

Democrats, Media Step Up Right-Wing Campaign on Alleged Trump-Russia Ties

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Congressional Democrats and the bulk of the corporate media have intensified their anti-Russian campaign against the Trump White House, with renewed demands this weekend for the appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate alleged Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election.

The new stage of the campaign has been fueled by reports that the Trump White House asked FBI officials to make public statements condemning as unfounded allegations of contacts between Trump election campaign officials and Russian intelligence operatives. It has also been bolstered by the support of one congressional Republican, Representative Darrell Issa of California, who said a special prosecutor should be appointed to investigate.

The supposed Russian connection to the Trump campaign—for which no evidence has been presented, only unsupported leaks from anonymous intelligence agency officials—was the main topic of all of the Sunday television interview programs except the adamantly pro-Trump Fox News.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, appearing on the ABC Sunday interview program “This Week with George Stephanopoulos,” said that Attorney General Jeff Sessions should recuse himself from any investigation because of his prominent role in the 2016 Trump campaign.

“Let’s have the investigation and find out the truth,” she said, adding that 100 House Democrats and one Republican had signed a statement in support of legislation to “establish an outside, independent commission to study the personal, political and financial relationship between President Trump and the Russians.”

The ABC program then gave a platform to David Remnick, editor of the *New Yorker* magazine, which published a lengthy cover story on the alleged Russian hacking of the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton campaign. The article, headlined “Trump, Putin and the New Cold War,” is remarkable not only for its artwork—depicting the Kremlin firing a Star Wars-style death ray into the White House—but for a complete absence of any factual evidence, despite 13,000 words devoted to the subject.

Remnick began his remarks on ABC by declaring, “We have 17 intelligence agencies all saying, asserting, that there was serious interference in our presidential election.” He then admitted, “Well, here’s the problem. The problem is that intelligence agencies are not giving us the evidence of this.”

While he acknowledged that that there was good reason to be skeptical because of the lies

told by the intelligence agencies before the Iraq War, Remnick drew the remarkable conclusion that the lack of evidence reinforced the case for a full investigation.

The CBS program “Face the Nation” featured an interview with former CIA Director John Brennan, his first since leaving office. His very first comment was to question the actions of Trump White House officials in asking the FBI and the leaders of the Senate and House intelligence committees to publicly rebut the claims of Trump campaign contacts with Russian intelligence.

Brennan argued that a bipartisan investigation into the alleged Russian hacking was needed. “If it is only one party that is going to be leading this, it is not going to deliver the results that the American people need and deserve,” he said.

Similar themes were taken up on NBC’s “Meet the Press,” which featured an NBC News/ *Wall Street Journal* poll claiming that the majority of the American people favored a congressional investigation into the claims of Russian interference in the election. CNN likewise featured remarks by newly elected Democratic National Committee Chair Thomas Perez, who said, “What we need to be looking at is whether this election was rigged by Donald Trump and his buddy Vladimir Putin.”

The Trump administration lashed out in response to the media attacks with an unprecedented act of political censorship by White House press secretary Sean Spicer, who excluded the *New York Times*, CNN, *Politico* and the website BuzzFeed from an informal press briefing. While Trump frequently barred journalists from events during the 2016 campaign in retaliation for unflattering coverage, this was first time such an action was taken since his inauguration as president.

Trump himself denounced the anti-Russian campaign in a tweet Sunday afternoon, declaring, “Russia talk is FAKE NEWS put out by the Dems, and played up by the media, in order to mask the big election defeat and the illegal leaks!”

He also made attacks on the media the axis of his fascistic speech Friday to the Conservative Political Action Conference, where he repeated his declaration that the media was “the enemy of the people,” adding the open-ended and ominous threat that “we’re going to do something about it.”

There is not the slightest shred of democratic principle in this conflict between two factions of the American ruling elite. The Democratic Party is speaking on behalf of the dominant sections of the military-intelligence apparatus, which reject any deviation from the anti-Russian military buildup launched under the Obama administration. Trump, while speaking vaguely of the value of better relations with Russia, is proposing an even bigger military buildup, directed at Iran and China (and eventually at Russia as well).

The Democratic Party is responding, not only to differences over foreign policy, but to the mounting popular opposition to the new administration and its ultra-right attacks on democratic rights, particularly targeting immigrants. The Democrats seek to hijack any movement that develops against Trump and prevent it from emerging as a challenge to the capitalist ruling elite as a whole.

One longtime spokesman for the Democratic Party “left”—and ardent supporter of Senator Bernie Sanders in the presidential campaign—former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, gave

a glimpse of the real concerns of the US ruling elite Sunday. Speaking on the same ABC News program as Nancy Pelosi, Reich pointed to what he called a “disconnect...between a rather sclerotic Democratic apparatus which is in complete disarray...and a huge uprising at the grassroots, mostly against Trump.”

Reich cited the mounting crisis over jobs and living standards that is fueling deep social anger. “People, for 35 years, have not had a raise,” he said. “The average American is actually economically in a lot of economic desperation, insecure. We have parts of this country that are really desolate in terms of the economic activity. And so, you’ve got a lot of anger out there that nobody, neither the Democrats nor the Republicans, have come up with a way to respond to.”

What concerns the Democrats and their media acolytes, no less than Trump and his fascistic White House aides, is how this vast social and economic discontent can be diverted into channels that will leave the wealth and power of the financial aristocracy undisturbed.

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