

Documents alleging Trump-Moscow ties leaked to media, intensifying conflict in US state

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US media outlets on Tuesday reported the existence of a previously undisclosed document from a former British intelligence official alleging secret contacts with officials in Moscow by Donald Trump and his campaign team. The document includes salacious details on Trump's personal activities.

The document, initially prepared last year at the request of Republican and Democratic opponents of Trump, was reportedly obtained in December by Republican Senator John McCain, one of the most vociferous advocates of aggression against Russia. McCain then passed the document on to US intelligence agencies. A summary of the document was included in the report given last week by top US intelligence officials on alleged Russian interference in the US election to President-elect Trump and President Barack Obama.

The release of the document is the latest and most explosive episode in an escalating political struggle within the state apparatus that is without precedent. The conflict is centered on foreign policy issues, with sections of the state, led by the CIA, concerned that Trump will shift away from an aggressive stance toward Russia in favor of a more immediate focus on China.

The release of the document appears to be a last-ditch effort by sections of the intelligence apparatus to prevent the inauguration of Trump, which is only 10 days away. There will likely be congressional hearings into the allegations that could begin even before Trump takes office, assuming that he is inaugurated.

The document was leaked on the eve of Trump's first scheduled press conference since July, slated for Wednesday.

Trump responded to the reports with a Tweet Tuesday night: "FAKE NEWS—A TOTAL POLITICAL WITCH HUNT!"

CNN first reported on the document Tuesday evening, citing "multiple US officials with direct knowledge of the briefings" to Obama and Trump—that is, intelligence officials. One hour later, BuzzFeed published the full 35-page document prepared by the British intelligence official, from which a two-page summary was produced for the Obama and Trump briefings.

According to the *Guardian*, it and other media outlets had access to the revelations several weeks ago but declined to publish "because there was no way to independently verify them."

The full document alleges an "extensive conspiracy between Trump's campaign team and the Kremlin," organized by Trump's former campaign chairman Paul Manafort. It asserts that Trump was aware of Russian involvement in the hacking of Democratic National Committee emails, and that in return for the leaks agreed to sideline Russian involvement in Ukraine as a major campaign issue.

The document also claims that Russian officials had obtained evidence of Trump's "perverted sexual acts" while he was staying at a hotel in Moscow in 2013, and that the officials used the information to blackmail the current president-elect.

According to the media reports, the document was assembled by the former British intelligence official hired by a Washington research firm working for opponents of Trump during the 2016 election campaign. The official gave the information to the FBI sometime during the campaign, but FBI Director James

Comey decided not to make it public. McCain reportedly found out about the document last month and again presented it to Comey and likely to other intelligence agencies.

The release of the document follows the publication last Friday of an unclassified version of the report by US intelligence agencies on allegations of Russian hacking of Democratic Party emails. The report contains no actual evidence of the charges, but it has been used by the media and those sections of the political establishment favoring aggression against Russia to demand harsher measures.

McCain has repeatedly called the hacking an “act of war,” while his close ally in the Senate, Republican Lindsey Graham, demanded over the weekend that Trump “make Russia pay a price for trying to interfere” in the election.



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