

Trump continues to defy Democrats' impeachment inquiry

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5 October 2019

On Friday, President Donald Trump continued to defend his efforts to pressure Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate his potential 2020 presidential opponent Joe Biden and stepped up his defiance of the impeachment inquiry launched by the Democrats with the support of the intelligence agencies.

Doubling down on his statements Thursday publicly demanding that Ukraine investigate the business dealings of the former vice president's son Hunter Biden and adding a new call for China to follow suit, Trump held a lengthy exchange Friday morning with White House reporters on the South Lawn. He repeatedly insisted that his only concern in pressing for investigations of the Bidens was a commitment to fight corruption, with no ulterior political motivations, and that it was perfectly legitimate to ask for help from foreign governments in doing so.

In an early morning tweet preceding the press appearance, Trump wrote: "As President I have an obligation to end CORRUPTION, even if that means requesting the help of a foreign country or countries... This has NOTHING to do with politics or a political campaign against the Bidens. This does have to do with their corruption!"

This attempt to posture as an anticorruption crusader is absurd on its face coming from a billionaire real estate speculator and serial tax evader. However, Trump is seeking to capitalize on the narrow and right-wing basis on which the Democrats, in alliance with the CIA and other intelligence agencies, are basing their impeachment campaign. They are excluding Trump's crimes against the democratic rights and living standards of working people, including his fascistic attacks on immigrants, his tax cuts for big business, his cuts in social programs and his support for far-right and racist forces.

Instead, they are charging that his withholding of military aid to Ukraine—and now his appeal for America's "enemy" China to intervene—in order to boost his electoral chances undermine US national security and benefit Russia. In what is essentially an attempted palace coup organized by the intelligence apparatus, they are determined to avoid any appeal to the social grievances of the broad mass of the American people, fearful that the political warfare in Washington might open the way for a social upheaval that could threaten the capitalist system itself.

This enables Trump to make a demagogic appeal to his right-wing political base and other social layers that have never accepted the phony anti-Russia narrative and are hostile to the warmongering of both warring factions within the ruling class.

Trump coupled his remarks with the announcement that the White House would be sending a letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi demanding that she hold a vote by the full House of Representatives on the launching of the impeachment inquiry, and making clear that he would not cooperate with subpoenas or other demands for documents, testimony or information unless and until that was done.

In line with the undemocratic character of their impeachment campaign, the Democrats have resisted holding a floor vote for fear of negative political fallout for 31 freshmen Democratic House members who were elected last year in districts that voted for Trump in 2016.

There may also be concerns that the impeachment crisis could bring forward damning evidence of Biden family corruption—typical of the influence peddling and bribe taking that pervades all of bourgeois politics and both big-business parties. There is no doubt that Biden used his influence as vice president under Obama to grease the wheels for his son to make a small fortune from business deals in both Ukraine and China.

On Thursday, the State Department announced that it had approved the sale of 150 additional Javelin missiles to Ukraine for up to \$39.2 million. Friday morning, Ukraine's top prosecutor announced that his office was "conducting an audit" of previously closed cases, including that of the energy company Burisma, where Hunter Biden served five years on the board and netted some \$850,000.

The Democrats for their part are escalating their demands for testimony and documents. Late Friday, the three House committees conducting the investigation—Intelligence, Foreign Affairs and Oversight—issued a subpoena to the White House for documents relating to Trump's interactions with the Ukraine government. In a letter to acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, the committee chairs gave Trump until October 18 to comply.

The letter warned that failure by the White House to comply would likely result in the addition to potential articles of impeachment of the charge of obstruction of Congress.

Also on Friday, Intelligence Community Inspector General Michael Atkinson, who has played a key role in precipitating the impeachment drive, testified for hours before Democratic investigators meeting behind closed doors. Atkinson verified the whistleblower complaint to his office from a CIA agent assigned to the Trump White House that was used to launch the impeachment drive, calling it substantive and “urgent.” When the White House and Justice Department sought to bury the document and keep it from Congress, Atkinson formally notified the House Intelligence Committee of its existence.

Atkinson is the second government official to be deposed thus far as part of the impeachment inquiry. On Thursday, the former special envoy to Ukraine, Kurt Volker, who suddenly resigned last Friday, testified in closed session for 10 hours.

Late Thursday, House Democrats released a spate of text messages submitted by Volker documenting the discussions among State Department officials working with Trump’s personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani to pursue Trump’s demand that the new Ukraine government publicly launch an investigation of the Bidens. The White House demanded as well that Kiev investigate claims that Ukraine worked with the Obama administration and the Clinton campaign in 2016 to frame up Russia for the hacked Democratic emails that were published by WikiLeaks, as part of the effort to portray Trump as a stooge of Vladimir Putin.

Some of the text messages made clear that Trump had withheld \$391 million in military aid and a White House invitation from the new Ukraine president in order to pressure him to announce the desired investigations.

The claims of Ukrainian involvement in the origins of the anti-Russia/anti-Trump campaign have a certain plausibility, since Clinton—and the bulk of the intelligence and foreign policy establishment—were intent on intensifying Obama’s aggressive stance against Moscow and hostile to Trump’s calls for improved relations, something that would be anathema to the virulently nationalist, far-right regime installed in Kiev in a US-backed, fascist-led putsch in 2014.

Even the *New York Times* felt obliged to acknowledge, while seeking to debunk such “conspiracy theories,” the existence of a Democratic Party/Clinton campaign/Kiev nexus during the 2016 campaign. It noted in an article on Thursday: “A Ukrainian-American lawyer who consulted for the DNC [Democratic National Committee] looked into the finances of Paul Manafort and spoke with Ukrainian embassy officials... It is true that a Ukrainian legislator helped publicize documents on Manafort’s multi-million-dollar payments from a Ukrainian political party, leading to his resignation as Trump’s campaign chairman.”

So much for the supposed horror and outrage of the Democrats over the solicitation of foreign interference in US elections!

Another revelation has shed light on the intimate collaboration between the Democrats and the CIA in

orchestrating the current impeachment inquiry. It has now been widely reported that the CIA “whistleblower” contacted the House Intelligence Committee before he or she drafted the complaint that became the centerpiece of the drive to remove Trump. This strongly suggests that there was direct, secret coordination between House Speaker Pelosi, who spent decades on the Intelligence Committee before becoming the top House Democrat, Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff and the CIA in staging the impeachment campaign.

On Friday, the *Washington Post*’s “fact checker” Glenn Kessler gave Schiff four “Pinocchios” for lying about contacts between his committee and the whistleblower. He cited Schiff’s interview September 17 on the MSNBC “Morning Joe” program, when he said, in reply to a question, “We have not spoken directly with the whistleblower. We would like to.”

In fact, the whistleblower asked a House Intelligence Committee staff member for guidance before filing the complaint with the Intelligence Community inspector general.

The reactionary basis upon which the Democrats are conducting their impeachment inquiry was summed up by two events on Thursday. Trump addressed a retirement community in Orlando, Florida to announce an executive order escalating the privatization of Medicare and attacking the “socialist” Democrats for supposedly seeking to destroy the program by proposing “Medicare for all.”

At virtually the same time and in the same state, in a suburb outside of Miami, Pelosi and four other Democratic representatives appeared with Carlos Vecchio, the US representative of the far-right, rump Guaidó “government” of Venezuela, which Washington has been seeking to install in a coup against the elected government of Nicolas Maduro. Echoing Trump’s antisocialist demagoguery, they denounced the bourgeois regime of Maduro as “socialist” and fully backed the coup operation, which has to date badly floundered.

They had nothing to say about Trump’s plans to destroy Medicare, and instead sought to outflank him from the right on foreign policy, declaring their support for a CIA coup and implying that once in office, they will be more ruthless and aggressive than the current administration in carrying it through.



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