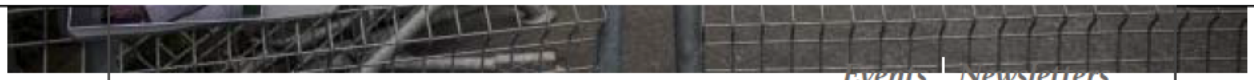
EXHIBIT 8

OPINION

NSA: White House Knew Jamal Khashoggi Was In Danger. Why Didn't They Protect Him?

By John R. Schindler • 10/10/18 5:11pm



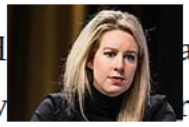


Posters of missing Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi stuck to a police barricade outside Saudi Arabia's consulate in Istanbul, Turkey. (Photo by Chris McGrath/Getty Images)

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W… intelligence and the White H… about the disappearance of Ja…oggi—and when did they know… re the Top Secret questions haunting Washington right now. A National Security Agency official tells me that the codebreakers, as usual, have some answers.

For a week, the disappearance of Jamal Khashoggi has been one of the world's top news stories, a bona fide international mystery. A prominent Saudi journalist with deep connections to the Kingdom's leadership circles, the 59-year-old Khashoggi entered the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on October 2 and has not officially been seen since.

While the Middle-Eastern rumor mill can't agree whether the unfortunate man was murdered or merely abducted, few expect to see Khashoggi alive and well again. At a minimum, he has been disappeared, to use the jargon of repressive regimes. Turkish authorities claim that Khashoggi was killed then dismembered inside the consulate, like something out of a low-budget horror movie, while unconfirmed rumors assert that the missing man is being held against his will in his home country, having been smuggled out of Turkey by Saudi intelligence. In any event, the Khashoggi case has become a sore point between Ankara and Riyadh, as well as a black eye for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its allegedly reformist leadership.

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It's Khashoggi's strained relationship with that new leadership, specifically Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, the Kingdom's de facto ruler since last year, that may be the backstory to this mystery. Shortly after MBS (as he is known to fans and detractors alike) took power, Khashoggi fled the country and became a sharp critic of the new regime from exile in the United States. His accusations, some of them published in the *Washington Post*, encompassed regime corruption and harsh critiques of Saudi Arabia's dirty war in neighboring Yemen, which has killed thousands of innocent civilians. This annoyed Riyadh, particularly MBS, whose tolerance for dissent is low even by Saudi standards, which rank among the most repressive and media-unfriendly on earth.

Khashoggi made an unlikely dissident. A well-known journalist, he had longstanding connections to power circles in Riyadh, including with Saudi intelligence, and he served as editor of the Saudi daily *Al Watan*, one of the Kingdom's top newspapers. For years he was an unofficial counselor to Riyadh bigwigs, who valued his insights on matters both foreign and domestic. The insider, however, suddenly became an outsider under the new regime. That he was an annoyance to MBS is not up for debate, while reports that Khashoggi was entering the world of politics, specifically attempting to establish a pro-democracy advocacy group, provides more motive for Riyadh wanting to silence him.

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What exactly happened to Khashoggi may take time to establish beyond a reasonable doubt, given the mysterious cast of characters and conflicting storylines. Today, Turkish media published photos of the 15-man team of Saudi killers allegedly d[illegible] Istanbul to deal with Kha[illegible] Ankara's latest claim was a [illegible] planned secret intelligence op[illegible] killers apparently fled Turkey just hours after the job was done.

Riyadh, of course, has dismissed all this as hogwash, even though evidence is mounting of Khashoggi's unpleasant end. Neither does Ankara have much credibility here, given how President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his not-quite-democratic regime harass dissidents at home and abroad—including in the United States. That said, Khashoggi has been missing for more than a week now, and Saudi involvement in his disappearance seems all but certain.

The United States government in fact knows what happened to the missing man—and seems to have known something about his fate even before his disappearance. As reported by the *Washington Post* last night, "US intelligence intercepted communications of Saudi officials discussing a plan to capture" Khashoggi, adding:

> The Saudis wanted to lure Khashoggi back to Saudi Arabia and lay hands on him there, this person said. It was not clear whether the Saudis intended to

arrest and interrogate Khashoggi or to kill him, or if the United States warned Khashoggi that he was a target.

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I [illegible] the National Security Ag[illegible]ca's big eavesdr[illegible]
in[illegible]audi communications that ind[illegible]dh had something unpleasant in store for Khashoggi. Listening in on foreign governments, after all, is NSA's main job, and that includes frenemies like Saudi Arabia as well as hostile regimes. At least a day before Khashoggi appeared at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, an NSA official told me, the agency had Top Secret information that Riyadh was planning something nefarious—though exactly what was not clear from the intercepts. This was deemed important because Khashoggi is a legal resident of the United States, and is therefore entitled to protection. According to the NSA official, this threat warning was communicated to the White House through official intelligence channels.

It needs to be asked what, if anything, the White House did with this Top Secret warning. Intelligence without action is merely expensive noise, and if no action was taken in this case, Congress should ask why not. If action was taken—meaning a warning was issued to Saudi officials to keep their hands of Khashoggi—and Riyadh ignored it, that too is something worth investigating. Saudi Arabia is a difficult ally of the United States, but our influence in Riyadh remains significant. This is particularly the case due to the close relationship between President Donald Trump's administration and MBS, which is reported to be cordial and then some. At press time, the White House had not responded to a request for comment.

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NSA did its highly classified job and provided the White House with threat information, direct from Saudi sources, which might have saved Jamal Khashoggi from whatever grim fate he met on October 2 at the hands of Saudi officials. If the Trump administration failed to take necessary action to protect a journalist and dissident who was resident in our country, the guilt in this case will not lie solely with Riyadh.

Filed Under: Politics, International Politics, National Security, News, Middle East, Washington Post, NSA, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Jamal Khashoggi, Saudi Arabia, Assassination

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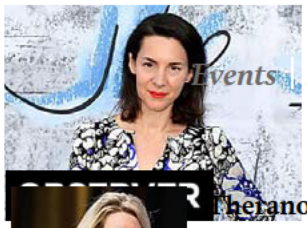


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