

Newly released emails reveal Clinton ties to CEOs, Persian Gulf despots

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25 August 2016

The media campaign over Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server and the interactions between the Clinton Foundation and the State Department while she was at its head provides information on her ties to billionaires and foreign despots, but largely obscures the basic issues in the corruption of the Clintons, to say nothing of the crimes she committed as part of the Obama administration.

The right-wing group Judicial Watch, which played a prominent role in the campaign to impeach President Bill Clinton in 1998-99, on Monday released more than 700 pages of email messages to and from Huma Abedin, Hillary Clinton's closest personal aide at the State Department and now a vice chairman of her presidential campaign.

The emails included several in which a top Clinton Foundation official, Douglas Band, contacted Abedin on behalf of foundation donors who wanted access either to the State Department or Clinton herself. Abedin responded, sometimes by setting up meetings or facilitating requests, at other times in the negative.

On the same day, a federal judge revealed that the FBI has recovered nearly 15,000 email messages to or from Clinton during her tenure as secretary of state, and turned them over to the State Department for a security review and eventual public release. Judge James Boasberg set September 22 for a progress update on the processing of the email messages, but no other information was made public on either the content of the messages or how the FBI obtained them.

The following day, Citizens United, another right-wing group dedicated to demonizing the Clintons, released 378 pages of emails from Cheryl Mills and other Clinton aides at the State Department.

Media outlets hostile to Clinton, such as Fox News and the *New York Post*, featured the twin stories with headlines about a new deluge of emails threatening Clinton's presidential campaign and claims they showed wealthy donors buying access to the State Department through contributions to the Clinton Foundation.

Republican candidate Donald Trump declared the Clinton Foundation "the most corrupt enterprise in political history" and pledged to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate its activities if he is elected in November.

The Associated Press released an analysis showing that of 154 private individuals who met with Clinton as secretary of state, nearly half had given money to the Clinton Foundation. The AP report seemed to support allegations of "pay to play" at the State

Department, but the Clinton campaign claimed that it involved "cherry-picking" among the more than 17,000 people with whom Clinton had calendared meetings during her four years at the State Department.

The political motivation of right-wing media outlets in promoting the email story is obvious—to boost the floundering Trump campaign. In the case of the pro-Clinton media—the vast majority—the continued publicity given the email scandal and the role of the Clinton Foundation also has a political purpose, to keep the Clinton campaign in line, putting pressure on it to make no concessions to those who supported her primary challenger Bernie Sanders or have illusions that Clinton can be pushed to the left.

Neither the US ruling elite nor, for that matter, Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party leadership, wants a blowout victory in the November elections. They would prefer to avoid a situation where the election of Clinton is accompanied by a Democratic takeover of the Senate and the House of Representatives because this might arouse popular expectations that the new government will take some action to alleviate the deepening crisis affecting working people.

The allegations of a "pay to play" relationship between the Clinton Foundation and the State Department, whatever the political motivation, largely obscure the essential basis of the corruption of the Clintons and the real purpose of their foundation.

In the fifteen-plus years since Bill and Hillary Clinton left the White House, they have amassed a personal fortune estimated at more than \$150 million. The vast bulk of their income during this period had nothing to do with the Clinton Foundation, but came in the form of fees for speeches given to banks, corporations, trade associations and universities. In some years, one or the other Clinton made as much as \$10 million simply for giving dozens of such closed-door talks, for an average fee of more than \$200,000 per appearance.

In the course of the campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination, Sanders repeatedly raised the issue of these speaking fees and demanded that Clinton release the transcripts of her talks, particularly to Wall Street audiences. She always refused.

After Clinton won the Democratic nomination, Sanders dropped the issue and endorsed her, and neither the corporate media nor the Trump campaign has raised the question since—no doubt because the banks and billionaires do not want their dealings with Clinton to be made public.

The Clinton Foundation was not primarily a money-raising

instrument for the Clintons' personal bank account, as their critics on the right claim, nor a harmless, blameless charity, set up out of the goodness of their hearts, as Democratic Party apologists suggest. Its purpose was to maintain the Clintons' political relations with billionaires, corporations, dictators and right-wing capitalist governments around the world.

From that standpoint, it was highly successful. Bill Clinton traveled and engaged with wealthy donors continuously, while his wife, who held office as a senator or secretary of state for most of this period and could not represent the foundation openly, benefited politically but stayed in the background.

Once Hillary Clinton became a declared presidential candidate, in May 2015, many of the donors to the Clinton Foundation became donors to her presidential campaign. (Foreign governments and individuals are barred from making such contributions, but foreign corporations may do so through their US-based subsidiaries).

The claim that the Clinton Foundation engaged in an overt "pay to play" relationship with the US State Department—the focus of this week's media campaign—finds little support in the emails from Huma Abedin released by Judicial Watch on Monday. The bulk of these messages concern routine internal State Department business, like scheduling, personnel matters, drafts of documents, much of which is redacted for security reasons. But a few have been highlighted in media accounts because they involved the Clinton Foundation.

For example, in June 2009, Douglas Band of the Clinton Foundation wrote to Abedin, telling her the crown prince of Bahrain was to be in Washington and wanted a meeting with Hillary Clinton. "Good friend of ours," he added, referring to the autocrat, whose regime had given money to the foundation four years before.

Abedin replied that the crown prince had already contacted Clinton through normal State Department channels but Clinton was delaying a response because she was not feeling well. Two days later she informed Band that the State Department had replied to the prince "thru official channels."

Bahrain is an important client state of US imperialism in the Persian Gulf, hosting the headquarters of the US Fifth Fleet. US military aid to the tiny monarchy peaked at nearly \$100 million in 2003, the year of the US invasion of Iraq, and has never since fallen below \$10 million. US-Bahrain trade, which includes substantial purchases from US arms manufacturers, regularly tops \$2 billion annually.

In that context, to suggest, as Judicial Watch does, that the heir-apparent to the Bahraini throne could not get a meeting with a US secretary of state without going through the Clinton Foundation is dubious, at best.

What is criminal here is the US-Bahrain relationship itself, which Clinton oversaw as secretary of state, including during the crisis year of 2011, when a mass popular movement threatened the monarchy. This led to a police-military crackdown with the backing of Saudi Arabia, which dispatched 1,000 troops across the causeway leading to the island nation. The Obama administration tacitly supported the Saudi intervention while paying lip service to the democratic rights of Bahrain's Shi'ite majority.

Other Abedin emails relate to requests for meetings with Clinton from corporate heads, including Daniel Abraham, the billionaire proprietor of Slim-Fast, and top officials of St. Louis-based Peabody Coal, the largest US coal producer. Both had made donations to the Clinton Foundation but did not go through the foundation to make contact with the State Department.

Abraham is a long-time Democratic Party money-man who wanted to see Clinton about US policy on Israel and the Palestinians. He told the press this week, "I have been friendly with the Clintons since their White House days. As far as I am concerned, it was all good. She never asked me for anything."

Peabody approached the Obama administration through the lobbying firm run by Richard Gephardt, former House Democratic leader and presidential candidate. The company wanted its CEO and other top executives to brief Secretary Clinton on Peabody's activities in exporting "clean coal" technology to Australia, China and Mongolia, among other global initiatives.

Such meetings—billionaires seeking to convey their views on foreign policy, giant companies seeking US government backing for their foreign ventures—are the bread and butter of every capitalist administration, Democratic or Republican. The corruption is embedded in the routine, everyday relationships.

One email to Abedin was from Maureen White, a longtime Clinton crony who wanted to meet with the secretary of state during a visit to Washington. Abedin promised to fit her in.

This is of interest mainly because White is married to Steven Rattner, the Wall Street speculator whom Obama appointed to head his auto industry task force and supervise the slashing of wages for entry-level autoworkers and the imposition of cuts in pensions and other benefits. Rattner only narrowly escaped prosecution for his role in manipulating the issuance of bonds by the New York state government during the administration of Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo, a cabinet official in Bill Clinton's administration.



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