

Mother Jones

July + August 2017



THE RUSSIA DOSSIER

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THE RUSSIAN CONNECTION

COLLUSION? MAYBE.

THE TRUMP-RUSSIA SCANDAL is the subject of multiple investigations that may or may not unearth new revelations, but this much is already certain: Donald Trump is guilty.

We don't need additional information about the Russian covert scheme to undermine the 2016 campaign, or about the curious interactions between Team Trump and Russia, or about Trump pressuring and then firing FBI Director James Comey, to reach the judgment that the president of the United States engaged in wrongdoing.

From the start, Trump and his crew have claimed they had nothing to do with the hack-and-leak operation mounted by Russian intelligence to help Trump nab the presidency. They have dismissed the matter as fake news, and they have insisted there is no issue because there has been no proof that the Trump

campaign conspired with Russia. In May, for instance, Trump proclaimed, "Believe me, there's no collusion." Nothing to see; move along.

Explicit collusion may yet be proved by the FBI investigation overseen by special counsel Robert Mueller or by other ongoing probes. But even if it is not, a harsh verdict can be pronounced: Trump actively and enthusiastically aided and abetted Russian President Vladimir Putin's plot against America. This is the scandal. It already exists—in plain sight.

As soon as the news broke a year ago that the Russians had penetrated the Democratic National Committee's computer systems, Trump launched a campaign of denial and distraction. For months, he refused to acknowledge the Kremlin's role. He questioned expert and government findings that pinned the blame on Moscow. He refused to condemn Putin.

ACTIVE ENABLERS? DEFINITELY.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MIKE MCQUADE



TRUMP KNEW THE TRUTH, BUT HE REMAINED ON THE SIDE OF THE ENEMY.

Far from treating these acts of information warfare seriously, he attempted to politicize and delegitimize the evidence. Meanwhile, he and his supporters encouraged more Russian hacking. All told, Trump provided cover for a foreign government's attempt to undermine American democracy. Through a propaganda campaign of his own, he helped Russia get away with it. As James Clapper, the former director of national intelligence, testified to Congress this spring, Trump "helps the Russians by obfuscating who was actually responsible."

On June 15, 2016, the day after the *Washington Post* reported that the DNC had been hacked and that cybersecurity experts had identified two groups linked to the Russian government as the perps, Trump's campaign issued a statement blaming the victim: "We believe it was the DNC that did the 'hacking' as a way to distract from the many issues facing their deeply flawed candidate and failed party

leader." The intent was obvious: to impede somber consideration of the Russian intervention, to have voters and reporters see it as just another silly political hullabaloo.

In the following weeks, Trump continued to claim the Russia story was fiction. After WikiLeaks dumped nearly 20,000 DNC emails—a move that nearly blew up the Democratic convention—Trump tweeted, "The new joke in town is that Russia leaked the disastrous DNC e-mails, which should never have been written (stupid), because Putin likes me." Two days later, he proclaimed at a news conference, "Russia, if you're listening, I hope you're able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing. I think you will probably be rewarded mightily by our press." Trump supporters including Rep. Mike Pompeo, who would become Trump's CIA director, and Roger Stone, the longtime political dirty trickster, cheered on WikiLeaks.

By midsummer, numerous

cyber experts had bolstered the conclusion that Russia was behind the hacks. And President Barack Obama echoed those findings. So anyone paying attention to the facts—say, a presidential candidate and his advisers—would have been aware of this fundamental point. Indeed, in August, during his first intelligence briefing as the Republican presidential nominee, Trump was reportedly told that there were direct links between the hacks and the Russian government.

Still, he didn't change his tune. During a September 8 interview with RT, the Kremlin-controlled broadcaster that has been accused of disseminating fake news and propaganda, Trump discounted the Russian connection: "I think maybe the Democrats are putting that out. Who knows, but I think it's pretty unlikely." (Yes, he did this on RT.) He repeated a similar line at the first presidential debate at the end of that month, with his famous reference to how the DNC hacker "could be somebody sitting on their bed that weighs 400 pounds, okay?"

Private experts and US intelligence had already determined that Russia had pulled off this caper. Trump had been told this. Yet he continued to deny Russia's culpability, actively protecting Moscow.

Many Republicans followed his lead. Trump's stance—treating a widely shared conclusion as controversial speculation—essentially foreclosed a vigorous and bipartisan response to the Moscow intervention. It is hard to imagine how this did not embolden Russian intelligence and reinforce Putin's belief that he had backed the right horse.

On October 7, the Department of Homeland Security and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence blew the whistle on Moscow, issu-

ing a statement that the DNC hack and related cyberattacks had been authorized by "Russia's senior-most officials." Yet Trump remained on the side of the enemy. That same day, the now notorious grab-them-by-the-pussy video surfaced—and less than an hour after that story broke, WikiLeaks began releasing thousands of stolen emails from John Podesta, the Clinton campaign's chairman. Trump's response, at the second presidential debate: "I notice, anytime anything wrong happens, they like to say 'the Russians.' Well, [Hillary Clinton] doesn't know if it's the Russians doing the hacking. Maybe there is no hacking." The next day at a campaign rally, Trump, citing some of the Podesta emails, exclaimed, "I love WikiLeaks!"

What could be better for Putin? The US government had called him out, yet the GOP presidential candidate was discrediting this conclusion. Trump made it tougher for Obama and the White House to denounce Putin publicly—to do so, they feared, would give Trump cause to argue they were trying to rig the election against him.

At the final debate, Clinton accurately summed up Trump's position: "It's pretty clear you won't admit that the Russians have engaged in cyberattacks against the United States of America, that you encouraged espionage against our people." Trump replied, "Our country has no idea" who pulled off the hacks.

After the election, he maintained this stance. "It's time for the country to move on," he said in December. Two weeks later, after the US intelligence establishment released a report concluding Putin had implemented this covert op to install Trump in the White House, the president-elect compared the intelligence community to



HACKER, BANKER, SOLDIER, SPY

Who's who in the expanding Trump-Russia scandal

Nazi Germany. Though he did at one point concede Russia was the culprit, Trump continued calling the Russia story a hoax whipped up by Democrats and eventually reverted to form, asserting that the hacks might have been waged by China or others. And he still showed no signs of confronting Putin. At the Russian leader's request, he jovially hosted the Russian foreign minister and ambassador in the Oval Office—and then disclosed top-secret information to them. Moreover, he did this the day after brazenly ousting Comey, who was overseeing the bureau's probe of Moscow's meddling and links between Trump associates and Russia.

It's been common for political observers to say the Trump-Russia controversy has generated a great deal of smoke, but the amount of fire is yet to be determined. It's true that the various links tying Trump and his associates to Russia—which we explore in the following pages—have yet to be fully explained. Many questions remain: Was there any specific coordination? If not, did the Trump camp privately signal to Moscow that Russia would get a better deal if Trump were elected? That alone would have provided encouragement for Putin to attack.

This country needs a thorough and public investigation to sort out how the Russian operation worked, how US intelligence and the Obama administration responded, and how Trump and his associates interacted with Russia and WikiLeaks. But whatever happened out of public view, the existing record is already conclusively shameful. Trump and his crew were active enablers of Putin's operation to subvert an American election. That is fire, not smoke. That is scandal enough. —David Corn

BFFS 4EV?

As US-Russia relations frayed during the Obama era, Donald Trump publicly pursued a romance with Vladimir Putin. Some of the ups and downs of Trump's attempts to praise, woo, and play it cool with his would-be "new best friend":

JUNE 2012:

After President Barack Obama meets with Putin, Trump tweets,

"PUTIN HAS NO RESPECT FOR OUR PRESIDENT—REALLY BAD BODY LANGUAGE."

JUNE 2013:

"DO YOU THINK PUTIN WILL BE GOING TO THE MISS UNIVERSE PAGEANT IN NOVEMBER IN MOSCOW—IF SO, WILL HE BECOME MY NEW BEST FRIEND?"

After tweeting this, Trump reports that "Putin even sent me a present, a beautiful present."

DONALD TRUMP

Despite his claims to the contrary, the president's ties to Russia are long, deep, and, above all, mysterious. In the 1980s, before the Soviet bloc crumbled, Trump was already trying to get a foothold behind the Iron Curtain. Since then, he has on at least three occasions announced plans to build a Trump Tower in Moscow in partnership with various power players and oligarchs. Before his campaign came under investigation by the FBI and assorted congressional committees, the mogul happily touted his Russian dealings: "I've done a lot of business with the Russians," he once bragged to David Letterman.

Trump's relationship with Russia, and his refusal to condemn the Kremlin as evidence of its election interference became clear, raised questions during his campaign. Not only did Trump praise Vladimir Putin, but his campaign pushed to remove a plank from the Republican Party platform that called for arming Ukraine in its fight against Russian forces.

He also surrounded himself with aides and advisers with curious Russian connections, including lobbyist Paul Manafort and little-known consultant Carter Page, who traveled to Moscow at the height of the presidential campaign to deliver a speech critical of US foreign policy. That same month, a former British spy and Russia expert named Christopher Steele, who had been hired by a US research firm to look into Trump's Russia ties, grew so worried by what he was finding that he provided his intelligence reports to the FBI. *Mother Jones* was the

first outlet to report on the existence of the memos and the spy's effort to get them into the hands of American authorities. Steele's dossier contained a series of hair-raising—though as yet unverified—claims: Russia had been cultivating Trump for years, it possessed blackmailworthy material on Trump of a sexual nature, and the Trump campaign may have colluded with the Kremlin as it mounted a hacking operation to tarnish Trump's opponent.

The president has called the Russia scandal a "hoax" drummed up by the "fake news media," and said, "Russia has never tried to use leverage over me." But he has grown increasingly enraged by the various investigations swirling around him and his associates, denouncing them as a "witch hunt." At one point, his White House, with the help of House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes, staged a clumsy effort to redirect the controversy to Obama administration surveillance. As the scandal snowballed, Trump abruptly fired James Comey, the FBI director overseeing the bureau's investigation into ties between Trump and Russia. But far from disappearing, the scandal is poised to define Trump's presidency. It could even end it.

VLADIMIR PUTIN

Despite a once-hopeful move toward democracy, Russia can't seem to shake its Soviet legacy. A major reason is the former KGB spy and USSR functionary who has led modern Russia for most of its 26-year existence. Putin is rumored to be one of the richest men—if not *the* richest man—in the world.

This package was reported by Ashley Dejean, Hannah Levintova, Bryan Schatz, and AJ Vicens. It was sent to press on May 19.

Not bad for a guy who has spent his entire career in government service. After graduating from law school in 1975, he entered the KGB and ascended rapidly, eventually becoming the head of the FSB, the KGB's successor organization, in 1998. Putin's rise in politics was even more rapid: In 1999, he was named deputy prime minister and then acting prime minister by President Boris Yeltsin; months later, when Yeltsin resigned, he became acting president. He has led the country ever since.

Many Russia experts believe Putin's main goal is to restore Russia's place in the world as a major power by challenging the dominance of Western democratic values. This goal fueled the Kremlin's 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, Russia's opposition to Eastern European countries joining NATO or the European Union, and more recently a campaign by the Kremlin to undermine US and European elections with cyberattacks. Within Russia, Putin has also stoked the image of the West as an enemy, spreading fake news like his claim that Hillary Clinton instigated mass protests in Moscow in 2011 following Putin's reelection as president.

Putin has long had an admirer in Trump. In a 2007 TV interview, Trump said Putin was "doing a great job" in "rebuilding Russia." In his 2011 book, *Time to Get Tough*, Trump lauded Putin's "grand vision" for Russia and its surrounding countries. Trump's pronounced admiration has since been reciprocated, if only tepidly: During the 2016 campaign, Putin called Trump "a colorful and talented man" and "bright," and he later applauded the future president for "reaching the hearts of the voters" and "representing the common people."

THE FAMILY



IVANKA TRUMP

The "first daughter" is so tight with Dasha Zhukova, the wife of Russian oligarch and Putin ally Roman Abramovich, that she reportedly invited Zhukova to attend her father's inauguration. Ivanka has also helped her father pursue business deals in the former Soviet bloc. In 2006, Donald Trump asked formerly "Mafia-linked" businessman Felix Sater to "squire" Ivanka and her older brother, Don Jr., around Moscow, according to the *Washington Post*. And Ivanka was deeply involved with a failed effort to build a Trump Hotel in Azerbaijan, where the Trumps had joined forces with a family whom a government minister had accused of corruption and who had possible ties to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.



DONALD TRUMP JR.

"I have nothing to do with Russia," President Trump has declared. "No deals. No loans." That's not quite true. Just ask his oldest son, who serves as the executive vice president of the Trump Organization. "Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross section of a lot of our

assets," Don Jr. told investors in 2008. "We see a lot of money pouring in from Russia." Weeks before the election, Trump's son was reportedly paid \$50,000 to address a pro-Russian group in Paris whose leader nominated Putin for the Nobel Peace Prize in December.



ERIC TRUMP

In a May interview with Boston radio station WBUR, golf journalist James Dodson recalled asking Trump's second-oldest son a few years ago about who was funding his father's courses. "We don't rely on American banks," he replied, according to Dodson. "We have all the funding we need out of Russia." Eric, who manages the Trump Organization with his older brother, called Dodson's account "completely fabricated."



JARED KUSHNER

The president's son-in-law reportedly failed to disclose "dozens of contacts with foreign leaders or officials in recent months" on his application for security clearance, including meetings with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak and the head of Vnesheconombank, a Russian state-owned bank. The 36-year-old real estate (continued on page 10)

THE KREMLIN'S GREMLINS

"WE NEVER INTERFERE in the political life and the political processes of other countries," Vladimir Putin said with a straight face in May. Yet for more than a decade, the Russian leader has sought to sway elections and destabilize democratic nations through a variety of means, from cyberattacks to military invasion. By sowing chaos, confusion, and discontent abroad, Putin hopes to shore up Russia's standing and distract from economic and political problems at home. Here's how his ambitions have played out around the world.

THE BALTICS:

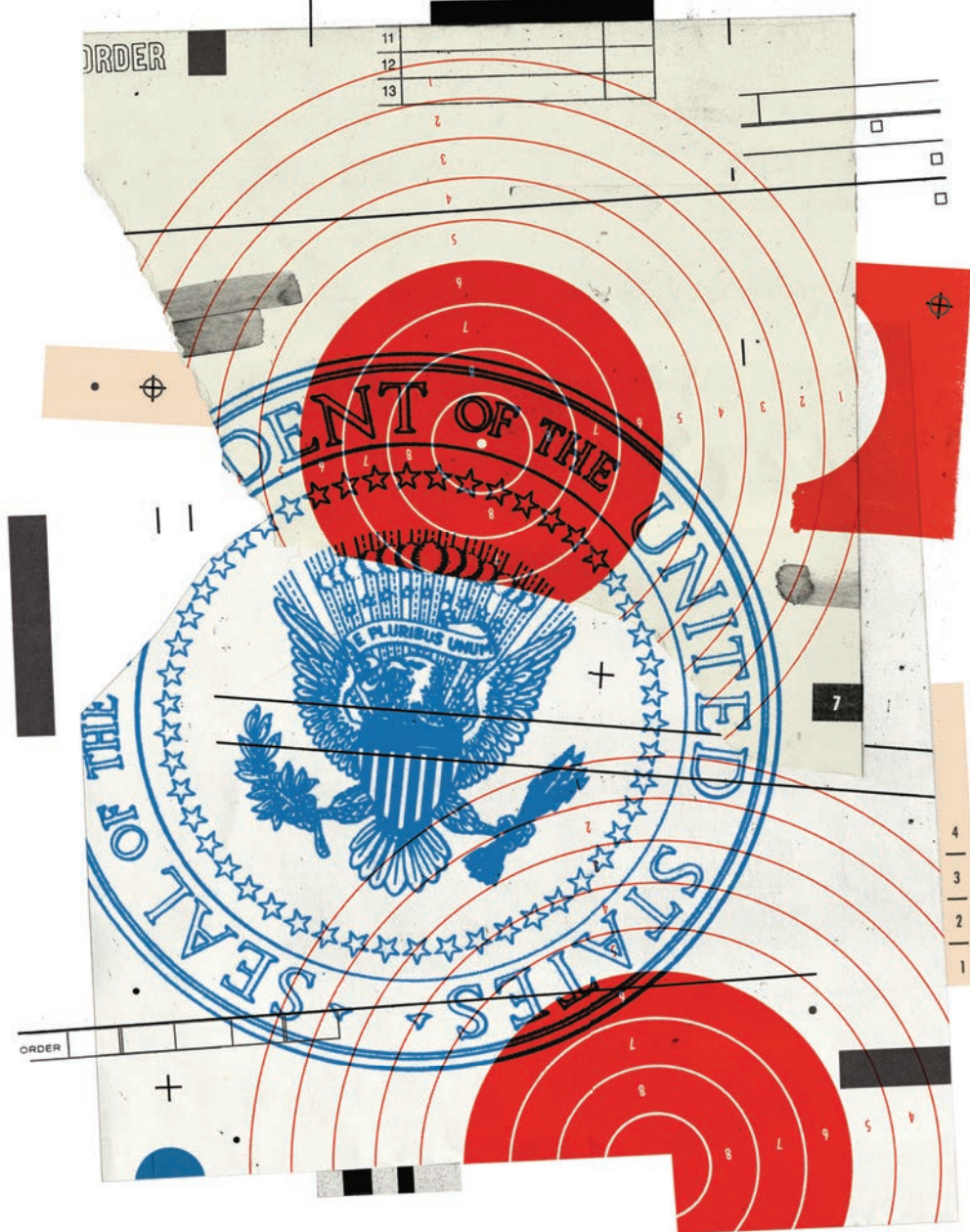
The Kremlin has long tried to exert remote control over these former Soviet states, most notably Estonia. When Estonia moved a Russian World War II memorial in 2007, its government and financial institutions were hit with a distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack and the country's internet access was temporarily shut off. The first-of-its-kind cyberattack was dubbed "Web War One."

UKRAINE:

Just before Ukraine's 2014 presidential election, a pro-Russian hacking group took down the country's election commission—and its backup system. They changed the results and the media briefly reported the wrong winner, though Russia's preferred candidate eventually lost. Moscow then allegedly unleashed a massive DDoS attack to disrupt Ukraine's internet, wiping out part of the country's power grid. After that, it helped pro-Russia rebels take over Crimea, bringing the area under Moscow's control. Russia has armed pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine, fueling a bloody civil war that continues today.

GEORGIA:

In 2008, Georgia sent in troops to quell a pro-Moscow separatist movement in South Ossetia. Russia responded with a land, air, and online invasion. A year later, on the anniversary of



the assault, Russia reportedly shut down Twitter and disrupted Facebook in Georgia. This March, Putin incorporated South Ossetia's separatist army into the Russian military's command structure.

NETHERLANDS: A Dutch Safety Board investigation into the Malaysia Airlines plane shot down over eastern Ukraine in July 2014 concluded that a Russian-made missile fired from pro-Russian rebel-held territory was responsible. In October 2015, security experts accused the Russian-backed hackers of attempting to break into Dutch government com-

puters to steal the report before it was released.

GERMANY: In May 2015, German intelligence accused a group "steered by the Russian state" of penetrating parliamentary computers to try to steal information about politicians and the inner workings of the German government. Russia is also believed to have been behind misinformation campaigns and cyberattacks ahead of Germany's federal elections in September 2017.

FRANCE: In 2015, Russian hackers were suspected of posing as the ISIS "Cyber Ca-

liphate" and taking a French TV channel off the air for 18 hours. The reason for the attack was unclear, though it may have been a test run for future hacks on media outlets. (The same hacking group, Fancy Bear, is also suspected of perpetrating the attacks on the Democratic National Committee and others on several Western governments.) Russia has yet to be conclusively linked to the hack on Emmanuel Macron that occurred one day before he won the French presidential election in May. Voters, a French journalist told the *New York Times*, were prepared for Russian meddling and "didn't want to get into that game."

MARCH 2014:

"I BELIEVE PUTIN WILL CONTINUE TO RE-BUILD THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE. HE HAS ZERO RESPECT FOR OBAMA OR THE U.S.!"

Trump tweets this just after Russia annexes Crimea from Ukraine.

MAY 2014:

"I WAS IN MOSCOW RECENTLY AND I SPOKE, INDIRECTLY AND DIRECTLY, WITH PRESIDENT PUTIN, WHO COULD NOT HAVE BEEN NICER, AND WE HAD A TREMENDOUS SUCCESS."

JULY 2015:

Trump says he and Putin would

"GET ALONG VERY WELL... I JUST THINK SO. PEOPLE SAY, 'WHAT DO YOU MEAN?' I THINK I WOULD GET ALONG WELL WITH HIM."

HACKS, LEAKS, AND TWEETS



The long shadow of the attack on the 2016 election
By Hannah Levintova

APRIL–JUNE 2016

April: The Democratic National Committee contacts the FBI about suspicious computer activity and hires cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike, which ties the hacking to Russian intelligence.

June 15: Guccifer 2.0, a persona later connected to the Russians, takes credit for the DNC hack and begins posting documents.

JULY

July 5: FBI Director James Comey announces the bureau found no evidence to support criminal charges against Hillary Clinton for her use of a private email server as secretary of state. But he adds that Clinton and her staff were “extremely careless” in their handling of classified information. Donald Trump tweets, “No charges. Wow! #RiggedSystem.”

July 22: Three days before the Democratic convention, WikiLeaks publishes nearly 20,000 hacked DNC emails. Some indicate that party officials favored Clinton over Bernie Sanders, including Debbie Wasserman Schultz, who resigns as party chair. Spread in part by Twitter bots, the emails further pit Clinton and Sanders supporters against each other.

July 24: Trump’s future CIA director, Rep. Mike Pompeo, tweets, “Need further proof that the fix was in from Pres. Obama on down? BUSTED: 19,252 Emails from DNC Leaked by WikiLeaks.”

July 27: Trump calls for Russia to hack Clinton’s email: “I think you will probably be rewarded mightily by our press.”

Late July: The FBI begins to investigate contacts between the Trump campaign and Russia.

AUGUST–SEPTEMBER

Aug 8: Longtime Trump confidant and political dirty trickster Roger Stone boasts to a GOP group in Florida about WikiLeaks’ founder: “I actually have communicated with Julian Assange... There’s no telling what the October surprise may be.”



#CrookedHillary
#WikiLeaks
#LockHerUp

Aug 21: Stone tweets about Clinton campaign CEO John Podesta: “Trust me, it will soon be the Podesta’s time in the barrel. #CrookedHillary.”

Aug 27: After being briefed on classified information, Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid sends a letter to Comey urging an investigation: “The prospect of individuals tied to Trump, WikiLeaks and the Russian government coordinating to influence our election raises concerns of the utmost gravity.”

Sept 9: Guccifer 2.0 communicates online with Stone about voter turnout and Democratic strategy.

Sept 15: Guccifer 2.0 posts stolen Democratic Party documents strategizing about battleground states.

Sept 26: In the first presidential debate, Trump suggests the DNC hack could be the work of China or “somebody sitting on their bed that weighs 400 pounds.”

OCTOBER–NOVEMBER

Oct 1: Stone tweets, “Wednesday @HillaryClinton is done. #WikiLeaks.”

Oct 3: Stone tweets, “I have total confidence that @wikileaks and my hero Julian Assange will educate the American people soon #LockHerUp.”

Oct 7: US intelligence agencies announce they are “confident” the Russian government aimed to interfere in the election and collaborated in the DNC leaks. Later in the day, a 2005 Access Hollywood video emerges in which Trump brags about sexually assaulting women. Within an hour, WikiLeaks begins releasing several thousand emails stolen from Podesta.

Oct 10: “I love WikiLeaks!” Trump declares at a campaign rally.

Oct 11: The Obama White House announces it is considering retaliation against Russia for cyberattacks.

Oct 12: The *Wall Street Journal* reports the FBI suspects Russian intelligence hacked Podesta’s emails. Stone tells a Miami TV station that he has “back-channel communications” with Assange.

Oct 19: During the final debate, Clinton says Trump would be Putin’s “puppet” if elected and rebukes his call to hack her email. “You encouraged espionage against our people.”

Oct 28: Comey notifies Congress that the FBI is reopening the Clinton matter, after a criminal probe into disgraced Rep. Anthony Weiner reveals his laptop contains emails between his wife, Huma Abedin, and Clinton, her boss.

Oct 31: At a campaign rally, Trump says, “It took guts for Director Comey to make the move that he made...where they’re trying to protect her from criminal prosecution... What he did was the right thing.”

Nov 8: Trump is elected president.

Nov 15: National Security Agency Director Michael Rogers remarks about Russia and WikiLeaks, “This was a conscious effort by a nation-state to attempt to achieve a specific effect.”

JANUARY 2017

Jan 4: Trump tweets, “Julian Assange said ‘a 14 year old could have hacked Podesta’—why was DNC so careless? Also said Russians did not give him the info!”

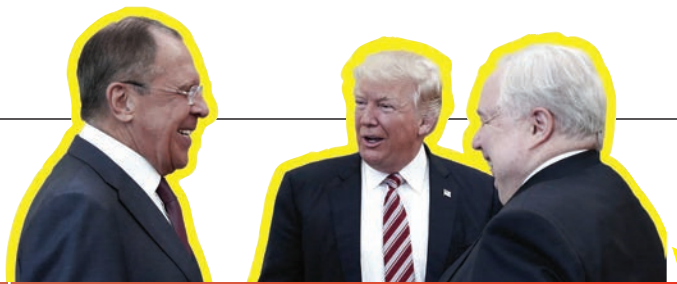
Jan 6: The CIA, the FBI, and the NSA concur Russia tried to help Trump win via hacking operations involving Guccifer 2.0, DC Leaks, and WikiLeaks.

Jan 10: At a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing, Comey declines to say whether the FBI is investigating Trump campaign ties to Russia. He notes that Russian hackers also attacked the Republican National Committee but that none of that material was released.

Jan 11: Trump acknowledges the Russians hacked the DNC: “I think it was Russia.”

Jan 14: Rep. John Lewis says he won’t attend Trump’s inauguration: “I think the Russians participated in helping this man get elected. And they helped destroy the candidacy of Hillary Clinton.”





FEBRUARY–APRIL

MAY

Jan 15: Incoming White House chief of staff Reince Priebus says Trump has confidence in the FBI director: “We have had a great relationship with him over the last several weeks. He’s extremely competent.”

Jan 20: Trump is sworn in as president.

Jan 22: At a White House event, Trump greets Comey: “Oh, there’s Jim. He’s become more famous than me.”

Jan 24: The FBI interviews national security adviser Michael Flynn about his contacts with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak.

Jan 26: Acting Attorney General Sally Yates warns the Trump White House that Flynn lied about his conversations with Kislyak and is vulnerable to blackmail by the Kremlin.

Jan 27: Trump and Comey have a one-on-one dinner at the White House, where, it is later reported, Trump asks Comey to swear his political loyalty. Comey declines.

Jan 30: Trump fires Yates after she refuses on constitutional grounds to defend his travel ban targeting seven majority-Muslim countries.

Feb 13: After the *Washington Post* reveals Flynn lied about his conversations with Kislyak, Flynn resigns.

Feb 19: Following a meeting with Comey, the Senate Intelligence Committee sends letters to more than a dozen agencies, groups, and individuals asking them to preserve all communications related to Russia’s 2016 election interference.

March 2: In the wake of revelations that Attorney General Jeff Sessions failed during his confirmation hearings to disclose two conversations with Kislyak, Sessions announces, “I have now decided to recuse myself from any existing or future investigations of any matter relating in any way to the campaigns for president of the United States.”

March 4: Based on no evidence, Trump tweets, “[Terrible! Just found out that Obama had my ‘wires tapped’ in Trump Tower just before the victory. Nothing found. This is McCarthyism!](#)”

March 7: In the wake of intense media coverage of Trump’s wiretapping claim, WikiLeaks releases

more than 8,000 CIA files, code-named “Vault 7.”

March 8: Former NSA Director Michael Hayden says, “I’m now pretty close to the position that WikiLeaks is acting as...an agent of the Russian Federation.”

March 20: During a public hearing held by the House Intelligence Committee, Comey confirms the FBI is investigating possible “coordination” between the Trump campaign and Russia. He debunks Trump’s claims of surveillance by Obama: “I have no information that supports those tweets.”

March 27: “[Trump Russia story is a hoax,](#)” Trump tweets.

April 12: Asked if it’s “too late” for him to request Comey’s resignation, Trump tells Fox Business, “No, it’s not too late, but you know, I have confidence in him. We’ll see what happens. You know, it’s going to be interesting.”

April 30: Trump again casts doubts on the election attack, telling CBS News’ John Dickerson, “Could’ve been China. Could’ve been a lot of different groups.”

May 2: Trump tweets Comey is “[the best thing that ever happened to Hillary Clinton](#)” and the “[Trump/Russia story was an excuse used by the Democrats as justification for losing the election.](#)”

May 3: Comey tells the Senate Judiciary Committee, “It makes me mildly nauseous to think that we may have had some impact on the election,” but says he reopened the Clinton probe because Abedin had forwarded “hundreds and thousands of emails, some of which contain classified information.”

First week of May: Comey seeks more resources for the Trump-Russia investigation.

May 8: Trump tweets, “[The Russia-Trump collusion story is a total hoax, when will this taxpayer funded charade end?](#)” Former National Intelligence Director James Clapper tells Congress that by sowing doubts, Trump “helps the Russians” damage the US political system.

May 9: The FBI corrects Comey’s testimony: Only “a small number” of Abedin emails were forwarded, few contained classified information, and none were new. The same day, Trump fires Comey via a letter delivered to FBI headquarters. Comey, in Los Angeles, learns of the news via a TV screen and initially thinks it’s a prank. Trump’s letter says he was prompted by Sessions and Deputy Attorney General

Rod Rosenstein, who wrote a three-page memo critical of Comey’s handling of the Clinton probe. Trump’s letter also claims Comey personally absolved him on three separate occasions.

May 10: Trump unleashes a tweet-storm, including, “[Comey lost the confidence of almost everyone in Washington, Republican and Democrat alike. When things calm down, they will be thanking me!](#)”

Meanwhile, at Putin’s request, Trump greets Kislyak and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in the Oval Office, where a Russian state-sponsored photographer is the only media allowed in. Trump tells them Comey was “a real nut job” and that firing him took “great pressure” off Trump with regard to Russia.

May 11: Acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe testifies that, contra White House statements, the Russia probe is “highly significant” and “Comey enjoyed broad support within the FBI and still does to this day.” Trump tells NBC’s Lester Holt a new version of why he fired Comey: “I decided to just do it. I said to myself, I said, ‘You know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made-up story.’”

May 12: Trump tweets, “[James Comey better hope that there are no ‘tapes’ of our conversations before he starts leaking to the press!](#)”

May 15: The *Post* reports that Trump disclosed highly classified intelligence on ISIS to Lavrov and Kislyak during their Oval Office meeting. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker says the White House is “in a downward spiral” and “has got to do something soon to bring itself under control and in order.”

May 16: The *Times* reports that Comey kept detailed memos on his interactions with Trump—including when Trump pressured him at an Oval Office meeting in February to shut down the FBI investigation into Flynn. “I hope you can let this go,” Trump told Comey.

May 17: Amid rising turmoil on Capitol Hill, including talk of possible impeachment of Trump for obstruction of justice, the Senate Intelligence Committee seeks Comey’s memos and invites him to testify. Rosenstein appoints former FBI Director Robert Mueller to serve as a special counsel overseeing the continuing FBI investigation.



DEBRIEF: CIA
ON KOMPROMAT

Steven Hall, who retired in 2015 after a decorated career at the CIA, ran the agency's Russia operations.

MOTHER JONES: If you were involved in the Trump-Russia investigation, who or what would you hone in on?

STEVEN HALL: Mike Flynn, no doubt. It's fun to think about what I would do if I was a Russian intelligence officer in charge of running these various operations. Not just the influence operation, which it's quite clear now was pretty successful in increasing the likelihood that Donald Trump would be elected. But if I was the SVR [Russian foreign intelligence] guy who was told, "Okay, your job is to try to find whether there are members of the campaign who would be willing to play ball with us," No. 1 on my list would be Flynn. First of all, he's a former chief of the DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency]. He's an intelligence officer, so he understands how discreet and clandestine you need to be if you're going to cooperate on that level. And then, there's the future: He's probably going to land a pretty good job, assuming Trump wins. So it's a win-win-win in terms of targeting Flynn. Furthermore, he's come to Moscow. He's accepted money from Russian companies, and he's tried to conceal that. So on paper, he's a really good-looking candidate for a spy.

MJ: Is there any parallel to this moment that you saw in your 30-plus year career with the CIA?

SH: The short answer is no. There have certainly been big spy cases in the past—Aldrich Ames, Robert Hanssen. But I can't think

of one that would be as senior a guy as somebody like the national security adviser, or even more unprecedented—if it turns out that the Trump camp had the go-ahead from the big dog to talk to the Russians prior to the election.

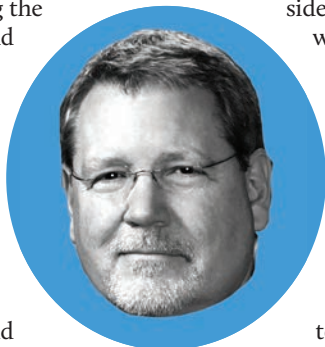
MJ: How likely is it that the Kremlin has collected *kompromat* on Trump?

SH: I can absolutely tell you that the FSB [Russia's Federal Security Service] are rigged up to collect as much compromising information against any target they consider to be valuable. So when Trump was there in Russia, would they have collected against him? I think the answer is yes. I think they would have seen Trump for what he was at the time, which to the Russian lens would have just been an American oligarch—a rich guy with considerable power who you might need something on at some point...He's a good guy to have at your beck and call.

If there was compromising material that had a shot at actually making Trump behave the way the Russians wanted him to, I would imagine it would be something financial—illegal, dirty dealings, or something with legal import.

MJ: Do you think Congress is able to investigate the Trump-Russia allegations effectively?

SH: I don't think so, given where Congress is right now in terms of partisanship. There might have been a time historically—15, 20 years ago. Short of having an independent investigator or some other mechanism that can get rid of some of the partisanship, I just don't think it's going to happen.



(continued from page 6)

scion has volunteered to be interviewed about these contacts by the Senate Intelligence Committee. Kushner advocated Trump's firing of FBI Director James Comey in May, amid growing media scrutiny on how the Kushner family was leveraging the presidency to do business in China and elsewhere.

CABINET PLAYERS



JEFF SESSIONS

"I did not have communications with the Russians," the former Republican senator from Alabama said during his confirmation hearings in January. That statement quickly came back to haunt the new attorney general, after the *Washington Post* reported that Sessions had met at least twice with Ambassador Kislyak during the presidential campaign—including the day after then-Director of National Intelligence James Clapper suggested publicly that Russia was behind the Democratic National Committee hack. Sessions said he was recusing himself from any investigations of Russian election meddling, but he later played a key role in firing the senior Justice Department official overseeing the probe—Comey.



WILBUR ROSS

In 2014, the billionaire (and "king of bankruptcy") led a group of investors in a takeover of the Bank of Cyprus, an ailing financial institution with deep ties to Russia. Other top investors included oligarch Viktor Vekselberg and former KGB official Vladimir Strzhalkovsky. During Ross' confirmation process for commerce secretary, Senate Democrats asked him for more details about the bank, including any loans made to Trump or his company. The Trump White House blocked the release of that information. But this probably isn't the last we've heard about the bank: US Treasury officials are probing payments routed to lobbyist (and former Trump campaign chairman) Paul Manafort through Cyprus—a hotbed of illicit Russian cash. In March, the Associated Press reported that \$1 million was directed to a Manafort-linked company in 2009 via the Bank of Cyprus.

REX TILLERSON

The secretary of state and former Exxon Mobil CEO, who was once deeply involved in the company's operations in Russia, forged deep bonds with oligarchs and Kremlin officials. In 2013, Putin awarded him the Russian Order of Friendship.



MY DINNER WITH VLAD

In December 2015, the Kremlin-backed cable channel RT celebrated its 10th anniversary with a conference and dinner in Moscow. Little noticed at the time, Vladimir Putin's guests that night included future Trump national security adviser Michael Flynn and future Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein—an odd couple who reflected the Russian president's efforts to court fringe figures on both the right and the left. Stein said the soiree was “a great opportunity to lay out some of my foreign policy proposals and get Russian reactions to them.” Flynn, who commanded a \$45,000 fee to speak at the event, said he didn't ask to be seated next to Putin. “I found it a great learning opportunity,” he told the *Washington Post*.

ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN



MICHAEL FLYNN

The former Defense Intelligence Agency chief memorably led Republican National Convention attendees in chants of “lock her up.” Now Flynn—ousted less than a month into his job as Trump's national security adviser—is facing legal jeopardy of his own. According to members of the House Oversight Committee, the retired lieutenant general may have broken the law

by failing to disclose payments from Russian and Turkish interests, including for a Moscow speech he gave at an event celebrating RT, the Kremlin-backed broadcaster, where he was seated next to Putin. Barack Obama personally warned Trump about hiring Flynn, whom Obama had fired from his DIA post. In January, acting Attorney General Sally Yates urgently told the Trump administration that Flynn had lied about his contacts with Ambassador Kislyak and could be vulnerable to Russian blackmail. When that news emerged in the *Post* three weeks later, Trump fired Flynn and blamed the media, calling Flynn a “wonderful man” who had been treated “very unfairly.” Flynn has offered to testify if offered immunity. In May, the Senate Intelligence

Committee subpoenaed records from him and his business associates.



PAUL MANAFORT

A lobbyist out of central casting, Manafort has repped some of the world's shadiest autocrats and dictators, once flying to Angola in the '80s amid the country's bloody civil war to pitch warlord Jonas Savimbi. (In hacked text messages made public in February, Manafort's daughter Andrea allegedly said her father had “no moral or legal compass” and described her family's wealth as “blood money.”)

Brought on to the Trump campaign at the urging of his former business partner Roger Stone, Manafort helped to guide it through the Republican convention. Manafort was ousted in August, as details emerged about his work for deposed Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, a Putin ally, which allegedly involved \$12.7 million in secret cash

payments earmarked for Manafort. Scrutiny of Manafort, who is reportedly under investigation by the FBI and the Treasury Department, has expanded to include his business dealings with Oleg Deripaska, the Russian aluminum magnate and Putin ally who was denied a visa to the United States because of alleged ties to organized crime.

**ROGER STONE**

The 64-year-old, who proudly sports a tattoo of Richard Nixon across his back, has made a career of political subterfuge. He cut his teeth at 19 as a Nixon dirty trickster, once hiring a GOP operative to infiltrate George McGovern's campaign. He later co-founded the lobbying firm of Black, Manafort, Stone & Atwater in the early 1980s. He has advised Trump for decades, lobbying on behalf of Trump's casino interests and serving as campaign manager of the real estate mogul's short-lived presidential campaign in 2000. During the 2016 campaign, Stone seemed to possess uncanny knowledge of what WikiLeaks had in store for Hillary Clinton. On October 1, he tweeted, "Wednesday @HillaryClinton is done. #Wikileaks." Less than a week later, WikiLeaks began publishing the emails of Clinton campaign chair John Podesta. Stone claimed he was in touch with WikiLeaks' founder, Julian Assange, and that he exchanged direct messages with Guccifer 2.0—the handle for the alleged Russian hacker(s) who posted the stolen DNC emails. Reportedly under investigation by the FBI, Stone has strenuously denied any collusion with Russians and has volunteered to testify before Congress. But anything he says should be taken with a grain of salt—his mantra, after all, is: "Admit nothing, deny everything, launch counterattack."

**MICHAEL COHEN**

In the dossier produced by the ex-British spy Steele, Trump's pugnacious personal lawyer surfaced as an alleged liaison to Russian officials—a charge he strongly denies. He has long-standing business and family ties to Ukraine. In January, he hand-delivered a peace plan for Ukraine and Russia to then-national security adviser Flynn, according to the *New York Times*. The effort also involved Trump's business associate Sater and Andrii V. Artemenko, a Ukrainian lawmaker.

J.D. GORDON

The former Navy officer and Pentagon spokesman, who advised the Trump campaign on national security policy, has reportedly acknowledged advocating a controversial platform change at the Republican National Convention: removing language calling for the provision of "lethal defensive weapons" to Ukraine to protect the country from Russian aggression. Gordon was also one of several Trump campaign aides who met with Ambassador Kislyak during the Republican convention.

RICK GATES

As Manafort's right-hand man, Gates helped him lobby on behalf of Putin-allied Ukrainian President Yanukovich and was involved in at least two multimillion-dollar deals with Russian oligarchs—one with Deripaska and another with Ukrainian natural-gas titan Dmitry

**DEBRIEF: EX-KGB****PUTIN'S LONG GAME**

*Jack Barsky is a former KGB officer who spent a decade spying in the United States before defecting in 1988. His 2017 memoir, **Deep Undercover: My Secret Life and Tangled Allegiances as a KGB Spy in America**, details his path from a Soviet intelligence operative to a proud US citizen.*

MOTHER JONES: What type of intelligence interest would have been aroused by Donald Trump's 2013 trip to Moscow? Is it likely he was surveilled?

JACK BARSKY: Absolutely. In today's Russia—if you go over there and talk business with senior businessmen, then you've had some contact with Russian intelligence without knowing it.

MJ: Why was Russia so brazen in interfering in the US election?

JB: It wasn't so much about getting Trump elected. It was about creating disorder, stirring up problems, destabilizing to the extent you can. Even prior to the internet, the KGB was famous for planting false news and somehow getting information circulated in the Western world that was entirely phony. They are taking advantage of the "weaknesses" of an open society. It's actually a strength.

But from the point of view of a tightly controlled regime, our openness, the ability to plant all kinds of information with all kinds of people because we don't have a tightly, centrally controlled media—that is a weakness.

They absolutely succeeded to some degree. And we are helping with this success. That's what bothers me. We took the bait, the media and the politicians. We are wallowing in this internal bickering. The longer this goes on, the more folks back in Moscow will rub their hands and say, "Hey, this is going pretty well."

MJ: What's Russia's end-game?

JB: Reestablishing the Russian empire. It doesn't necessarily mean conquering Europe and being super-aggressive like Hitler was, but establishing themselves again as a power to be reckoned with in the world. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia lost significant influence and power. And Putin wants to restore this. That's historically something that's part of the Russian national character. And obviously, any kind of intelligence efforts will try to support that end goal.

DECEMBER
2015:

On *Morning Joe*, Trump dismisses Putin's autocratic reputation:

"HE'S RUNNING HIS COUNTRY, AND AT LEAST HE'S A LEADER, UNLIKE WHAT WE HAVE IN THIS COUNTRY. I THINK OUR COUNTRY DOES PLENTY OF KILLING ALSO, JOE."

FEBRUARY
2016:

At a campaign rally, Trump says,

"I HAVE NO RELATIONSHIP WITH [PUTIN] OTHER THAN HE CALLED ME A GENIUS. HE SAID, 'DONALD TRUMP IS A GENIUS AND HE IS GOING TO BE THE LEADER OF THE PARTY AND HE'S GOING TO BE THE LEADER OF THE WORLD,' OR SOMETHING."

(Putin never called Trump a genius.)

Firtash. Like Manafort, Gates did not disclose his work as a foreign agent to the Justice Department last year, a possible violation of the law. Following the election he helped form a nonprofit promoting Trump's agenda, but he departed after the Associated Press reported Manafort's business dealings with Deripaska.

MICHAEL CAPUTO

The veteran PR consultant ran communications for Trump's 2016 primary campaign in New York. But before that, he spent years working in Russia, first for the US Agency for International Development and then for his own Moscow PR firm. In 2000, he was hired by Gazprom Media to burnish Putin's image in the United States. At one point, fearing Russian organized-crime figures were hunting him, Caputo (and his parrot, August West) took refuge on a boat in Florida.



CARTER PAGE

"I think he is an idiot"—so said one Russian spy to another of a 2013 effort to recruit Page as an intelligence asset. ("I didn't want to be a spy," Page has said. "I am not a spy.") Washington foreign policy hands scratched their heads when Trump cited the obscure energy consultant, who had once

worked for Merrill Lynch in Russia, as one of his campaign advisers. And Page's July 2016 speech in Moscow, where he sharply criticized US foreign policy toward Russia, drew notice at the FBI, kicking off the bureau's ongoing probe into Trump associates. Page, a central figure in the Trump-Russia imbroglio, recently gave a series of bizarre interviews in which he dodged questions but also seemed to implicate himself. He acknowledged meeting with Kislyak during the GOP convention and, after first denying that he had discussed the easing of sanctions with Russian officials, hedged in an interview with George Stephanopoulos: "Something may have come up in a conversation. I have no recollection."



ERIK PRINCE

In January, according to the *Washington Post*, the founder of notorious private security contractor Blackwater—whose sister is Trump's education secretary, Betsy DeVos—held a secret meeting in the Seychelles with a Russian close to Putin in an effort to establish an unofficial back channel between Moscow and Trump. Prince also reportedly advised Trump aides, including Flynn, during the transition. (Prince denies both claims.)

EZRA COHEN-WATNICK

The 30-year-old National Security Council official is a member of the "Flynnstones," as the dwindling cadre of Flynn loyalists on the NSC are known. After Flynn's firing, incoming national security adviser H.R. McMaster attempted to remove Cohen-Watnick from his position, but top Trump advisers Kushner and Steve Bannon intervened to save his job. Cohen-Watnick—known for his hawkish views on Iran and for clashing with CIA staffers—was among a trio of White House officials involved in an effort to lend credence to the president's baseless claim that he had been wiretapped by the Obama administration. The NSC staffer—along with White House lawyers Michael Ellis and John Eisenberg—helped provide Rep. Devin Nunes with access to classified documents that the House Intelligence Committee chairman cited as evidence, wrongly, that Trump associates had been inappropriately "unmasked" in surveillance intercepts.

INVESTIGATORS AND INTEL



JOHN BRENNAN

In August, the then-CIA director held urgent briefings with Congress' Gang of Eight law-

makers about Russia's efforts to get Trump elected. Before stepping down on Inauguration Day, he told Fox News that Trump lacks a "full understanding of Russian capabilities and the actions they are taking on the world." On January 6, the National Security Agency, the CIA, and the FBI announced that "Putin and the Russian Government aspired to help President-elect Trump's election chances when possible by discrediting Secretary Clinton and publicly contrasting her unfavorably to him."



JAMES CLAPPER

In May, the former director of national intelligence debunked one of Trump's favorite pieces of spin. The president loved pointing out that Clapper once said he'd seen no evidence of collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia. But in congressional testimony, Clapper clarified that at the time he made that statement, back in March, he was not in a position to know of the FBI's counterintelligence investigation into Trump's Russia ties. And he testified that Trump's denials and downplaying of Russian election interference had aided the Kremlin.



SALLY YATES

Six days after Trump's inauguration, the then-acting attorney general paid an urgent visit to the White House to alert the administration that Flynn had lied about his interactions with the Russian ambassador and could be vulnerable to blackmail. "To state the obvious: You don't want your national security adviser compromised with the Russians," she testified in May. Instead of acting on her warning, Trump waited another three weeks to ax his national security adviser, doing so only after the *Washington Post* reported on Flynn's communications with Kislyak. A longtime Justice Department official who once served as US attorney for the Northern District of Georgia, Yates was abruptly fired in late January after she refused to enforce the administration's hastily executed "Muslim ban."



JAMES COMEY

When news of his firing flashed across a TV screen on May 9, Comey thought it was a prank. Trump had previously praised the Justice Department veteran after he briefly reopened the bureau's investigation into Clinton's emails just before the presidential

election. Shortly after his inauguration, Trump summoned Comey for a private dinner, where he asked for the FBI director's political loyalty, the *New York Times* reported; Comey promised him "honesty." The relationship went downhill from there. Comey perhaps sealed his fate when he publicly confirmed the bureau's ongoing probe into the Trump campaign and dismissed Trump's claims that he was wiretapped by the Obama administration. Trump recalled of his decision to fire Comey, "When I decided to just do it, I said to myself, I said, 'You know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made-up story.'" News soon emerged that Comey kept detailed memos of his interactions with Trump, including on the president pressuring him to quash a growing FBI investigation into Michael Flynn.



CHRISTOPHER STEELE

A real-life James Bond who worked undercover for MI6 in Moscow in the 1990s and later oversaw the British intelligence agency's Russia operations, the ex-British spy was hired by a US research firm during the presidential campaign to look into Trump's business ties in Russia. His network of sources provided him with alarming allegations, including that the Putin regime possessed compromising information on Trump and had been cultivating the real estate mogul for years. His memos also contained

salacious allegations regarding Trump's personal conduct while visiting Russia. In July 2016, Steele passed his findings on to contacts in the FBI; after the election, US intelligence officials briefed Obama and Trump about the memos. The Senate Intelligence Committee may seek to question Steele as part of its investigation into possible Russian interference in the US election.



ROBERT MUELLER

George W. Bush tapped the ex-Marine and federal prosecutor to head the FBI just days before the 9/11 attacks. He went on to lead the bureau for 12 years, becoming the

longest-serving FBI director since J. Edgar Hoover. Like his friend James Comey, Mueller has an independent streak and no qualms about taking on the powers that be. During the Bush years, he nearly resigned over what he saw as a rogue White House effort with the National Security Agency's warrantless surveillance program. As special counsel in charge of an investigation that Trump has dubbed an unprecedented "witch hunt," Mueller is likely to again butt heads with a sitting president.

HACKERS AND HACKS



JULIAN ASSANGE

Conservatives once called for the WikiLeaks founder to be locked up. During the 2016 campaign, Trump allies, including Roger Stone and Alex Jones, hailed him as a hero for releasing hacked emails from the DNC and Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta. (Stone claimed to have "back-channel communications" with the hacktivist during the campaign.) Assange—who has taken refuge in Ecuador's London Embassy since 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden over rape allegations (the case was dropped in May)—has claimed the source for the hacked messages was not the Russian government. The US intelligence community begs to differ.

TRUMPAGANDA

There are four basic techniques of propaganda—the 4Ds—according to Ben Nimmo, an England-based analyst of Russian information warfare. Though he's mostly applied them to Putin's disinformation operations, they also provide a helpful lens for understanding Donald Trump's mastery of spin.

1. DISMISS: Reject uncomfortable allegations or facts.

EXAMPLE: One day before he fired FBI Director James Comey, Trump tweeted, "The Russia-Trump collusion story is a total hoax."

2. DISTRACT: Throw out diversionary stories or shiny counterclaims.

EXAMPLE: As reports of his staffers' Russian ties heated up in March, Trump tweeted that "Obama had my 'wires tapped' in Trump Tower just before the victory."

3. DISTORT: If you don't like the facts, invent your own.

EXAMPLE: "The NSA and FBI tell Congress that Russia did not influence electoral process," Trump tweeted in March, just after National Security Agency Director Mike Rogers and Comey testified that Russia had tried to do exactly that.

4. DISMAY: And if all else fails, try to scare them into shutting up.

EXAMPLE: During the election, Trump threatened to prosecute Hillary Clinton if he became president. Trump has also threatened to roll back First Amendment protections for journalists who report "purposely negative and horrible and false articles" about him: "We're going to open up libel laws, folks, and we're going to have people sue you like you never got sued before."

WikiLeaks' release of the first batch of Podesta's emails was curiously timed: It dropped less than an hour after a video clip of Trump bragging about sexual assault went public. Thereafter, the material was released in daily batches—that is, in a manner designed to inflict maximum harm to the Clinton campaign.

GUCCIFER 2.0

Guccifer was the handle of a notorious Romanian hacker who was sentenced to 52 months in prison in 2016. Guccifer 2.0 is the online persona that surfaced in June 2016 to take credit for hacking the DNC. The persona has claimed to be a lone wolf from Romania, but the intelligence community and outside experts have concluded that Guccifer 2.0 (which direct-messaged with Stone) is almost certainly a front for Russian intelligence. It's a misogynistic one at that. "I've never met a female hacker of the highest level," Guccifer 2.0 wrote last year. "Girls, don't get offended, I love you."

DC LEAKS

The mysterious website and its associated Twitter feed popped up in June 2016. Over the course of the campaign, it published the hacked emails of military and political targets, including Colin Powell, NATO commander General Philip Breedlove, and the campaign staffs of Sens. John McCain and Lindsey Graham. The people behind DC Leaks, which is no longer active, claimed to be "American hacktivists," but the US intelligence community reported that the site was a front for Russia's military intelligence service.

RT AND SPUTNIK

In its joint report on Moscow's election meddling, the US intelligence community described RT, the

TV network formerly known as Russia Today, as "the Kremlin's principal international propaganda outlet." The report noted it "has actively collaborated with WikiLeaks"; Assange hosted a show for the network in 2012. RT also has controversial ties to Flynn, who was paid to speak at a 2015 gala for RT in Moscow and frequently appeared as an analyst on the network. Another Kremlin-supported outlet, Sputnik, spread fake news while boosting Trump and attacking Clinton.

COZY BEAR AND FANCY BEAR

The shadowy groups are affiliated with different branches of the Russian security apparatus. Cozy Bear has been linked to a variety of cyberattacks against government and corporate targets throughout the world, including a 2015 spear-phishing attack on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. According to CrowdStrike, the cybersecurity firm hired by the DNC, Cozy Bear first targeted the DNC in the summer of 2015. Fancy Bear penetrated the DNC's network in April 2016, apparently unaware Cozy Bear had gotten there first. The group's targets have ranged from the World Anti-Doping Agency to the German parliament.

RUSSIAN CONNECTIONS



SERGEY KISLYAK

Following the 2016 presidential election, it came to light that Kislyak—the

BODIES OF EVIDENCE?

In March, former FBI agent Clinton Watts told members of the Senate Intelligence Committee that one way to track Russia's influence was to "follow the trail of dead Russians." In May, former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper noted a "curious pattern" of people being "eliminated" after running afoul of Vladimir Putin. There has been a spate of injuries and deaths of high-profile Russians in recent years, including at least a dozen since the US election. A few that raise eyebrows:

Oleg Erovinkin: Some have speculated that Erovinkin, a former general in the Russian intelligence agency, was the key source in the dossier on Donald Trump compiled by former British spy Christopher Steele. On December 26, after the dossier had been widely covered in the media, Erovinkin was found dead in the back of his Lexus in Moscow. No official cause of death has been released.

Vladimir Kara-Murza: A longtime Putin critic and leader of the Russian opposition, Kara-Murza fell into a six-day coma in February—the second time he'd been hospitalized because of a suspected poisoning. A month earlier, he'd written a letter to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "There are higher risks than slander or imprisonment for those who oppose the regime."

Sergei Krivov: On the day of the US election, Krivov was found dead in the Russian Consulate in New York. Early reports said the diplomat fell from the roof and suffered blunt-force trauma to his head. Later, Russian Consulate officials said he died of a heart attack. Police called the death "natural" and closed the case.

Denis Voronenkov: The former Russian politician was gunned down in Kiev, Ukraine, in broad daylight in March. Voronenkov had denounced Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea as "illegal" and had fled to Ukraine. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko decried the killing as a "Russian state terrorist act." A Putin spokesman said that was "absurd."

JULY 2016:

"I NEVER MET PUTIN. I DON'T KNOW WHO PUTIN IS,"

Trump says. He also refuses to warn Putin to stay out of the US presidential election:

"I'M NOT GOING TO TELL PUTIN WHAT TO DO. WHY SHOULD I TELL PUTIN WHAT TO DO?"

OCTOBER 2016:

At the second presidential debate, Trump declares again,

"I DON'T KNOW PUTIN."

FEBRUARY 2017:

Trump defends Putin to Bill O'Reilly:

"I DO RESPECT HIM...WHAT DO YOU THINK, OUR COUNTRY'S SO INNOCENT?"

Russian ambassador to the United States since 2008 and formerly Russia's deputy minister of foreign affairs—held mul-

tipl private meetings and phone conversations with Trump campaign surrogates and aides, including then Sen. Jeff Sessions,

Carter Page, J.D. Gordon, and Jared Kushner. His pre-inauguration communications with Flynn—which included discussion

of US sanctions targeting Russia—led to Flynn's ouster. Kislyak told the *Washington Post* he was in contact with Flynn before the election, but he declined to say what they discussed. Some US intelligence officials allege that Kislyak is not just a diplomat, but a talented spy-recruiter.

the stem of a margarita glass and a guilty plea in a Mafia-linked racketeering case. Though Trump claimed in a 2013 deposition that he wouldn't know Sater if they were in the same room, the pair in fact worked together on a variety of projects, including a potential Moscow hotel. Once a managing partner of Bayrock Group, a real estate firm with offices in Trump Tower and alleged organized crime ties, Sater reportedly worked as a senior adviser to Trump in 2010, with a Trump Organization email address and business card. In January, Sater met with Trump attorney Michael Cohen and Andrii Artemenko, a pro-Putin Ukrainian lawmaker, to discuss a "peace plan" for Ukraine and Russia.

DEBRIEF: MUCKRAKER WIKILEAKS' ROLE

Andrei Soldatov is a longtime Russian investigative reporter, the co-founder of Agenta.ru, a website focusing on the Russian secret services, and the co-author of two books on Russian intelligence activities.

MOTHER JONES: Do you think WikiLeaks is actively coordinating with Russian interests?

ANDREI SOLDATOV: Yeah, after 2016 I think it's pretty clear.

MJ: How does that relationship work?

AS: The entire history of the Russian hacking operations is mostly outsourced operations, so you can easily deny your responsibility. It's not so hierarchical and direct, like you have the government secret agency and you have WikiLeaks and you have one guy in between. It might be much more complicated.

MJ: Can you walk us through the ecosystem of how the Russian hacking operations work?

AS: You have three elements: You have the secret services, mostly the FSB. They have extremely good connections to criminal hackers and the IT industry because the FSB is also in charge of licensing all activities in cyber, like encryption. The military is a second actor, extremely active now, extremely adventurous. Then you have informal actors, people who have their own direct access to the Kremlin. Some of them might work for the security services, but a lot of these guys work directly for the administration of the president.

This tactic was developed in 1999, when the Chechens found

a way to start all these websites about what's going on in Chechnya. That was a real threat. So the security agencies got some students to hack these websites. And immediately the Kremlin understood that if you've got students, not government actors, attacking your targets, it provides you deniable responsibility. And immediately they started encouraging these people to attack other sensitive targets. Some targets were based in Russia: independent media, political opposition. Some were based outside the country. But the Kremlin understood outsourcing is much more effective. They have been using this trick ever since.

MJ: The US intelligence community has concluded that the hacking operation was closely directed by Putin.

AS: It's entirely plausible to me. This election was really personal for Putin because he believed that Clinton is a personal enemy. He genuinely believed she was behind the Moscow protests in 2012, 2011. I do not think these groups would try to do something without his authorization or his knowledge. It would be really crazy.

MJ: How do everyday Russians view this whole episode?

AS: It's a strange combination of two thoughts. The first one is, "Look how ridiculous are Americans. They blame us for everything." And the second thought is, "Look how great we are. We are to blame for everything in the world, which means we are really, really important."



SERGEY GORKOV

A graduate of the FSB's finishing school for spies, Gorkov heads Vnesheconombank, Russia's state-owned development bank—effectively Putin's slush fund. With its board seeded with Kremlin ministers, including Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev, the bank was the majority lender for the Sochi Olympics, has helped Russia gain financial power in Ukraine, and is currently under US sanctions because of Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. In December 2016, Gorkov attended a meeting with Jared Kushner brokered by Kislyak.



FELIX SATER

This Russian American businessman (and onetime FBI informant) has quite the rap sheet, including prison time for stabbing a man with

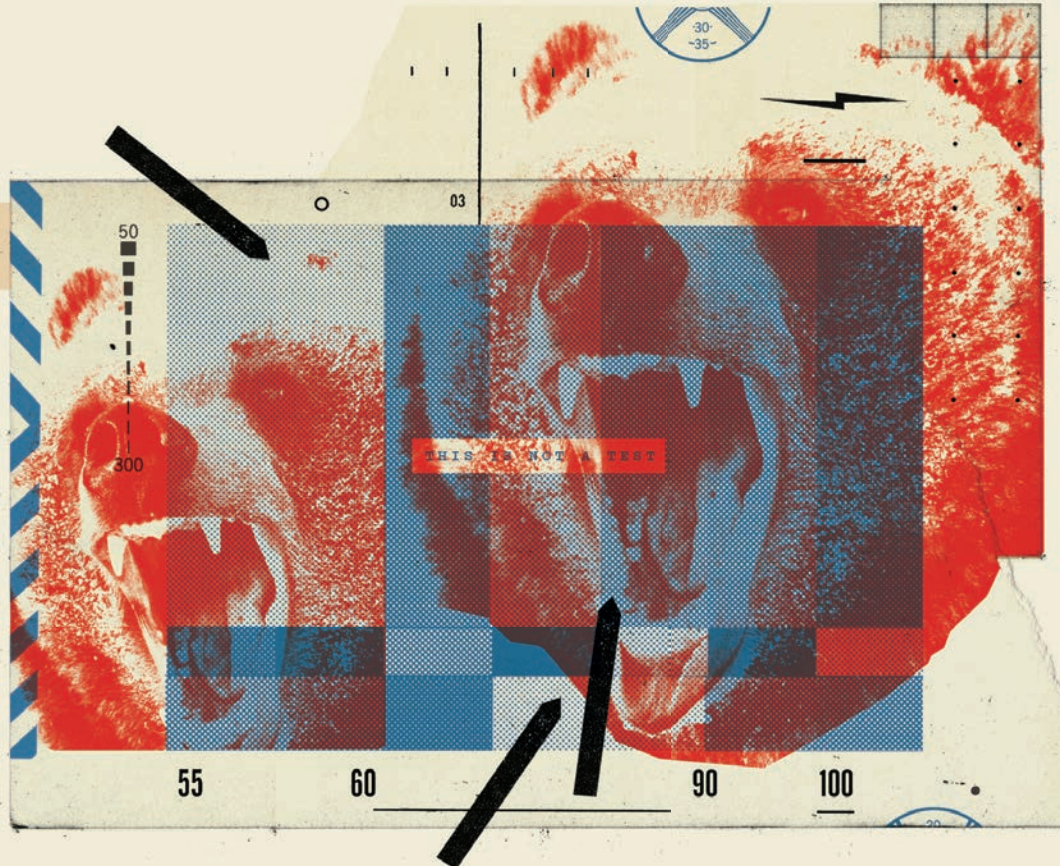


ANDRII ARTEMENKO

Currently facing an inquiry by Ukrainian prosecutors into possible treason over his collaboration with Trump associates on the Russia-friendly peace plan, the Ukrainian parliament member claims to have evidence of corruption that could oust his country's current pro-European president. Artemenko has spent time in prison on embezzlement charges (eventually dropped) that he says were politically motivated.

TEVFIK ARIF

The Kazakh founder of the Bayrock real estate firm was formerly a USSR commerce official. He



hired Sater, who by 2005 became Bayrock's managing partner; subsequently, the firm entered into deals with Trump to develop various hotel and condo projects. In 2010, Bayrock's former finance director sued the company (but not Trump) over one of those joint ventures, the Trump SoHo, calling the building "a Russian mob project" financed with mysterious cash from Kazakhstan and Russia.

VICTOR PODOBNYY

At a January 2013 energy conference in New York, Podobnyy met future Trump adviser Carter Page. At the time, Podobnyy was a clandestine Russian intelligence agent working under diplomatic cover in Russia's UN delegation. For the next five months, Page met with, emailed, and provided documents to Podobnyy about the energy business, believing that Podobnyy's UN position would help him broker deals in Russia. All the while, Podobnyy

and one of his colleagues attempted to recruit Page as an asset. In 2015, Podobnyy was busted by the FBI for being an unregistered agent of a foreign government, along with two other Russians, but avoided arrest and prosecution because of his diplomatic immunity.

SERGEI MILLIAN

The Belarusian American president of the Russian American Chamber of Commerce in the USA first met Trump in 2007 at Moscow's Millionaire Fair. Millian—whose given name is Siarhei Kukuts—says he later signed an agreement with the Trump Organization to market Trump properties to buyers in Russia and the former Soviet bloc. In June 2016, Millian shared a slew of allegations about Trump with an associate. These allegations, corroborated by other sources, according to the ex-British spy Christopher Steele, would later make it into Steele's unverified intelligence reports on Trump's

Russia ties—where Millian is reportedly identified as source "D."

THE OLIGARCHS



DMITRY RYBOLOVLEV

Known in Russia as the "fertilizer king," this billionaire oligarch bought a Palm Beach mansion from Trump in 2008 for \$95 million—more than twice what Trump paid for it in the mid-2000s. It was a surprisingly high price, given Florida's crashing real estate market and an appraisal for much less. At least twice during the campaign, Rybolovlev's plane was in the same location as Trump's, fueling speculation of deeper ties.



DMITRY FIRTASH

For years, this Ukrainian natural-gas titan cut deals with Russia's state-owned gas company, Gazprom. Putin's administration sold him Russian gas at a steep discount, and Firtash resold it in Ukraine, reinvesting some of the profits into electing pro-Putin politicians, including Viktor Yanukovich. In 2008, Firtash partnered with Manafort on an \$885 million deal to buy and redo a New York hotel. The deal fell apart, but a few years later Firtash and Manafort were together again—this time named in a lawsuit alleging that Firtash laundered money through a New York investment fund established with Manafort's help to

send back to Ukraine for political use. (The case was dismissed in 2015.) Since 2013, the United States has sought to extradite Firtash from Austria to face bribery charges in an unrelated case.



OLEG DERIPASKA

This billionaire aluminum magnate was denied entry to the United States in the mid-1990s because of suspected ties to the Russian Mafia. A few years later, Manafort helped Deripaska try to secure a visa to come to the United States. In 2006, Deripaska reportedly hired Manafort for a \$10 million annual contract; Manafort reportedly pitched Deripaska on a plan to bolster Putin's image in the US and elsewhere. In 2014, Deripaska sued Manafort for accepting a \$19 million investment and then failing to account for the funds. (The suit is pending.)

ARAS AGALAROV

This billionaire's real estate company, Crocus Group, has secured multiple contracts from the Kremlin, and Agalarov personally received a medal of honor from Putin. In 2013, Agalarov partnered with Trump to bring the Miss Universe pageant to Moscow, where it was hosted at one of his lavish properties. The day before the pageant, Agalarov helped organize a meeting for Trump with more than a dozen of Russia's top moguls. Agalarov claims he and Trump made a deal

to build a Trump Tower in Moscow following the pageant, a venture that never materialized.

EMIN AGALAROV

Trump starred in a 2013 music video with this middling Russian pop star (the son of Aras Agalarov). It was shot on the morning of the Miss Universe pageant in Moscow, where Emin performed two numbers. In a March 2017 interview, Emin described an ongoing relationship—including “messages” and a handwritten note—with the Trump family that continued after Trump’s inauguration. “Now that he ran and was elected, he does not forget his friends,” Emin said.



VIKTOR VEKSELBERG

The Ukrainian oil baron with past ties to the Kremlin is reportedly worth \$12.8 billion. Through his company Renova, he holds a 5.5 percent stake in the Bank of Cyprus, where Wilbur Ross served as vice chairman of the board until his confirmation as US commerce secretary in March.

WATCHDOGS AND LAPDOGS

SEN. JOHN MCCAIN

After the presidential election, McCain obtained a copy of Steele’s dossier, passing it to Comey during a December meeting. “I think there’s a lot more shoes to drop from this centipede,” the six-term senator and chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee said

this spring. While his fellow Republicans have tried to squelch probes into the scandal, McCain has pressed for a more aggressive inquiry, calling for a special congressional select committee or an independent commission. In mid-May, he said the growing scandal had reached “Watergate size and scale.”

SEN. LINDSEY GRAHAM

On the campaign trail, the South Carolina senator was a harsh critic of Trump, calling the real estate mogul a “jackass” who lacked “the temperament or judgment to be commander in chief.” Like McCain, Graham is one of few Republicans who have not sought to downplay the Russia scandal. His Senate Judiciary subcommittee has mounted an investigation into the Kremlin’s election interference that Graham has vowed is “going to find out all things Russia.”



REP. DEVIN NUNES

The House Intelligence Committee chairman’s brazen attempt to provide cover for Trump’s wiretapping allegations backfired in epic fashion. After Nunes’ White House-aided effort was unmasked, he was forced to recuse himself from the Intelligence Committee’s probe of Russian election meddling. Now the California congressman, who served on Trump’s transition team, is himself under investigation by the House Ethics Committee for possibly disclosing classified information.

REP. ADAM SCHIFF

The ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee has been described as “Trump’s public prosecutor.” During the panel’s first hearing on the Russia matter, Schiff laid out what amounted to an indictment in his lengthy opening statement. In his previous career as a federal prosecutor, he brought charges against the first FBI agent indicted for espionage. The congressman has been calling for an independent investigation from the start and clashed repeatedly with Nunes.

SEN. MARK WARNER

One of the only Democrats with any real say in how the Russia probe plays out, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee says the investigation is “the most important thing I’ve ever done.” It wasn’t until Warner threatened to boycott the hacking probe that Trump-boosting Sen. Richard Burr agreed to include possible Trump-Russia links in the investigation. Warner now says he has full “confidence” in Burr, but various reports indicate he has become frustrated with Burr’s slow pace.



SEN. RICHARD BURR

“There’s not a separation between me and Donald Trump,” Burr said during his reelection campaign. Burr also worked on the Trump campaign’s national security team and takes credit for instigating the FBI’s investigation into Clinton’s emails. The three-term Republican and chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee

was enlisted by the White House in February, along with Nunes, to personally call reporters to push back on stories concerning Trump associates and Russia. No surprise, Burr originally said his panel’s investigation would not involve Trump’s campaign. He has since changed his tune, but concerns remain about whether he can lead a full and fair inquiry.

THE HYPERVENTILATORS



LOUISE MENSCH

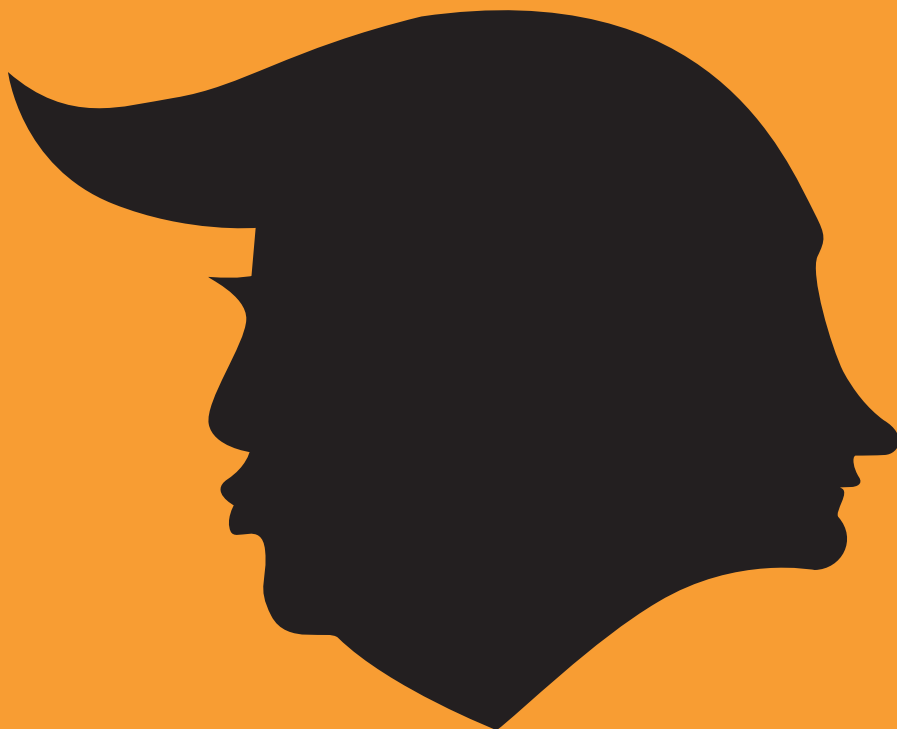
Of all the self-appointed detectives propagating their theories on Twitter, Mensch, a novelist and former Conservative member of the British Parliament, is the most bombastic and controversial. The day before the presidential election, Mensch, who’s known for making fantastical claims, reported that the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court had granted the FBI a warrant to surveil Americans with ties to Trump as part of its investigation.

Another two months would pass before the *New York Times* confirmed the existence of a warrant from the court in the case of Carter Page. Since then, Mensch has made claims that Page traveled to Moscow last July to explicitly request Russia’s help in hacking the election, delivering a prerecorded tape of Trump offering to make US policy more beneficial to Putin if elected. No reputable media have reported this.

JOHN SCHINDLER

The former NSA analyst declared in August 2016 that, regardless of who became president, Putin had already won the election by meddling with the American political system. Oddly, Schindler wrote about this in Jared Kushner’s *New York Observer* where Schindler is a regular columnist. (Kushner has since stepped down as the paper’s publisher.) In his column and Twitter feed—which Schindler liberally peppers with blindly sourced intel community gossip—he confidently suggests it’s only a matter of time before Trump’s collusion with the Kremlin is revealed. Sample tweet: “Trump knows his illegal ties to Moscow will be exposed soon. Hence his panic. He will do anything to save himself. Even provoking civil war.”

Cover and Page 19: Noma Bar. Page 2: Trump: Lucas Jackson/Reuters; Putin: Kremlin. Page 5: Putin: Metzel Mikhail/TASS/ZUMA; Trump: Ron Sachs/CNP/ZUMA. Page 6: Ivanka: Rex Shutterstock/ZUMA; Donald Trump Jr: Ron Sachs/CNP/ZUMA; Eric Trump: Cheriss May/Nurphoto/ZUMA; Jared Kushner: Andrew Harrer/CNP/ZUMA. Pages 8/9 from left: Mary Altaffer/AP; Seth Wenig/AP; Mike Blake/Reuters; Andrew Harrer/CNP/ZUMA; Alexander Shcherbak/TASS/ZUMA. Pages 10/11: Steven Hall: CIA; Sessions: US Department of Justice; Ross: US Department of Commerce; Flynn: Greg Mathieson Sr./Rex Shutterstock/ZUMA; Manafort: Tom Williams/CQ/ZUMA; RT Dinner: Mikhail Klimentyev/Sputnik/Kremlin Pool/AP. Pages 12/13: Stone: Michael Ares/Palm Beach Post/ZUMA; Michael Cohen: Richard Drew/AP; Barsky: Angel Chevreest; Carter Page: Artyon Korotayev/TASS/ZUMA; Prince: Oxford Union/Rex Shutterstock/ZUMA; Brennan: CIA; Clapper: DNI. Pages 14/15: Yates: DOJ; Comey: FBI; Steele: Victoria Jones/PA Wire/ZUMA; Mueller: Mark Murrmann/ZUMA; Assange: Dominic Lipinski/PA Wire/ZUMA; Kislyak: Joel Kowsky/NASA. Pages 16/17: Gorkov: Mikhail Metzel/TASS/ZUMA; Sater: Wikimedia; Artmenko: Wikimedia; Rybolovlev: Panoramic/ZUMA; Firtash: Heinz-Peter Bader/Reuters; Deripaska: Sergei Savostyanov/TASS/ZUMA; Bear: iStock. Page 18: Vekselberg: Vladimir Smirnov/TASS/ZUMA; Nunes: US Congress; Burr: US Congress; Mensch: PA Wire/ZUMA.



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