and the ‘cheesy quavers’<sup>28</sup>**

In ‘The View from the Bridge’ in this issue, Robin Ramsay mentions the involvement of political blogger Paul Staines in the recent re-circulation of smears against Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and also his involvement in the dim and distant past with David Hart and his smear sheet *British Briefing*.<sup>29</sup> I did some research about Mr Staines and came across an aspect of his life that I had not heard of before. It would seem that Paul Staines was involved with the early ‘Acid House’ rave scene in the late 80s after Staines and rave promoter Tony Colston-Hayter met through their shared love of the ‘Asteroids’ video game. For about 18 months between 1988 and 1989 Paul Staines had two jobs. In spite of already being employed to compile *British Briefing*, Staines also took on running press and publicity for the Sunrise parties that

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<sup>25</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, *Soldiers of God: With Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1990)

<sup>26</sup> Doubtless these forgeries would have been used in much the same way as those seen in the US SF chopper in Afghanistan – i.e. to buy help. For more details see <[http://www.coinbooks.org/esylum\\_v14n52a20.html](http://www.coinbooks.org/esylum_v14n52a20.html)> and the section on Cuba at <<https://www.psywar.org/coldwarcurrency.php>>.

<sup>27</sup> See <<https://tinyurl.com/yaqt5zya>> or <<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1979/08/inside-the-department-of-dirty-tricks/305460/>>.

<sup>28</sup> The term ‘cheesy quaver’ is modern Cockney Rhyming Slang for ‘raver’ - i.e. a fan of ‘banging’ electronic dance music and its associated nightclubs.

<sup>29</sup> See <[http://powerbase.info/index.php/British\\_Briefing](http://powerbase.info/index.php/British_Briefing)>.

were being organised by Colston-Hayter.<sup>30</sup>

Quoted (presumably from an interview) by Matthew Collin in his *Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House*, Staines said of David Hart:

'He's completely charming and can charm senior people like Thatcher for a while. But any proximity to him for a long period of time, you know he's completely off his fucking head.'<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps it was Staines' regular intake of MDMA around this time that provoked a particularly unhinged thought regarding police opposition to rave parties:

'Staines hoped that right-wing Conservative MP Teresa Gorman would come out in support of the rave promoters ('She's a fun girl'), but nothing came of it.'<sup>32</sup>

Following the relaxing of the licensing laws and the hosting of all-night parties moving into the mainstream, many of the original promoters from that period<sup>33</sup> disappeared from the scene. This was certainly the case with Tony Colston-Hayter but he re-emerged to public notice in 2014 when he was imprisoned for five and a half years after he admitted 'masterminding the hi-tech theft of £1.3m from Barclays'.<sup>34</sup>

## **The product versus a product**

**I**t has recently come to my attention that Government departments (not just in the UK) which have previously used the term 'product' as a generic descriptor for the output of their endeavours (i.e. to show that they are producing something tangible), are now using the term in a different way (i.e. to describe something that is an actual commercial product).

The first time I noticed this was in the intelligence community, where the

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<sup>30</sup> Initially Paul Staines did both of these jobs from David Hart's office in Mayfair.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew Collin, *Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1998) p. 104

<sup>32</sup> Collin (see note 14) p. 118

<sup>33</sup> Who all had very 'hippy' names like Raindance, Genesis '88 and Biology. If your eyes can stand the strain, check the (somewhat garishly designed) pages at <<http://www.fantazia.org.uk/Scene/promoters.htm>>.

<sup>34</sup> See <<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-27146037>>. To cap it all off, here's something truly bizarre: Valerie Singleton interviewing Tony Colston-Hayter in 1989 at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQIyWQdbSr8>>.

phrase 'the product' for many years has meant intelligence reports or briefings, etc. Now, it seems, reports from private intelligence companies are having a major influence on international events – a prime example being, of course, the 'Steele Dossier' on Donald Trump's dealings with Russians.

More recently, I was reading how Sir David Pepper (previously Director at GCHQ) is now Chairman of the Board at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DTSL). Here's what that organisation says about itself:

'The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) ensures that innovative science and technology contribute to the defence and security of the UK.'<sup>35</sup>

I think that's a very clear statement, from which it can be inferred that the DSTL should be inviolate by outside pressures and able to produce the most effective technological solutions. However, this is not the case because it has become commercially driven. The UK Government web page that profiles Sir David Pepper has it thus:

'The Board's role is to support and constructively challenge the Dstl executive in the development of *business strategies, plans, business cases* and targets, and to monitor Dstl's *business performance* against the approved *corporate plan*.'<sup>36</sup> (emphases added)

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<sup>35</sup> From the 'What we do' section at <<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/defence-science-and-technology-laboratory>>.

<sup>36</sup> See <<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/david-pepper>>.