

Intelligence report offers no evidence of Russian hacking of US election

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The US intelligence report released Friday provides no evidence that Russia was responsible for hacking into the email of the Democratic National Committee and Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta. The report consists of unsupported conclusions by the CIA, FBI and NSA, using the phrase “we assess” 19 times without a single fact to demonstrate Russian involvement.

The document made public late Friday afternoon was an unclassified version of a 50-page “top secret” report delivered to President Obama Thursday and shown to congressional leaders and President-elect Trump on Friday morning. But according to two intelligence officials who spoke with NBC News and the *Washington Post* Thursday, the classified version, like the public one, contained “no bombshells.”

The unclassified text does not even claim there is evidence to support its conclusions withheld in the public document in the interests of security but supplied in the un-redacted version. One is left with the bare assertion: we, the intelligence community, have made a judgment, and you, the American people, must take it on faith.

The 25-page declassified version does, however, contain one revelation. Nearly half of this document is a reprint of a CIA report from December 2012, detailing the coverage provided by the Russian government-supported English-language broadcaster RT, which reported extensively on the 2011 Occupy Wall Street protests and third-party campaigns in the 2012 US presidential election.

This appendix essentially suggests that anyone who questions the two-party system or opposes “corporate greed” is acting as an agent of the Russian government, an assertion that would make the witch-hunting Senator Joseph McCarthy blush.

The intelligence report is completely silent about the actual content of what was leaked by those who hacked into the DNC and Podesta emails: true information about the DNC’s efforts to sabotage the presidential campaign of Senator Bernie Sanders, and the transcripts of Clinton’s sycophantic speeches to Wall Street bankers, including Goldman Sachs.

The longer, classified version of the report was presented to President-elect Trump at a briefing Friday morning delivered by the four top officials of the US intelligence establishment: Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, CIA Director John Brennan, FBI Director James Comey, and Admiral Michael Rogers, director of the NSA.

Even before the briefing, Trump indicated his doubts in a series of tweets citing press reports that the FBI never conducted a forensic investigation into the DNC’s email server because the DNC refused to cooperate. He also demanded a congressional investigation into the leaking of details of the classified report to NBC and the *Washington Post*, even before the report was delivered to himself or to Congress.

After the closed-door briefing, Trump issued a perfunctory three-paragraph statement that described the meeting as “constructive,” declared his “tremendous respect for the work and service done by the men and women” of the intelligence agencies, and called for continued vigilance against efforts by “Russia, China, other countries, outside groups” that might attempt to break into the US cyber infrastructure. He concluded by rejecting any “public discussion” of “the methods, tools and tactics we use to keep America safe,” since this would only aid “those who seek to do us harm.”

For nearly four months, the US media has raised a hue and cry over alleged Russian hacking directed

against the US election campaign. On October 7, DNI Director Clapper, speaking for 17 intelligence agencies, effectively declared Russian President Vladimir Putin personally responsible for the hacking. But the factual content of this smear campaign, it is now clear, was zero.

The report released Friday actually clears Russia of any interference in the functioning of the US electoral system, making the assessment that there was no discernible impact on the technical processes of the election, where the votes are counted by local and state officials. The Department of Homeland Security, which was in contact with election officials in every state, found that that hacking was “not involved in vote tallying.”

The complete lack of factual substance has not halted the media campaign in the slightest. It continued Friday with a lead editorial by the *New York Times* headlined, “Donald Trump Casts Intelligence Aside.” Like previous effusions from the *Times*, this editorial declared absolutely uncritical confidence in the proven liars and cut-throats who run the US intelligence apparatus.

The editorial declared that Trump “is effectively working to delegitimize institutions whose jobs involve reporting on risks, threats and facts that a president needs to keep the nation safe.” It denounced him for his supposed endorsement of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who has insisted that the Russian government was not the source of the DNC and Podesta emails made public by WikiLeaks.

The *Times* concluded that Trump was creating problems for himself as the future commander-in-chief: “Having worked so hard to convince the American people that the intelligence community cannot be trusted, what will he tell the country when agents inform him of a clear and present danger?”

Washington Post columnist David Ignatius, who has the closest ties to the military-intelligence apparatus, posed the issue as Trump “siding with Russia” instead of with the US intelligence agencies. Ignatius hailed the performance of DNI Director Clapper before the Senate Armed Services Committee, not mentioning that Clapper is a proven perjurer, having delivered sworn testimony to Congress denying widespread NSA spying only three months before the Snowden revelations.

The very fact that the incoming Trump administration

has largely rejected the “Russian hacking” claims, despite the universal support for them in the media, is an indication that behind the scenes a furious struggle is raging within the ruling elite over foreign and military policy.

Trump aides have sought to deflect the claims of Russian hacking with suggestions that China may have been responsible, or is in any case an equally dangerous cyber-warfare foe. This reflects the orientation of the Trump administration to targeting China rather than Russia as the principal antagonist of American imperialism, at least for the immediate future.

What is the logical outcome of the campaign over “Russian hacking” in the elections? What are the implications of the incessant charges, by the Obama administration, congressional Democrats and many congressional Republicans, that Russia has committed “an act of war” against the United States? Are those leading this campaign prepared to go to war with Russia? Given that Russia and the US possess, between them, 95 percent of the world’s nuclear weapons, how far would such a war go? How many hundreds of millions of people would die?

The American media and the political establishment refuse to pose these questions publicly, but there is little doubt that in specialized think tanks where the ruling elite and its military-intelligence apparatus work out their strategy, these questions are under intense discussion. The American people are in danger of being dragged into a mounting confrontation that leads step-by-step to war with a nuclear-armed Russia.



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