

7 Huge News Stories You Probably Didn't Hear About In 2017

By Carey Wedler, The AntiMedia.org, 1 January 2017

2017 was a chaotic year filled with violent protest, threats of nuclear war, ongoing Cold War-style accusations of collusion with ‘the Russians,’ and widespread allegations of sexual harassment.

Establishment media outlets like *Washington Post* and *CNN* took it upon themselves to protect American democracy from the Trump administration, but in typical fashion, *many of the most vital stories of the year — the ones that reveal the true nature of corruption and power in the U.S. — received little to no attention.*

Here are the top underreported stories of 2017:

1. The government continued its push to spy on you indiscriminately — When Edward Snowden revealed to the American public the extent of the federal government’s surveillance programs, the country was outraged for a few fleeting moments. But the issue of privacy violations has largely faded into obscurity since then, even as the government’s push for these policies continues. Before leaving office, Barack Obama **granted** more surveillance authority to federal agencies, and once Trump took office, his administration began **pushing** to reauthorize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which has not only swept up the records of foreigners, but also American citizens. As the ACLU has summarized, Section 702 of FISA allows the government to engage in “mass, warrantless surveillance of Americans’ and foreigners’ phone calls, text messages, emails, and other electronic communications.” It was passed in 2007 and reauthorized in 2012 but is set to expire on December 31 of this year. Congress’ worked this year to push through a renewal with **tepid** reforms, though it now **appears** lawmakers may fail to reauthorize the bill before it expires on New Year’s Eve. Nevertheless, the ongoing push for data collection presses on. In September, Trump **nominated** Adam I. Klein, a surveillance and FISA advocate, to **chair** a governmental board in charge of *holding the government accountable for its surveillance activities.*

2. The media and government selectively informed the public about North Korea — North Korea has dominated headlines for months, with the media consistently warning of **imminent danger** and repeatedly **fear mongering** about the perceived threat. What has been grossly underreported, however, is not only the U.S. military’s **historical decimation** of the North Korean people, but also the North Korean regime’s **willingness** to engage in talks. North Korean officials have repeatedly stated they are willing to compromise on their weapons programs *if the U.S. backs off its military grandstanding.* As the North Korean ambassador to the U.N. **told Reuters** in November:

“As long as there is continuous hostile policy against my country by the U.S. and as long as there are continued war games at our doorstep, then there will not be negotiations.”

The *Reuters* headline, however, read, “North Korea rules out negotiations on nuclear weapons” – as if the notion of the U.S. halting its military drills is simply not an option.

This detail scarcely highlighted in the mainstream conversation, with outlets like the *Washington Post* also running **headlines** and stories that drum up the regime’s unwillingness to halt the weapons development.

3. Just as in the Obama years, the civilian death toll from American military operations was swept under the rug — Despite some mainstream reports on the mass casualties the Trump administration has incurred during its ramped up operations in the Middle East, over all, concerns over the loss of innocent life remain lost on the American public. Though Obama **dropped** over 26,000 bombs during his last year in office — a massive number — the Trump administration **dropped** over 20,000 in its first six months. Roughly halfway through

the year, over 2,000 civilians had **died**, and in the battle of Mosul, alone, over 3,200 **died** as a result of the U.S. coalition, contributing to a total of between 9,000 and 11,000 civilian deaths.

4. Police violence continues— Aside from several high-profile instances of police brutality, **including** the brutal shooting of Philando Castile, a legal gun owner (the officer was acquitted of all charges and received a settlement from the police department), and the recent instance of a cop forcing a pet owner to **behead** his own dog, mainstream attention on the system problem of police misconduct has been quiet this year (especially compared to 2014, for example, when protests in Ferguson, MO, drew ongoing national attention). At the same time, President Trump **encouraged** officers to be rough with suspects and continued to assert his **unwavering support** for law enforcement, claiming anti-police sentiment is “wrong” and “dangerous.” He also **reinstated** the federal government’s program of granting military gear to local police. Meanwhile, American police continue to kill civilians at staggering rates, with **estimates** ranging between 976 and **almost 1,182** for 2017. The number of cops killed in 2017 was the **second-lowest** in 50 years, according to data from the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund.

5. Establishment media neglects to inform audiences of the U.S. role in international chaos—Just a few weeks ago, *CNN* ran a disturbing **story** detailing the growing slave trade in Libya, where human beings are subject to gruesome conditions and auctioned off as property. Though the story itself received widespread attention (and the *Guardian* **covered** it earlier this year), *CNN* left out one key detail from the narrative: the problem exploded after the Obama and Clinton-backed NATO toppling of the country’s former leader, Muammar Gaddafi, in 2011, a detail the *Guardian* **reported** in April. Following the power vacuum left in the wake of that operation, Libya has become a haven for terror groups and horrifying activities like slave trading and rape. The media’s **widespread** omission of this fact **prevents** a thorough understanding of the ramifications of Western intervention in countries that are outside their jurisdiction (some outlets, like *Newsweek*, did **highlight** the Obama administration’s role in the growth of the slave trade, and to *Fortune*’s credit, the outlet **acknowledged** the problem was exacerbated following Gaddafi’s “fall,” though it failed to note how he ‘fell.’ Similarly, *CNBC* **noted** that “*conditions have worsened since 2011, when former Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi was overthrown,*” but failed to mention who instigated the overthrow.).

6. The world moves on from the American empire— As U.S. foreign policy continues to create unintended consequences, other global players are moving to **lessen their dependence** on America and the U.S. dollar. From **Venezuela** to Pakistan and Iran, countries are opting to conduct their oil transactions outside the long-dominant American currency. In addition, they are forming alliances. For example, Turkey, which has for years been somewhat of a U.S. ally, has **strengthened ties** with Russia. Iran and Qatar have **mended** ties, and even staunch U.S. ally Saudi Arabia is hedging its bets by **building up business ties** with Russia and **China**. The E.U. has also **signaled** its intention to become less dependent on the U.S., moving to create its own army.

7. Weed keeps winning!— Despite all the terrible news and seemingly unending flow of negativity, cannabis continues to make gains, and though the stories about individual developments have mounted in the mainstream, the breadth of the evolution is difficult to fully capture. Though the federal government has **continued making huge numbers of arrests** for the plant, the public’s support for legalization keeps **mounting**. Further, multiple **surveys** conducted this year show Americans strongly prefer cannabis as medicine over traditional pharmaceuticals. One analysis conducted by UC Berkeley and Kent State **found** “*Ninety-seven percent of the sample ‘strongly agreed/agreed’ that they are able to decrease the amount of opiates they consume when they also use cannabis*” and “*81% ‘strongly agreed/agreed’ that taking cannabis by itself was more effective at treating their condition than taking cannabis with opioid.*” Further, police are facing harsher scrutiny for their weed busts

as the [Internet schools them](#) when they attempt to brag about cannabis-related arrests on social media. Despite the [lobbying efforts](#) by [Big Pharma](#), police unions, and prison guard unions, the plant continues to enjoy increasing popularity and [skyrocketing profits](#). This positive story demonstrates the ruling establishment's continuing loss of control even as it struggles to keep its power over individual freedom.