

Atlantic editor's presence in Houthi attack chat: a conspiracy theory (or two)

By Lev Tsitrin

It is an inalienable trait of human nature that we like our accomplishment recognized and recorded. Of course, "virtue is its own reward" – yet a mere personal satisfaction of having done something worthwhile feels insufficient and incomplete. Hence, monuments to rulers and achievers the world over; hence, chronicles – either official, or in the form of ubiquitous book-length autobiographies that are the staple of book trade. We automatically assume that what any official of higher rank will do upon retirement, is embark on writing an autobiography. Usually, this is exactly what happens – hence, shelf upon shelf of brick-sized volumes like Bill Clinton's bio in bookstores' biography sections.

Even super-hyper-top-secret endeavors like the Manhattan Project had to have an official historiographer allowed into its works before the work was completed – the *New York Times*' reporter [William L. Lawrence](#). Clearly, risking national security never stood in a way of human vanity. (Manhattan Project was, as we now know, riddled with Soviet spies; the first Soviet atom bomb was a carbon copy of the American one. But that's a little beside the point.)

The point is: that there was absolutely nothing unusual about having a journalist watch – and later report – ostensibly secret proceedings, citing access to highly-placed sources. Such journalistic scoops are, again, routine.

Why would something as spectacular and full of action as a US attack on Houthi targets be an exception to that rule, is a little beyond me. So why the hoopla that resulted from

inclusion of an enigmatic JG – Jeffrey Goldberg, the editor of the *Atlantic*, into the chat, and why have his revelations become such a sensation?

I have a theory – a conspiracy theory if you will – though it is rather too simple for the genre: Jeffrey Goldberg of the liberal *Atlantic* was the wrong JG. The intended JG, to my thinking, was [Jonah Goldberg](#), the editor of the conservative *National Review*. The screw-up, in other words, was in putting a wrong JG editor/journalist on the chat – but not a presence of a journalist on it, as the press would want us believe.



If so, one needs not doubt Trump administration's assertions that no secrets were leaked – the participants knew that there was a journalist on the chat, and shared just the fireworks part (and, admittedly, their gleeful delight at things going well) – but nothing that would have derailed the mission, or put US forces in danger.

The brouhaha resulting from Jeffrey Goldberg's sensational revelations simply opened a window in how the government-press nexus operates – trusted journalists having access to far more than official press conferences. That's all there is to it.

I freely admit that is is pure speculation, a conspiracy theory. And yet I would insist that it is not at all implausible – and is a mere illustration of how government uses the press, and of press's access to the government. I can understand why the government would stay mum, and won't admit to it – but why MSM is not trumpeting this theory of the leak,

is beyond me.

Is it because it would demystify – and deflate – the sensation, reducing the much-touted “incompetence” of the administration to putting on the chat a wrong journalist with a similarly-sounding name to an intended one – admittedly a mistake, but a minor one compared to what the administration is accused of? Well, that would be yet another conspiracy theory of mine, I guess...