

Congressional Republicans open investigation into Clinton role in Russian acquisition of US uranium mines

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House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes, Republican from California, announced last week that his committee would begin an investigation into the sale of Canadian uranium mining company Uranium One, which owned mines in the United States, to the Russian state-owned nuclear energy firm Rosatom. The sale was approved in 2010 by a nine-member government panel which included a representative of the State Department, then headed by Hillary Clinton.

The congressional investigation into Uranium One is part of an effort to counter the anti-Russia campaign by the Democrats by arguing that it is the Clintons and the Democrats, not President Trump, who are stooges of Putin. Trump repeatedly raised the issue of the Uranium One deal during the presidential campaign, as well as in recent tweets, claiming that Clinton gave away America's uranium stockpiles to Russia.

Republican Senator Chuck Grassley, who heads the Senate Judiciary Committee, has raised demands for the Justice Department to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate the approval of the 2010 deal and possible Russian collusion, mirroring the appointment of special prosecutor to investigate the ties of Trump's associates to Russians. White House chief of staff General John Kelly backed this call in an interview Monday night on Fox News.

This line of argument reached its most hysterical pitch in the comments of Sebastian Gorka, a former Trump campaign official and White House aide, who appeared on Fox Friday night and demanded that Hillary Clinton face the death penalty. "If this had happened in the 1950s, there would be people up on treason charges right now," he declared. "The Rosenbergs, okay? This is equivalent to what the Rosenbergs did, and those people got the chair. Think about it. Giving away nuclear capability to our

enemies, that's what we're talking about."

The facts of the Uranium One deal fail to substantiate these increasingly unhinged denunciations. There is ample evidence that Bill and Hillary Clinton did corrupt favors for big financial contributors to the Clinton Foundation, but the charges of disloyalty and treason are nothing more than an attempt by the defenders of the White House to repay the congressional Democrats in the same coin for their McCarthyite-style Russia baiting of Trump.

The history of the affair demonstrates once again the complete cynicism of the anti-Russia campaign, since Democrats no less than Republicans have been happy to take the money of Russian oligarchs, while both parties continue to serve their real masters, the Wall Street billionaires and the military-intelligence apparatus of American imperialism.

The Uranium One story first came to light in the 2015 book *Clinton Cash* written by Peter Schweizer, an editor at large for the fascistic Breitbart News, and funded by the Government Accountability Institute, a Florida-based "research organization" founded by Breitbart boss Stephen Bannon and backed by billionaire Robert Mercer.

Bannon, who would go on to be the CEO of Trump's campaign and joined him at the White House as his senior counselor, produced the book as an effort to "weaponize" possibly damning stories about Clinton and then feed them to mainstream media, in particular the *New York Times*, which corroborated the details outlined in the book, and gave Schweizer extensive publicity and credibility.

The latest round of reports adds nothing to the accounts appearing in early 2015, which are damning enough in terms of documenting the money-grubbing activities of the Clintons, who were willing to speak to any audience for the right fee. In the case of the Russian uranium deal,

that was \$500,000 for a single appearance in Moscow by Bill Clinton, the largest fee the former president ever received for an event.

The convoluted story goes back to 2005, when Canadian mining speculator Frank Giustra won a deal for his company, UrAsia, to take control of prized uranium mines in Kazakhstan several days after a meeting between Bill Clinton and the country's dictatorial president Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Giustra expressed his appreciation subsequently in 2006, donating \$31.3 million to the Clinton Foundation. He has since become one of the largest donors to the Clinton Foundation, pledging a multi-year donation of \$100 million, cofounding the Clinton Giustra Enterprise Partnership. He now sits on the board of directors of the Clinton Foundation. He has thrown lavish birthday parties for Bill Clinton and provided the former president with the use of his private jetliner to fly to events during his wife's 2016 presidential run.

UrAsia merged with a South African firm in 2007 becoming Uranium One and expanding its holdings into the United States. While Giustra stepped aside from the company after the merger, the company's investors as well as Chairman Ian Telfer, donated millions of dollars to the Clinton Foundation between 2008 and 2011.

Soon after the creation of Uranium One, negotiations began for the Russian state-owned corporation Rosatom to take a 17 percent ownership stake in the company and a deal was cut in 2009. This was followed by a June 2010 bid by Rosatom to take a majority ownership stake in the company, a deal which because of its potential national security implications had to be approved by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), which included a representative of the State Department, then headed by Hillary Clinton.

While the deal was under consideration, Bill Clinton flew to Moscow where he was paid \$500,000 by Renaissance Capital, a Russian investment bank which had assigned a favorable rating to Uranium One stock. During his visit Clinton also had a meeting with Putin, who was then prime minister. Four months after Clinton's speech CFIUS approved Rosatom's taking a majority stake in Uranium One.

While the Giustra-Clinton connection is well-documented and highly lucrative for the former president and his wife, there is no evidence connecting this relationship to the approval of the Uranium One takeover, or even that Hillary Clinton was aware of that particular deal. Moreover, the McCarthyite claims of "treason"

conceal the reality that no uranium was actually transferred from the United States to Russia. The deal was purely financial, and all of Uranium One's production facilities, assets and uranium holdings in the United States remain in the country.

A second avenue of attack has been launched around claims that the Obama administration dragged out an investigation of another US subsidiary of Rosatom, Tenex, in which the company's executive Vadim Mikerin was convicted of money laundering and bribery involving an American uranium trucking company. The investigation began in 2009 but did not result in charges until 2015. During this period, Rosatom acquired its majority share of Uranium One and then, in 2013, took 100 percent control of the company.

Republicans have argued that the investigation was deliberately delayed to ensure approval of the Uranium One deal. They have also objected to a gag order imposed on an undercover FBI informant involved in the case. Last week, at Trump's urging, the Department of Justice lifted the gag order, permitting the unidentified informant to testify before the House Intelligence Committee.

The concocted and politically motivated character of the Uranium One affair is demonstrated in the identity of the lawyer representing the FBI informant: Victoria Toensing, a longtime legal operative in a series of right-wing provocations, going back to the multiple investigations that led to the impeachment of Bill Clinton in 1998. Toensing was identified with the public defense of Linda Tripp, who helped engineer the exposure of Clinton's sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky, as well as Judith Miller, the *New York Times* reporter who served as the conduit for fabricated CIA claims of "weapons of mass destruction" in Saddam Hussein's Iraq.



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