

# Biden threatens unspecified retaliation against Russia

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US President Joe Biden told ABC News Wednesday that he had warned Russian President Vladimir Putin about alleged Russian interference in US elections and that “he will pay a price,” although Biden did not elaborate.

The statement, in the first lengthy interview Biden has given since taking office, follows a recent report in the *New York Times* that the Pentagon was preparing a cyberwarfare attack on Russia in the coming months.

Biden did not discuss the consequences of such an action with his interviewer, George Stephanopoulos, but escalating conflict between Moscow and Washington has the most ominous implications. It raises the prospects of a tit-for-tat exchange between the world’s two largest nuclear powers.

Stephanopoulos sought to portray Putin in the harshest terms, asking Biden, “So you know Vladimir Putin. You think he’s a killer?” and eliciting an affirmative response, “Mmm hmm, I do.”

One can only imagine if a major media outlet in Europe or Russia had broadcast a similar comment from Putin applying the “killer” label to a US president—one which would be perfectly justified, given the number of people slaughtered by drone missile strikes, American bombing, and other military and covert operations ordered by the White House over the years. The American media would be apoplectic.

Besides that double standard, it was noteworthy that Stephanopoulos did not ask Biden whether Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman or Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are “killers,” or the leaders of a dozen other US allies and client states around the world.

That label is reserved for the president of Russia, together with the false charge of “genocide” against China, because these terms are useful for inflaming

public opinion in America against the two principal targets of US imperialism.

Biden’s comments Wednesday followed the report issued the previous day by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence that sought to revive the discredited anti-Russia campaign of the American “intelligence community,” charging that Putin authorized efforts to subvert the Biden campaign and boost the prospects of then-President Trump.

The report doubled down on the claims that Putin intervened in the 2016 US presidential campaign, alleging further Russian “influence operations” in 2020, although on such a small scale that they actually influenced very few people and had negligible impact on the outcome of the vote, which Biden won in a near-landslide.

The DNI admitted that neither Russia nor any other foreign country actually attempted to affect either the casting or the tabulation of votes, confirming the assessment made by the top cybersecurity official of the Department of Homeland Security, Christopher Krebs, that the 2020 elections were “the most secure in American history”—for which he was fired within days by President Trump.

The DNI report released Tuesday is the unclassified version of a classified document sent to Trump, other top Trump administration officials, and senior congressional leaders of both parties on January 7, the day after Trump supporters attacked Congress and attempted to shut down the certification of Biden’s victory over Trump in the Electoral College.

“We have no indications that any foreign actor attempted to interfere in the 2020 U.S. elections by altering any technical aspect of the voting process,” the report said, adding, “we did not see persistent Russian cyber efforts to gain access to election infrastructure.”

The report thus attempted to square the circle, upholding the validity and security of the US balloting against attempts by Trump and his fascist supporters to claim voter fraud, while still peddling allegations of a vast effort by Moscow to undermine and discredit the US election, and influence its outcome in favor of Trump—albeit with no success.

The substance of the claims against Russia revolves around efforts to spread allegations against Biden's son Hunter, who held a highly paid sinecure with a Ukrainian energy company, Burisma, during the period that then-Vice President Biden was in charge of Ukraine policy for the Obama administration.

It goes without saying that Hunter Biden was put on the Burisma board of directors and paid close to \$60,000 a month for several years in an effort to buy goodwill with the US government. This type of influence peddling is commonplace in American politics.

No evidence has yet emerged that Burisma was able to buy any specific decision from the vice president, or that he was even in a position to deliver such a favor. Efforts by Trump's deputy for the Ukrainian-based smear campaigns, Rudy Giuliani, failed to provide any usable material, and the issue was largely downplayed by the American media, which was heavily pro-Biden.

The activities of Giuliani and his interlocutors, such as Ukrainian member of parliament and alleged Moscow agent Andriy Derkach hardly caused a ripple, despite efforts by the *New York Times* and other US media to create the impression of a vast Russian intervention in the US election.

The report also claimed that Russian-backed “troll farms” in Mexico, Nigeria and Ghana promoted claims of vote fraud related to mail-in voting, but the scale of these efforts is trivial compared to those of Trump himself, virtually the entire Republican Party, and their media allies like Fox and Newsmax.

This molehill was immediately transformed into a mountain by Democratic congressional leaders. Representative Adam Schiff, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, declared,

“Russia interfered to support former President Trump, hurt President Biden, and undermine confidence in our electoral process.”

He added, “Through proxies, Russia ran a successful intelligence operation that penetrated the former

president's inner circle,” a reference to Giuliani.

More significant was the statement by Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines, who warned, “These efforts by U.S. adversaries seek to exacerbate divisions and undermine confidence in our democratic institutions.”

The reference to the supposed effort to “exacerbate divisions” is an indication of a major purpose of the anti-Russia campaign: to outlaw any effort to give voice to the very real social divisions in America, above all the yawning gulf between the financial aristocracy and the working class, as the product of foreign subversion, or, as the defenders of Jim Crow used to call civil rights activists, “outside agitators.”



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