Two Real Deplorables

by Michael Curtis

American citizens must have been startled and shocked when a prominent politician, who should know better words, informed them with passionate intensity of the existence of "deplorables" in their ranks. No doubt some citizens would like the numbers and identity of them in the absurd "basket of deplorables" to be more precisely stated.

Nevertheless it is more sensible, important and urgent to concentrate on two particular individuals, Edward Snowden now in Moscow and Rachid Kassim hiding in France, deplorables, indeed too deplorable for words, and "irremediable" who are indirectly linked.

The more familiar of the two is Edward Snowden, former intelligence contractor with the National Security Agency (NSA) who has been in Russia since June 2013. He wants to return to the U.S. and is seeking a presidential pardon from President Barack Obama. He is unlikely to receive it but may be satisfied with the publicity of his activities in the film *Snowden* released in September 2016 directed by the controversial director Oliver Stone.

In previous films Stone has demonstrated he is not renowned for factual accuracy as the absurd theories about JFK showed in his film on the assassinated President. Nor is he acclaimed for his impartiality or his political astuteness. At one point in 2010, he explained that the reason why people were "fixated" on memorializing the Holocaust was because of the "Jewish domination of the media," and Israel's powerful lobby in Washington, D.C. Elsewhere, he expressed sympathetic thoughts about Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez.

It is therefore unsurprising to observe inaccuracies in his film, *Snowden,* regarding Snowden's decision to steal

government documents before he fled to Hawaii and Hong Kong and Russia. Snowden was proud to have stolen thousands, perhaps more than a million, of classified NSA documents in order to reveal the extensive mass surveillance programs by NSA and GCHQ, the British intelligence agency, that intercepted phone calls and internet traffic. Verizon was directed to hand over all its telephone data to NSA on an ongoing daily basis. NSA tapped into nine Internet firms to track online communication.

Snowden leaked sensitive information yet his case was and is controversial because of an inherent conflict. On one side is the argument that U.S. citizens benefitted from his disclosure of government intrusion into privacy. On the other is the need for government not to be troubled by intrusion on and danger to national security.

People may differ on Snowden, traitor or hero. What is important in the present context is that his activities have helped a series of processes that have inadvertently led to helping terrorist activity. This results from developments in advanced technology, the use of apps, and the desire for software programs that could be used online or on mobile devices to prevent leaks. One of the most important of these developments has been the development of Telegram, the instant messaging service, highly encrypted and which can self-destruct, thus making it impossible to recover messages.

The service was founded by two Russians in 2013 and is listed as "very safe," compared to other devices such as WhatsApp. It sends photos or videos to multiple users and is available to most carriers. It currently claims 100 million users delivering 15 billion messages a day.

Unfortunately, one of those users is Rachid Kassim, a 29 year old Frenchman from Roanne, a town near Lyon, born of Algerian parents. He has been prominent in recruiting for ISIS, and has been responsible for orchestrating a number, at least four,

terror atrocities in France. The most recent plot in which was involved was the attempt in September 2016 to destroy Notre Dame in Paris.

Kassim was behind the attempt of three young women, aged 19, 23, and 31 to attack the Cathedral using five gas canisters, three bottles of diesel, and a half smoked cigarette that fortunately did not stay alight, that were in a Peugeot car parked nearby. The young women, who pledged allegiance to ISIS were also charged on September 12, 2016 with plotting to kill public officials.

France, like the rest of the democratic world, has to face the problem of jihadists who use Telegram to prevent intelligence officials detecting their private messages. The terrorists also use You Tube and other outlets to dispense their propaganda. The fundamental problem for law enforcement is that it is difficult, if not impossible, to intercept the chats of users. Infiltrating into extremist chat rooms is extraordinary difficult. Indeed, Telegram is so sure of its encryption that it has offered a large sum of money to anyone who can get through the system.

Kassim has used Telegram to direct people to carry out terror attacks. He is suspected of being behind the murder of the 86 year priest whose throat was slit on July 26, 2016 in his church in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray. He was linked to the July 14, 2016 truck attack massacre of 86 people in Nice. He is close to the killer, Larossi Abballa, who murdered a police couple in Magnanville, outside of Paris, on June 14, 2016. He drew up a hit list of journalists, politicians, and public personalities.

Above all, Kassim has directed hundreds of recruits using encrypted messages. Already. France faces a real problem with a data base with a security list of 20,000 names, of whom 10,500 are suspected likely terrorists linked to Islamic groups, and nearly 30 % are women. France, under a state of

emergency until the end of January 2017, has increased the number police, customs and border guards, justice officials, and army units, and has increased the power of the police to keep suspects under house arrests.

The courts have been helpful. On December 11, 2015, the Conseil d'etat ruled that detaining suspected jihadists without evidence of a crime did not violate their human rights. It also upheld the extension of the state of emergency. However, France has been handicapped by rivalry between the DGSI intelligence service (General Directorate for Internal Security) and the police. And the policy of electronically tagging suspected terrorists has not been implanted with greatest efficiency.

Encryption is a major problem on which the world must combine forces and solve. In this the U.S. must play a major role. The next U.S. President must be less concerned with "deplorables" and more with advancing technology to overcome Islamic terrorists.