

Trump tweets threats as impeachment defense begins

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President Trump made a thinly veiled incitement of violence against the leader of the House Democrats prosecuting the impeachment case against him in the Senate. “Shifty Adam Schiff is a CORRUPT POLITICIAN, and probably a very sick man,” Trump tweeted Sunday morning. “He has not paid the price, yet, for what he has done to our Country!”

The Sunday morning message comes in the wake of a previous Trump retweet of a photo-shopped picture showing House Speaker Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Schumer in Muslim garb in front of an Iranian flag, after Democrats voiced mild criticism of Trump’s drone-missile assassination of Iranian General Qassem Suleimani.

The Trump tweet, sent out to more than 60 million followers, is certain to swell the number of death threats sent to Schiff and other congressional Democratic leaders as the political tensions over the impeachment trial escalate.

Congressional Republicans denied that Trump’s statement was an incitement to violence, when the issue was raised with them on Sunday morning television interview programs. Senator James Lankford, speaking on the CNN program “State of the Union,” said, “I don’t think it’s a death threat. I don’t think he’s encouraging a death threat.”

The denial was remarkably limp. And CNN interviewer Jake Tapper responded, “People who are supporters of the president have heard his rhetoric and then actually tried to bomb and kill politicians and the media.”

Schiff himself appeared on the NBC program “Meet the Press” Sunday and described Trump as “a wrathful and vindictive president,” citing the tweet a few hours earlier. Asked by interviewer Chuck Todd whether this was a threat, Schiff replied, “I think it’s intended to

be.”

Significantly, Schiff raised the threat only at the end of his interview, spending most of his time on the program defending US intelligence agencies against criticisms made by Trump’s defense counsel during the two-hour Senate session on Saturday morning, where the defense began its rebuttal of the House impeachment case.

Responding to a question about the decision of the Trump defense team to declare that Trump had “every right to question” the conclusion of the “intelligence community” that Ukraine did not interfere in the 2016 presidential election in the United States, Schiff said, “I was surprised. I think it was a huge mistake. Basically, what he did ... he continues to believe Russian propaganda over his own intelligence agencies, over his own FBI director and that makes him dangerous to our country. “

He continued, “It’s astonishing. And, you know, for on the first day of the president’s defense to say, ‘The president should disbelieve his own intelligence agencies. He has every right to believe Vladimir Putin,’ I wouldn’t want to be making that argument.”

This continued the vitriolic anti-Russian line of the final day of the Democratic prosecution on Friday, when Schiff and the other House managers repeatedly suggested that Trump was acting on behalf of Putin in his actions in relation to Ukraine.

At one point, Schiff played a video of the news conference in Helsinki, Finland, where Trump appeared side-by-side with Putin and endorsed Putin’s denial of charges of Russian interference in the 2016 US elections (for which not a shred of evidence has been provided, despite claims to the contrary by US intelligence agencies and the corporate media).

“That’s one hell of a Russian intelligence coup,”

Schiff said. “I would submit to you that in the entire length of the Cold War, the Soviet Union had no such success. No such success.”

Schiff later showed a clip of the late Republican Senator John McCain denouncing Russia and hailing the bipartisan US government policy of supporting the ultra-right government in Ukraine established through a CIA-backed destabilization operation in 2014. He quoted McCain declaring, “We are all Ukrainians,” and reiterated suggestions that the US was fomenting war in eastern Ukraine as a substitute for fighting Russian troops in the streets of America.

While Trump appeals to his ultra-right Christian fundamentalist and white supremacist supporters—including an unprecedented appearance at Friday’s “March for Life” rally in Washington, the first ever presidential address given in person to the anti-abortion event—the Democrats are making a thoroughly reactionary appeal to the military-intelligence apparatus, seeking to uphold its authority against the occupant of the White House.

The infighting within the ruling elite that has produced the impeachment of Trump will continue regardless of the likely foreordained outcome of the Senate trial. This was signaled by the publication Sunday night on the *New York Times* website of an article based on the unpublished manuscript of a forthcoming book by Trump’s former national security adviser, John Bolton.

The article, most likely the product of a leak by Bolton himself, outlines what he would say if called as a witness in the Senate trial—an eventuality that may still materialize, if four Republican senators break ranks and agree to summon him as a witness in a vote later this week.

By the *Times* account, Bolton would substantially bolster the House impeachment case, describing personal conversations with Trump in which the president said he wanted to maintain a freeze on \$391 million in security assistance to Ukraine until the Ukrainian government agreed to help Trump’s reelection campaign by announcing investigations into former Vice President Joe Biden, his son Hunter, and alleged Ukrainian intervention in the 2016 election.

The House case against Trump on the withholding of Ukraine aid has been largely circumstantial, because those top aides in direct contact with Trump during the

summer of 2019 have refused to testify, including Bolton and acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney.

Bolton, a ferocious militarist and advocate of the 2003 Iraq war, was fired by Trump in early September under murky circumstances, which appear to include his opposition to the temporary freeze on aid to Ukraine, which apparently disrupted a planned military offensive in eastern Ukraine against Russian-backed separatist forces.

White House officials have said that they would invoke executive privilege in the event the Senate votes to call Bolton as a witness in the impeachment trial, creating the possibility of a lengthy court battle that could delay the resolution of the trial for months.

The *Times* article appears to have been coordinated with the congressional Democratic leadership. Speaker Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Schumer issued a joint statement within minutes of its publication, demanding Bolton appear as a witness. “There can be no doubt now that Mr. Bolton directly contradicts the heart of the president’s defense,” they said.

The alignment of the Democratic leadership with Bolton, a longtime advocate of a US war against Iran, only demonstrates the reactionary nature of both sides in the conflict within the US ruling elite. While Trump incites fascist violence against the Democrats, they seek to represent the interests of the military-intelligence apparatus.



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