



WHEN IT COMES TO UKRAINE, THE CIA IS A CLOWN SHOW – Larry Johnson

Description

USA: The CIA, thanks to Hollywood and fanboys, enjoys an undeserved reputation for competence in carrying out espionage and covert actions. I am fascinated by the delusional punditry offered by former CIA officers, such as Douglas London and Steven Hall. Full disclosure, Hall was a young 20 something in my Career Trainee class (we entered on duty in September 1985). He is emblematic, in my opinion, of the problems that have plagued the CIA over the last thirty years—he was a legacy, i.e. got into the agency in part because his Daddy preceded him. Steve, if you recall, was one of the liars who signed a letter declaring that Hunter Biden's laptop had all the earmarks of Russian disinformation. Attaching himself to such a libelous letter (he was impugning the character of John Paul Mac Isaac) highlights his tendency to follow the herd and eschew critical thinking.

But I want to focus on Douglas London. He is popping up all over media, especially CNN and the *Wall Street Journal*, and offering analysis that ranges from the banal to the delusional. Consider this snippet, published in the [Wall Street Journal](#), in March:

I spent 34 years in the Central Intelligence Agency's clandestine service, and watching [Vladimir Putin](#)'s brutal war in Ukraine from the sidelines fills me with both sadness and a sense of opportunity. Espionage is a predatory business, and there's blood in the water. Mr. Putin's self-inflicted damage has done more to turn his own people against him than anything the West could have done. . . .

Russian mystique is gone. Mr. Putin has proved his country is the declining power that the best-informed Russia watchers claimed it was. Fewer pundits will wax poetic over Mr. Putin's cunning and strategic brilliance. He might have been a capable operations officer during his KGB career, but he clearly missed the classes on self-awareness and counterintelligence. The more he tightens the security screws and covers Russia's window to the world, the more likely those he depends on will turn against him.

Got that? Russia, whose economy is clicking along nicely in contrast to the implosion underway in Europe, is a declining power in Mr. London's fanciful world. Since the start of the Special Military Operation last February, Putin has frustrated Western attempts to paint him as Hitler reincarnated and has forged closer ties with China, India, Saudi Arabia and Brazil. Oh, did

I mention he enjoys popular support among the Russian people:

The proportion of Russian citizens' confidence in President Vladimir Putin stood at over 80%, according to the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center that published the results of a survey conducted from October 3 to 9 among 1,600 respondents aged over 18, reports *TASS*.

"When asked about trust in Putin, 80.9% of respondents answered positively (-0.2% over the week), the approval rate of the Russian president's work was 75.6% (-1.3 % over the week)," the pollsters noted.

<https://www.daily-sun.com/post/650584/Poll-reveals-level-of-Russian-public%E2%80%99s-confidence-in-Putin>

I want to remind you of the desperation of the West to portray Putin as a loser bereft of popular support. Five years ago, *Statista* claimed that Putin was losing popular support:

According to a Pew Research Center survey released last week, Russians still have a high level of confidence in President Putin's ability to do the right thing regarding world affairs. Despite his high overall approval rating, however, Putin is actually losing public support on many key issues. Support for his handling of relations with Ukraine and the EU have dropped 20 and 15 percentage points respectively since 2015. Russians are also increasingly dissatisfied with the way their president is handling relations with the United States.

If you thought that an experienced spook like London would take the time to actually gather some facts and compare them to history, think again. Sure looks like Mr. London is not about to let facts get in his way. London believes that his ability to speak Russian grants him special insight into the mind of Vladimir Putin. Here is his keen analysis from a recent column in *Just Security* :

Policymakers would do well to remember three fundamentals that guide Putin's decision-making: 1) he is the product of the 1970's and 1980's KGB and stood witness in then-East Germany in 1991, when the world as he knew it ceased to exist; 2) ego, survival, greed, and ambition direct his moral compass; and 3) he has come to believe his own propaganda.

Unlike all other political leaders, Putin is driven by “ego, survival, greed, and ambition.” Excuse me, but good grief!! Thank God that neither Bill Clinton nor Barack Obama nor Boris Johnson were motivated to run for office because of “ego, survival, greed, and ambition.” Any further question why I deride London as banal. Hell, Mr. London does not even understand himself, i.e., what motivates him. Apart from Jesus Christ, I have not had the privilege of knowing any political leader of substance that was free of ego, self-preservation, greed and ambition. This kind of superficial, shallow thinking is part of the reason that officers like London wormed their way up the ranks of the CIA bureaucracy. As long as you mouth platitudes and do not rock the boat of established thinking, you get a great Personal Appraisal Report (aka PAR), and are promoted in accordance with the Peter Principle.

The *London Express* asked Mr. London about Putin’s decision to name General Surovikin as Supreme Commander of the Military Operation in Ukraine:

Douglas London, . . . believes Vladimir Putin did not appoint Surovikin on merit but because the Russian Air Force Commander lacks the connections within the military to launch a coup. Putin installed Surovikin, nicknamed “General Armageddon,” to oversee Russian operations in Ukraine this month after a run of heavy defeats at the hands of Ukrainian forces in Kherson and Kharkiv. . . .

General Surovikin previously headed up Russian operations during the Syrian Civil War when Moscow propped up the regime of Bashir Al-Assad against Islamist rebel forces.

He was credited with masterminding the recapture of large swathes of Syria from rebel hands, the use of overwhelming firepower, and scant regard for collateral damage.

Surovikin’s appointment as the top Russian commander in Ukraine coincided with the use of widespread suicide drones to target Ukrainian energy infrastructure.

Got that? Surovikin is without “merit”, yet he is credited with capturing large portions of Syria from Islamic rebels. If Douglas London really had any analytical talent at all—along with some intellectual honesty—he could have at least acknowledged that Putin’s choice of Surovikin was in fact grounded in merit. Putin was not looking for some boot licking toady to kiss his ass and tell him what a wonderful dictator he is. Putin selected a General with experience in running a combined arms operation with a clear track record of success. I don’t know if London is just stupid and ignorant or if he sincerely believes the nonsense he is spouting. Could it be that his own experience as a boot licker is clouding his judgment?

U.S. policymakers, when it comes to Russia, are an ignorant lot with little appreciation for history. They are blinded by ideology and tend to view present day Russia through the expired constructs of the Cold War. Putin and Russia are inept. They are bumbling. They are backward. Etc.,etc. etc.

None take into account the remarkable transformation of life in Russia under Putin during the last 22 years. Russia was a genuine shit hole in 1999. Rather than spend Russian tax dollars on disastrous foreign policy expeditions like Iraq and Afghanistan, under Putin’s leadership the creaky, rotten infrastructure left by the Soviet regime was renovated and modernized. Russia’s military services also were upgraded dramatically and its technological skills, particularly in the realm of space exploration, surpassed that of the West. The vast majority of people in the

United States fail to appreciate the implications of Russia's role in providing the rockets and space craft that ferried U.S. astronauts to the Space Station.

Back in 2004, President Bush announced that NASA's aging space shuttle program would be retired in 2010 and — eventually — replaced by a plan to return to the moon. At the time, NASA realized there would be a four-year gap between the space-shuttle retirement and when the new manned space transport system would be in place.

But at that point, it didn't seem like a big problem for NASA to ask Russia to transport US astronauts to and from the space station in the interim. Relations between the two countries were friendly — Bush was telling reporters that he'd looked into Putin's eyes and “got a sense of his soul.” What's more, NASA had relied on Russian transport for 29 months after the *Columbia* disaster in 2003, when the shuttle program was put on hold.

Development of NASA's replacement vessels, however, has taken much longer than anticipated — the agency won't have a replacement for the shuttle until 2017. There are a few reasons for that. Bush's moon program was cancelled by Obama in 2010 and replaced with a plan for private companies to shuttle astronauts. Meanwhile, NASA's budget requests to pay for the new program were repeatedly underfunded by Congress.

<https://www.vox.com/2014/5/5/5674744/how-nasa-became-utterly-dependent-on-russia-for-space-travel>

Just to be clear. The incompetent, inept, backward, technologically unsophisticated Russians have been the Uber driver for the United States, carrying U.S. astronauts to and from the International Space Station. But when it comes to running military operations in Ukraine, the Russians supposedly cannot pour piss out of a boot. I offer this as the clearest example of the delusion that blinds the minds of supposed super spies like Douglas London and Steve Hall and others. Instead of acknowledging that Russia, notwithstanding its relatively small population compared to other countries, is a certified leader in sophisticated, complex technology, Western intelligence officials and politicians only see the bad old days of the Soviet Union and the craven party politics that sundered the Soviet empire. The West fails to understand that there is a new kid on the block who is not going to buckle or cower in the face of belligerent threats from the cretins in the West. A failure to know one's opponent (or enemy) is a recipe for disaster. Sadly, I fear the West is consumed by that recipe and will continue to fight a figment of their collective imagination that no longer exists.

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1. Army-Wars-Conflict Zones-Military Tech.
2. Main
3. Politics-Geopolitics-Gov.-Events

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