



DANIEL MORGAN GRADUATE SCHOOL
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presents

“The Cold War Never Ended:
Russia’s Quest for Revenge in 2016”

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The topic of my talk to today is “The Cold War Never Ended, Russia’s Quest for Revenge in 2016” and I want to be clear about why I am here and that is I’m here as a journalist who has been investigating, looking, searching, seeking, and collecting information about this particular topic for a very long time. I want to tell you about facts and information that I collected and have collected recently and began to realize that there was a pattern. I want to connect a few dots for you and show how Russia has made it very clear, and they have done so since the fall of the U.S.S.R., that they would get revenge against the West and U.S.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said on several occasions in his own words “the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the 21st century was the breakup of the U.S.S.R.” Gradually, since then, he spoke about rebuilding—trying to return Russia to the superpower state as it was and the size it was during the Cold War. For many U.S. officials, they may have said many times the Cold War is over, but for years’ numerous signs have emerged in stark relief that suggest this idea simply is not true and my journalistic exploits in discussing with people, collecting information from sources, and talking to people confirm the falsity of that idea.

In the past decade, I have researched, investigated, written about, and reported on radio the developments related to this enigma. Russia’s development of cyber capabilities are key, as I lay what I’ve learned, today. A key development took place in October 2011 when the National Counterintelligence Executive (NCIX), Robert Bear Bryant, issued a ground-breaking report that named the Russian government as a major perpetrator of espionage. Citing Russia or any country by name over the years preceding the 2011 announcement had not been done for diplomatic purposes. Nonetheless, it was a true sign that the intelligence community saw something bad—really bad on the horizon and it was right. The report titled “Foreign Spies Stealing U.S. Economic Secrets in Cyberspace” noted Russia’s extensive, sophisticated operations motivated by Russia’s high dependence on national resources, the need to diversify its economy, and their belief that the global economic system is tilted towards the U.S. and other Western nations at the expense of Russia. Moscow believed it needed to get going. Moscow’s highly capable

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intelligence services, according to this report, used HUMINT, cyber, and other operations to collect economic information and technology to support Russia's economic development and security.

Yet, in 2016, new evidence and new information has emerged indicating that Russia has expanded this into a very dangerous political plateau. Here's where it gets interesting. Russia's deployment of cyber and hybrid warfare tactics. I was in Sophia, Bulgaria, in mid-November, during a NATO conference, and NATO ACT, the Ally Command Transformation. It was the first time they had a journalist there observing or participating in this particular event and this particular event. There, they recognized a lot of what taking place in their space is becoming more critical and different from what they dealt with in the past.

I was there for the conference and David Kilcullen, a Lieutenant Colonel in the Australian military reserve and former chief strategist in the Office of Counterintelligence in the U.S. and senior counterinsurgency advisor to general David Petraeus in Iraq in 2007 and 2008, laid out something that was pretty mind-blowing to me. The Russian government has been doing a series of secret operations for a number of years and as a result, and this is my journalistic assessment, they may have a slight edge on the U.S. because they have been engaging in these actions. Again this is based on what I believe the individuals I was talking to, were telling me, but I'll get to that in just a moment.

First, however, in 2008 Sergei Tretitov, a former top KGB and SVR spy, later a defector to the U.S., told me during an interview—and he said this in his own words—“the more Russia has money, the more aggressive Russia will be” and if you know Sergei you can see that he meant this and he meant this deeply. He said first of all “I want to underline, I am not a boy scout, I am not an alarmist and I am not an analyst but I know what the Russians are up to because,” he said, “I was a part of that governmental team that developed those plans.” He said “I know what their plans are and I know what the nature of today's Russian government is.” Again, this is in 2008.

But he was nonetheless looking ahead because he knew what he was seeing. He saw the beginnings of what we are looking at now. He is no longer with us; he passed away in 2010 unfortunately, but I believe if he were here today he would say “See? I told you so.”

Sergei also insisted “Russia will do everything it can to undermine American interest. What's happening in the Caucasus's right now,” he said of Georgia, specifically in 2008, “is an important player but not that important, the whole Russian Escapade in Georgia is aimed against the U.S. The reason that this is done is because Georgia is the closest and probably the only real ally of the US in NATO in the whole region of the Caucasus's.” He continued to say “and for that, Georgia is supposed to be punished.”

“Right now,” he said, “I am watching Mr. Lavrov, Mr. Putin, and others that I worked with, and it is absolutely clear to me who was the real target of this action and it was not Georgia, it was the U.S.” He went on to say if the U.S. were in a stronger position geopolitically, Russia would never-ever do what they did in Georgia; these are the words of Sergei Tretitov, and he said essentially that this was a scenario where Russia started thinking they were not punishable, that they were above International Law, or just above the rest of the world in general. Sergei iterated that they don't care what the civilized world thinks of them. They're only interested in achieving what they wanted to achieve. He said, “I don't think the U.S. can do anything really to stop Russian aggression in Georgia or anywhere else in the world or in the Russian neighborhood specifically. Why? Because this would mean a direct military confrontation with Russia and no one wants that because it would be extremely dramatic and could lead to a military conflict.”

What Sergei was also saying was that the Russian government and the military have some clever ways to reach their objectives. He said they will use them to justify their goals. Example, the Georgian conflict in 2008, this is where David Kilcullen, who I told you I spoke with back in November, opened my eyes and it helped me connect the dots about cyber as a tactic: five years ago, the NCIX warned that Russia was developing capabilities. Kilcullen said to me in the days leading up to the Russian invasion of Georgia there was a large-scale cyber-attack on the Georgian government, on its web presence coming from criminal groups in part acting for the Russian government.

Early in the operation against Georgia, two of the hackers got into the bank account information of the Georgian military—the account they use to pay for commercial satellite imagery for their air defenses. On day 2 of that conflict in Georgia, they drained the money from that account. The next day, the Georgians didn't have any money to pay for satellite imagery and their air defense system went down. On day 4, the Georgians stopped the conflict, this was because of a Russian sponsored cyber operation.

Fast-forward to 2014 when the Russian government attacked another neighbor, Ukraine, using again another very unorthodox approach. Again, some dot connection was necessary and harkens back to what Sergei said about how “Russia will do everything they can to undermine American interest.” They used another unorthodox tactic, hybrid warfare, and little green men, masked soldiers in unmarked green army uniforms carrying modern Russian military weapons and equipment during the Crimea crisis. After months of denial, on December 17, 2015, President Putin confirmed the presence to Russian people, commenting, “in Ukraine we were engaged in certain tactics, including the military sphere.” But, he added, “this did not mean the presence of regular army.” What he meant was it was the *Spetznaz*. The *Spetznaz* are the Russian special forces military units which renowned as one of the most elite elements of their military.

The supreme allied commander Europe of NATO, General Philip Breedlove, also confirmed these little green men were in fact Russian troops. This was not an innovation—unorthodox but not an innovation. It was a copycat move. It was a page out of Nikita Khrushchev's book, from Berlin—1961 and checkpoint Charlie. He ordered the removal of all of the markings from all of the tanks and the military personal off their uniforms that were in place as that long confrontation in Germany and the Cold War that we knew began. The tactic was part of a strategy, connecting the dots again, that Kilcullen says that something to which the West and the U.S. certainly need to pay attention: irregular warfare. In fact, he says Russia has built a whole new strategy about warfare and, according to Kilcullen, instead of using kinetic military might as the engine to drive its projection of national power it has elevated information warfare to the pinnacle. It is Putin's principle approach.

According to Kilcullen, cyber, hybrid warfare, and kinetic tactics are simply an element of the information warfare strategy. Why did this happen? The lessons learned in the first Gulf War told to me by a top former US intelligence officer, was what the U.S. did in Iraq in 1991 was do two things: first, it stunned Iraqi forces because in 1991 Iraq had the number one military in the world in size of force in proportion to population. It was number 4 when it came to defense spending *per capita*, and number 6 for when it came to total military inactive duty personnel. Consequently, what happen from August 2, 1990 through January 17, 1991, left militaries around the world stunned at how quickly and how completely the U.S.-led coalition responded to and put down the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. On the flip side, the second lesson this whole operation provided was a blueprint—laying out a road map for the U.S. state-based adversaries. Kilcullen said that what happen in Iraq showed traditional state-based adversaries that they should not try to match bombs and bullets with the U.S., but instead figure out redefining how to go to war with the U.S.

This former counter intelligence officer I spoke with said what happen was in the midst of it collapse, Russia realized it had nothing that could help it at that point deal with a head-to-head confrontation with the U.S. It couldn't match power with the US. It needed something else. It needed a new approach.

As a result, by the early 2000's under Vladimir Putin, Russia began what it viewed as a resurgence by employing a new war strategy that the West may have underestimated. Russia began to redefine its view on war and according to this former counterintelligence operative, Russia adopted new concepts for confronting its adversaries. The U.S. needs to understand and embrace the fact that war, as far as Russia is concerned, is no longer what it used to be. Warfare has changed. It is not just a kinetic tool. Kinetic operations are just a tool in the larger tool box: it's not the leader, it's not the driver, and, he said, the West should think of that anymore as a primary tool for Russia.

There are some that say that 2016 presidential election was attempted Russian coup, that is absurd on the face of it, but when you look deeply at what's going on and based on the information that I have gathered from several sources, they have said this whole scenario involving Russia's involvement in the election was not to choose one candidate over the other, but to influence the process and sew chaos in the process. Part of this has to do with the nuclear winter scenario many years ago and, according to these sources, Russia has decided to try to flip the script and use a daring, unique plan of action to engage the U.S. political system. We may not know what the results of the chaos they have sewed are for a long time, but it appears that it is a result of keen planning.

As Sergei said in 2008 in our interview: "Years ago, an operation to influence the election and foam at discord in the U.S. began." So, what do we know about this operation? Well, one thing that we know it's called, "Operation Pawn Storm." It's an ongoing cyber campaign that's pretty far-reaching, and pretty ambitious. It has been known to primarily target military, embassy defense, and contractor personnel from the U.S., its allies—including government institutions like NATO—opposing factions, dissidents from the Russian government, international media, and high profile political personalities in countries like Ukraine and other countries that Russia does not consider to be friendly to Russian interests.

Some of Operation Pawns Storm's most impressive or notable activities include the 2014 compromise of Polish websites. In December 2014, corporate accounts of 55 employees of a large U.S. newspaper were hacked. It started with basic phishing ploys—ones the FBI has been warning about this for a long time. In 2015, they targeted three popular YouTube bloggers with a similar phishing attack. In February 2015, using malicious iOS applications for espionage, it also attacked the NATO liaison in Ukraine with fake Outlook Web Access pages. Subsequently, there is no doubt Russia is engaging in a very sophisticated operation, not the least of which was, according to these sources that I have spoken to, a key tool when it came to figuring out how to access, steal, and proliferate emails that came from the Democratic National Committee.

Additionally, seventeen U.S. government intelligence agencies assessed with the high degree of confidence that the Russian government was behind the theft of emails and documents from the Democratic National Committee. Other sources suggest the Russians sponsor, hacker programs have begun a similar process targeting the incoming administration, but I have not seen any evidence of this. I have talked to a lot of people. Nobody has anything that feel comfortable talking about or sharing, but they suggested that there is something taking place because knowing what they know about the leadership of the Russian government, and what they know about Russia's motivation, and what Russia feels, they assess that there remain very strong feelings of revenge against the U.S. in the Russian Federation. These intelligence professionals assess that this it is just a matter of time before that activity, again apart of this umbrella of information, warfare, strategy, will emerge. Russia, according to these sources that I have

spoken to, does not feel that it has the gun power, or the bullet power to match the U.S., but, they are hoping, they can do some other things by surprise.

As I've shown, Western intelligence officials say there are some very important things that we should be considering. Post-election distraction number one: They say it's meant to buy Russia time to take action in Syria and other areas—areas in the Russian “neighborhood,” such as Eastern Europe, and other countries that make up the region. David Kilcullen pointed out during a briefing at this NATO conference that there is something called migration manipulation that he believes that the Russian government and others seem to have information suggesting that the Russian government has been heavily involved in.

A good example is Kirkenes, a small town in Norway on the border with Russia. Nikel is the town on the other side of the border. Kirkenes has a policy that you cannot cross the border on foot. So, low and behold, during the height of the migration in the last few months they discovered in Kirkenes thousands of children's bicycles in this town which, arguably, may have a population of 1,500 people, meaning you are not going to have anywhere near that number of children in town. So, what happened, according to Kilcullen and some other sources that have spoken to him about this, someone provided bicycles for these migrants to cross the border into Kirkenes. They came through Nikel. He has certain suspicions about where these bicycles came from and without saying any certainty, obviously, there isn't any proof at this point that it was something that was sponsored by a Russian government or an affiliated organization.

In a couple of other places this has taken place as well, most notably, Finland. Migration manipulation—it is another one of the tools of new information warfare being used to further the objectives of the Russia government. The element that we are looking at here is plausible deniability. If no one can say for sure that the Russian government did it that leaves the open question: who did it? It also leaves the question why it was done? Kilcullen had a theory on that as well. He said that he believes that it is being done: to overwhelm the bandwidth of those nations where the Russians have meddled, making them unable to respond to certain elements of Russian aggression. It's not a bullet or a bomb. It's not kinetic. It's different. Information is what it is. Or, it is some kind of unusual scenario where any one does not have what it needs to respond. It hasn't studied, it hasn't practiced, it hasn't perfected what is necessary to push back this kind of aggression. According to Kilcullen, it is indeed aggression. As Russia seeks to buy time, he believes what they hope they can do is to engage in some other places while the U.S. is focused on this situation coming together and embracing the new government and essentially getting focused on what it needs to do.

As Russia is losing its traditional grip on Cuba and it needs a place where it can project its power in the Western Hemisphere. It is no wonder then that Kilcullen suggests we should be looking very carefully at Venezuela. Venezuela is extremely weak. Extremely economically depressed and very anti-U.S. at the moment. According to several sources, a number of staunchly anti-U.S. countries have active military forces in Venezuela, including North Korea. They have special operations forces in Venezuela at this point. Kilcullen pointed this out to say very simply, very clearly: Russia is not playing the game that it 'used to play' and that the U.S. needs to take a different look and approach at what it taking place and do some dot connection. Again, however, overwhelming an adversary with chaos or scenarios will distract them. Distraction and deception operations are nothing new when it comes to Russia, but this may be a new version of one. And, lastly, there is a Russian connection, according to these sources that I have spoken to, between where Edward Snowden ended up after leaking U.S. documents and information.

Before the WikiLeaks dump of documents and emails related to the DNC, several news organizations reported that someone who called himself “Guccifer 2.0” who investigators now believe was an agent of the Russian GRU (Military Intelligence), who got ahold of these documents. There is quite a bit of

activity going on that seems to have a very anti-U.S. and anti-West theme to it. But the difficulty is placing absolute blame on Russia, or anyone else.

According to Tretitov, according to Kilcullen, and according to the counter-intelligence source that I have been talking to, and numerous others in European countries that I have been talking to, this is a part of the strategy to make it such that Russia cannot be blamed—publicly anyway—even though our intelligence agencies know it's the Russians. They leave calling cards all the time. Situations back during the summer or earlier this year where U.S. diplomats were hacked or seized, or, in one particular case an individual's arm was broken, a calling card was left. It was very clear to the folks in the intelligence community who did it. Apartments ransacked, essentially breaking and entering secretly and it is all about sending messages to the U.S. and to the West.

In summation, what I have discovered is not earth shattering. It's a developing by a degree regarding what Russia has been involved in for a long time and something that they started years ago. It is not a new thing and we as a country need to pay very close attention to it.

Again, what I have been talking about today are the observations that I have made from conversations and from reporting and research dating back a good long time, but certainly, more importantly some revelations and understandings about what has taken place in the last year as far as Russia's view of the U.S. is concerned.

In conclusion, change is necessary for the survival of every individual, culture, nation, and organization. Technology has undoubtedly created both positive and negative avenues for that change and various consequences as well. The increase in speed in world events driven by technological advances in communications has ushered in an era of unprecedented economic competition, political instability, security concerns, population migration, and human transformation. Events that took long periods of time in the past can now happen in mere seconds. Triggering catastrophic outcomes, thus the need to prepare for tomorrow today is the key thing that's emerged from all of the discussions and conversations and engagements that I have had with all of the sources that I have spoken to about this.

A growing list of top-notch U.S. intelligence officials all agree—Russia is involved in something that is designed to hurt the U.S. one way or another. When it happens, how it happens, where it happens—it's not etched in stone—they are doing it in a way in which they can leave it loose. They are doing it in a way in which they can activate certain elements of it; use the elements that work for them and discard those that don't. But I will say this, looking at Syria, what is taking place in Aleppo now, looking at Venezuela, what is taking place in Venezuela now, looking at what took place in Moldova, what happened in Lithuania what's happened in Bulgaria, what's happened in Ukraine, and Georgia, there is irrefutable evidence that the Russian government is up to something. The key is figuring it out, and deciding what to do on what terms and when.

