

Democrats press anti-Russia campaign, now targeting Trump son-in-law

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Congressional Democrats and their media allies shifted the immediate focus of their anti-Russian campaign to Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, demanding that Kushner's security clearance be revoked on the grounds that he concealed a meeting with a Russian attorney last year.

The June 9, 2016 meeting between Donald Trump Jr. and Natalia Veselnitskaya was first made public by the *New York Times* little more than a week ago. Trump's eldest son agreed to the meeting at Trump Tower after he was told that the Russian lawyer had compromising material on Hillary Clinton, Trump's Democratic opponent in the presidential race.

Since then, there have been near-daily headlines in the *Times* or the *Washington Post* or "breaking news" reports on cable news about alleged new revelations about the Trump Tower meeting, whose attendance has now grown to eight, including Kushner, campaign chairman Paul Manafort, a Russian-American lobbyist, and the interpreter, although the actual significance of the event remains murky.

Veselnitskaya had no information on Clinton, and actually sought the meeting to lobby against the Magnitsky Act, the first of a series of anti-Russian sanctions enacted under the Obama administration. It is named after a Russian lawyer who was arrested after claiming to have uncovered evidence of corruption in the Putin regime and died in prison in 2009. When her purpose became clear, Trump Jr. says he ended the meeting, which lasted less than half an hour.

What is most remarkable about this campaign is that the Democrats are not attacking Trump or his advisers for the reactionary policies they have pursued in office—the onslaught against Medicaid, the persecution of immigrants, the defense of police violence, or the strutting militarism overseas.

Instead, the Democratic Party and media campaign is entirely devoted to alleging that Trump is the instrument of Russian President Vladimir Putin, and that his election was made possible, not by the right-wing policies of the Democratic Party and the Obama administration, but by an Internet campaign directed from Moscow.

The particular focus on Trump's family members is not an accident. As the WSWWS has previously written, "The United States is ruled by a financial-corporate oligarchy. But the Trump administration is an oligarchic government with a *kleptocratic and nepotistic twist*." There is concern in powerful sections of the ruling class that the collection of reactionary oligarchs that is the Trump family is subordinating basic imperialist strategic interests—including the conflict with Russia—to their personal business ventures.

Kushner has become the new target, since he did not initially disclose the meeting with the Russian attorney in the SF-86 form that every White House aide must file to obtain a security clearance. Kushner first filed the form leaving a blank where he was to record meetings with foreign persons, and subsequently amended the form several times, adding more than 100 names.

It was Kushner's latest SF-86 filing, reporting the Trump Tower meeting with Veselnitskaya last year, which unnamed officials, either inside the White House or in the FBI or CIA (which conduct security clearance reviews), leaked to the *New York Times*, touching off the latest media firestorm.

Over the weekend, a series of prominent Democrats sought to shift media attention away from Donald Trump Jr.—who played the main role in the meeting with the Russian attorney, but does not work in the

Trump White House—and onto Kushner, who played a minor role at the meeting but is considered the closest White House aide to Trump, and has represented the administration in several overseas missions, particularly in the Middle East.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi called on Thursday for Kushner's security clearance to be revoked "immediately." Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), the former head of the Democratic National Committee, submitted two amendments to appropriations bills to revoke Kushner's clearance, both rejected by the Republican majority in the House.

The leading Democrats on the House and Senate intelligence committees, Representative Adam Schiff and Senator Mark Warner, said Sunday they would ask both Kushner and Trump Jr. to testify and supply documents for their investigations into unproven allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 US election.

Schiff said that Kushner's security clearance should be revoked just for attending the meeting, regardless of whether he concealed it. "It's very hard for me to imagine anyone else being allowed to continue their clearance if they participated in a meeting like the one that just became public," he told the *Hill* in an interview.

Both Warner and Schiff appeared on several television interview programs Sunday. Schiff declared that the emails sent by Donald Trump Jr. to confirm the meeting with Natalia Veselnitskaya were "about as clear evidence you could find of intent by the campaign to collude with the Russians, to get useful information from the Russians,"

Warner declared, "This clearly brings the investigation to a new level." Appearing on CNN's "State of the Union," he said that Trump Jr. and Kushner had most likely informed candidate Trump about their meeting with the Russian attorney. "It's a little unbelievable that neither the son nor the son-in-law ever shared that information with their dad, the candidate," he said, thus suggesting that Trump was lying when he claimed that he only learned of the meeting recently.

Democratic Representative Don Beyer of Virginia extended the attack from Kushner to his wife, Trump's daughter Ivanka, pointing out that Ivanka Trump also filled out a form SF-86 asking if "you or any member

of your immediate family in the past seven years had any contact with a foreign government, its establishment (such as an embassy, consulate, agency, military service, intelligence or security service, etc.) or its representatives, whether inside or outside the U.S.?"

Since her husband met with an attorney who was supposedly a "representative" of the Russian government, Beyer argued, Ivanka Trump should have disclosed this for her own security review, and likely did not. He added, "If the President wants his family to run the government, they must be held to the same high standard as any other government official."

Media pundits have taken up the same theme. Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times* issued a column headlined, "All Roads Now Lead to Kushner," suggesting that Kushner's presence at the Trump Tower made him vulnerable to "Kremlin ... blackmail" and noting that Kushner supervised the Trump campaign's digital efforts, making him the logical person to coordinate with Russian hacking and dissemination of online "fake news" directed against Clinton (assuming such coordination existed, although no evidence has been presented.)

In a sign that the anti-Russian campaign is taking its toll at the White House, both Trump and his son-in-law shook up their legal teams responding to the multiple investigations. Kushner's lead attorney, longtime Democrat Jamie Gorelick, stepped down and was replaced by another Democrat, Abbe Lowell, who was part of the team defending Bill Clinton against impeachment and is more experienced in criminal law.

Trump added a new White House lawyer, Ty Cobb, who will work with the outside lawyers, Mark Kasowitz and Jay Sekulow, who have been handling responses to the inquiries, both in Congress and on the part of Justice Department special counsel Robert Mueller.



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