

Democrats, media seize on Trump pro-gun quip to step up right-wing campaign

By Barry Grey
11 August 2016

In the aftermath of an offhand remark by Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump attacking his Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton for advocating gun-control measures, the Clinton campaign, with the support of much of the corporate-controlled media, has intensified its attack from the right on the billionaire real estate speculator turned politician.

Speaking Tuesday to supporters in Wilmington, North Carolina, Trump accused Clinton of planning to overturn the Second Amendment, which guarantees the right of the people, in connection with maintaining a “well regulated militia,” to “keep and bear arms.”

Trump told the crowd that if elected, Clinton would pick Supreme Court justices who would curtail gun ownership. He declared, “If she gets to pick her judges, nothing you can do folks,” and then added, in something of an aside, “Although the Second Amendment people—maybe there is, I don’t know.”

This last quip, typical of Trump’s loose and incendiary rhetoric, was immediately seized on by the Clinton campaign and Democratic officials and denounced as an incitement for gun rights fanatics and Trump supporters to assassinate federal judges and/or Clinton herself. Clinton’s campaign manager Robby Mook issued a statement declaring, “A person seeking to be the president of the United States should not suggest violence in any way.”

Other Democratic officials directly accused Trump of advocating the assassination of Clinton. Clinton’s running mate, Virginia Senator Tim Kaine, speaking Tuesday in Texas, said, “Nobody who is seeking a leadership position, especially the presidency, should do anything to countenance violence, and that’s what he was saying.”

On Wednesday, speaking in Iowa, Clinton attacked Trump for “crossing the line” with his remark.

These charges were made despite the fact that the Trump campaign issued a statement only minutes after Trump’s remarks in Wilmington insisting that the candidate was referring to the political influence of the gun lobby and not recommending any form of violence. Trump himself later

made similar statements in media interviews.

Major media outlets, which since the conventions of the two big-business parties have swung behind the Clinton campaign, made Trump’s remarks headline news, doubling down on recent attacks on the billionaire candidate as a threat to US foreign policy interests and a potential danger to domestic political stability. Both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* led their Wednesday editions with articles on Trump’s remarks and denunciations of them from Republican and well as Democratic officials and commentators.

Both the *Post* and the *Times* carried editorials demanding that top Republican officials repudiate Trump. The *Post* web site published in addition three anti-Trump op-ed pieces, including a column by former Republican congressman and current MSNBC anchorman Joe Scarborough bearing the headline “The GOP must dump Trump.”

The *Times* editorial pages featured a piece by the newspaper’s chief foreign policy columnist Thomas Friedman comparing Trump’s remark to statements made by ultra-right-wingers in Israel following the Oslo accords with the Palestine Liberation Organization, which, according to Friedman, incited the right-wing assassin who killed Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin 21 years ago.

The *Times* also carried an extraordinary column by former Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency director Michael Hayden on CIA intelligence briefings of the two major parties’ presidential candidates, in which he suggested that Trump was not a trustworthy recipient of US national security secrets. Hayden is one of fifty Republican former national security officials who published an open letter Monday denouncing Trump and declaring him unfit for the post of president and commander in chief.

In his column, Hayden described his first intelligence briefing of Barack Obama the day after Obama’s election victory in November of 2008. He fairly boasted of filling Obama in on the CIA program of renditions (kidnappings) and transfers of suspected terrorists to “third countries” for interrogation and torture.

Hayden's column underscores the criminal character of the growing list of high-level Republican national security officials who have publicly rallied behind Hillary Clinton. Monday's open letter, posted on the *New York Times* web site, followed last Friday's op-ed column, also posted on the *Times*' site, by former acting CIA director Michael Morrell headlined "I Ran the CIA. Now I'm Endorsing Hillary Clinton."

The furor over Trump's remarks in Wilmington is indicative of a US presidential campaign that has exposed an unprecedented crisis of the entire political system. Whatever Trump's intentions in making his off-the-cuff comment on Tuesday, both campaigns are using the language of civil war against one another. Each candidate is accusing the other of being mentally unstable and unfit to occupy the White House. Three months before Election Day, Trump is declaring the elections to be rigged against him. The clear implication is that the administration that ultimately takes office on January 20, 2017 will be illegitimate.

Fueling this unstable and explosive situation is the immense growth of social inequality, a protracted economic slump and years of continuous war. The primary process was dominated by mass opposition to the entire political establishment and the apparatuses of both parties. Trump has sought to channel the anger and frustration of social layers devastated by years of deindustrialization and austerity along the reactionary channels of anti-immigrant racism, economic nationalism and American chauvinism, law-and-order authoritarianism, and militarism.

The entire ruling elite and both parties were shocked by the broad popular support for the Democratic presidential primary campaign of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, who called himself a socialist and claimed to be leading a "political revolution" against the "billionaire class." As the *World Socialist Web Site* warned from the outset, however, Sanders did not represent the political radicalization of workers and young people or the growth of anticapitalist sentiment, but rather the attempt by the ruling class to contain, disarm and dissipate this movement by channeling it back into the historical graveyard of social protest in the United States, the Democratic Party.

Since Sanders' groveling capitulation to Clinton, the Clinton campaign has turned sharply to the right. Particularly since the eve of the Democratic convention last month, it has focused on winning the support of top Republicans, the military brass, intelligence operatives and billionaires by attacking Trump from the right—as an agent of Vladimir Putin who cannot be counted on to wage war against nuclear-armed Russia, as a critic of NATO and other imperialist alliances, as insufficiently deferential to the military, and as someone who is mentally unstable.

At the same time, the Clinton campaign has let it be known that should she win the election—her poll numbers have risen since the conventions—she will sharply escalate the US war for regime change in Syria and other operations in the Middle East, as well as the US confrontations with Russia and China.

It is indeed remarkable how intently the Democrats are working to win either direct support for Clinton or public opposition to Trump from the most infamous war criminals in the Republican stable.

USA Today reported Wednesday: "The Clinton campaign is soliciting support from Republican foreign policy figures, such as former secretary of state Henry Kissinger, Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, according to news reports."

These are men and women, along with Michael Morrell and the signatories of Monday's open letter, who have the blood of countless thousands of people on their hands. Collectively, they have played leading roles—as have the Clintons themselves—in fascist military coups, illegal wars of aggression from the Middle East to North Africa to Central Asia, and conspiracies for war against such rivals as Russia and China—conflicts that could quickly lead to a nuclear third world war.

The Democratic presidential campaign has evolved into an effort to forge a bipartisan consensus and establish a virtual coalition government on the basis of right-wing militaristic policies, which will inevitably involve an intensified assault on the democratic rights and social conditions of the working class at home.

To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>