

Trump Jr. emails on meeting with Russian lawyer bring political warfare in Washington to fever pitch

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The political warfare in Washington reached a new level of ferocity Tuesday following the release of an email chain by Donald Trump Jr. concerning a Trump Tower meeting held in June 2016 with a Moscow lawyer who has links to Russian officials and wealthy oligarchs. The younger Trump released the emails along with an explanatory statement after he was informed that the *New York Times* was about to publish the contents of the emails.

The emails establish that Trump Jr., at the time a campaign adviser to his father, agreed to the meeting after being told by a business contact acting as an intermediary that the Russian “government lawyer” was offering to provide the Trump campaign with “official documents and information that would incriminate [Democratic presidential candidate] Hillary [Clinton] and her dealings with Russia and would be very useful to your father.”

The same June 3, 2016 email from publicist Rod Goldstone said, “This is obviously very high level and sensitive information but is part of Russia and its government’s support for Mr. Trump...”

Donald Trump Jr. quickly emailed a reply asking Goldstone to arrange the meeting and adding, “I love it.”

The meeting, on June 9, 2016, was attended by the Russian lawyer, Natalia Veselnitskaya, Trump Jr., Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner and the Trump campaign chairman, Paul Manafort.

In the statement accompanying the emails, the younger Trump wrote, “The information they suggested they had about Hillary Clinton I thought was political opposition research.”

Trump Jr. claims no such information was provided,

and he ended the brief meeting when Veselnitskaya tried to turn the discussion to the Magnitsky Act. Passed by the US Congress and signed into law by President Obama in 2012, the law imposes sanctions on a number of Russian business figures and officials for alleged human rights abuses. The Moscow lawyer represents prominent clients affected by the law.

In an interview with NBC News on Tuesday, Veselnitskaya denied any connection to the government of Russian President Vladimir Putin and said she never intended to discuss the Hillary Clinton campaign with the Trump officials. A Kremlin spokesman said Putin is not acquainted with Veselnitskaya.

The White House said President Trump first learned of the meeting only last week.

The revelation of the June 2016 meeting and the release of Trump Jr.’s emails have sharply intensified the campaign led by the Democratic Party and major media outlets accusing the White House of colluding with Moscow against the Clinton campaign.

Virginia Senator Tim Kaine, the Democratic vice presidential candidate in 2016, told MSNBC on Tuesday: “We are now beyond obstruction of justice, in terms of what is being investigated. This is moving into perjury, false statements and even into potentially treason.”

Representative Eric Swalwell, a Democratic member of the House Intelligence Committee, said on CNN, “I call it a betrayal of our country.”

Democratic Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer said the emails released by the younger Trump marked “the end of the idea pushed by the administration and the president that there is absolutely no evidence of intent to coordinate or collude.”

The anti-Russia campaign cuts across party lines, and some Republicans are joining the Democrats in denouncing President Trump for being “soft” on Russia. Richard Painter, an ethics lawyer who served in the administration of George W. Bush, said of Trump Jr., “This is treason. He must have known that the only way Russia would get such information was by spying. In the Bush administration we would have had him in custody for questioning by now.”

Republican Senator Susan Collins of Maine, a senior member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, joined the ranking Democrat, Mark Warner of Virginia, in demanding that Trump Jr. and the other participants in the meeting with Veselnitskaya testify before the committee and turn over all relevant documents. It was announced Monday that Donald Trump Jr. had obtained the services of a private lawyer.

Driving the anti-Russia hysteria and the multiple investigations into alleged Russian interference in the 2016 election is a furious struggle over basic questions of US imperialist foreign policy. Powerful forces in the national security and intelligence establishment, allied with the Democratic Party and such media outlets as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, CNN, MSNBC and NBC, are waging a no-holds-barred political war centered on forcing Trump to prioritize and intensify the conflict with Russia.

The CIA and other intelligence agencies are continually leaking information damaging to Trump, such as the revelations surrounding the June 2016 meeting with Veselnitskaya, to the *Times*, the *Post* and television news outlets.

This is a struggle between reactionary and war-mongering factions that are equally committed to deeper attacks on the social conditions and democratic rights of the working class. There is no “progressive” side in this fight.

The latest eruption of anti-Russian and anti-Trump agitation appears to have been triggered by Trump’s meeting with Putin last Friday on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Hamburg, Germany. Following the more than two-hour meeting, Trump and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson hailed the meeting as “constructive” and said it was time to “move on” from the dispute over alleged Russian interference in the US election.

The two sides announced a cease-fire in southwestern

Syria and spoke of increasing their collaboration in the country. They also spoke of working together on the question of cyber security.

Trump followed up the meeting with a Sunday morning tweet that declared: “We negotiated a ceasefire in parts of Syria which will save lives. Now it is time to move forward in working constructively with Russia!”

These developments provoked new attacks by Democrats as well as anti-Russia hawks such as senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham. On the Sunday TV interview programs, Graham called Trump’s meeting with Putin “disastrous” and denounced talk of moving forward “without punishing Russia.” McCain criticized Trump’s tweet on Russia and complained that Moscow has not “paid a single price” for meddling in the US election.

John Brennan, CIA director under Obama, was brought onto “Meet the Press” to attack Trump’s insufficiently aggressive posture toward Russia. He singled out Trump’s statement in Hamburg that he was “honored” to meet Putin, calling it “dishonorable.”



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