

OPINION

editor@dailyastorian.com



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Trump and Putin versus America

From the beginning of his administration, President Donald Trump has responded to every new bit of evidence from the CIA, FBI and NSA that Russia intervened in our last election on his behalf by either attacking Barack Obama or the Democrats for being too lax — never President Vladimir Putin of Russia for his unprecedented cyberhit on our democratic process.

Such behavior by an American president is so perverse, so contrary to American interests and values, that it leads to only one conclusion: Donald Trump is either an asset of Russian intelligence or really enjoys playing one on TV.



THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

Everything that happened in Helsinki on Monday only reinforces that conclusion. My fellow Americans, we are in trouble and we have some big decisions to make.

This was a historic moment in the entire history of the United States.

There is overwhelming evidence that our president, for the first time in our history, is deliberately or through gross negligence or because of his own twisted personality engaged in treasonous behavior — behavior that violates his oath of office to “preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.”

Trump vacated that oath on Monday, and Republicans can no longer run and hide from that fact. Every single Republican lawmaker will be — and should be — asked on the election trail: Are you with Trump and Putin or are you with the CIA, FBI and NSA?

It started with the shocking tweet that Trump issued before he even sat down with Putin: “Our relationship with Russia has NEVER been worse thanks to many years of U.S. foolishness and stupidity and now, the Rigged Witch Hunt!” The official Twitter account of the Russian foreign ministry — recognizing a useful idiot when it saw one — immediately “liked” Trump’s tweet and later added: “We agree.”

I’ll bet they do.

It only got worse when, in his joint news conference with Putin, Trump was asked explicitly if he believed the conclusion of his intelligence agencies that Russia hacked our elections. The president of the United States basically threw his entire intelligence establishment under a bus, while throwing out a cloud of dust about Hillary Clinton’s server to disguise what he was doing.

Trump actually said on the question of who hacked our election, “I don’t see any reason why it would be” Russia. And in a bit of shocking moral equivalence, Trump added of the United States and Russia: “We are all to blame ... both made some mistakes.” Trump said that it was actually the American probe into the Russian hacking that has “kept us apart.”

To watch an American president dis his



AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko
Russian President Vladimir Putin gives a soccer ball to President Donald Trump during a press conference after their meeting Monday in Helsinki, Finland.

Trump walks back statement on intelligence agencies

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Blistered by bipartisan condemnation of his embrace of a longtime U.S. enemy, President Donald Trump sought Tuesday to “clarify” his public undermining of American intelligence agencies, saying he had misspoken when he said he saw no reason to believe Russia had interfered in the 2016 U.S. election.

“The sentence should have been, ‘I don’t see any reason why I wouldn’t, or why it wouldn’t be Russia’ instead of ‘why it would,’” Trump said, in a rare admission of error by the bombastic U.S. leader. His comment came — amid rising rebuke by his own party — about 27 hours after his original, widely reported statement, which he made at a Monday summit in Helsinki standing alongside Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“I accept our intelligence community’s conclusion that Russia’s meddling in the 2016 election took place,” Trump said Tuesday. But he added, as he usually does, “It could be other people also. A lot of people out there. There was no collusion at all.”

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said Trump was trying to “squirm away” from his comments alongside Putin. “It’s 24 hours too late and in the wrong place,” he said.

own intelligence agencies, blame both sides for the Russian hacking of our election — and deliberately try to confuse the fact that there is still no solid proof of collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia with the fact that Russia had its own interest in trying to defeat the anti-Putin Hillary Clinton — actually made me sick to my stomach. I completely endorse former CIA Director John O. Brennan’s tweet after the news conference:

“Donald Trump’s news conference performance in Helsinki rises to & exceeds the threshold of ‘high crimes & misdemeanors.’ It was nothing short of treasonous. Not only were Trump’s comments imbecilic, he is wholly in the pocket of Putin. Republican Patriots: Where are you????”

Trump is simply insanely obsessed with what happened in the last election. But now he is president, and the fact that he may not

have colluded with the Russians doesn’t mean he does not, as president, have a responsibility to ensure that the Russians be punished for interfering in our last election on their own and be effectively deterred from doing so in the future. That is in his job description.

Listening to Trump, it was as if Franklin Roosevelt had announced after Pearl Harbor: “Hey, both sides are to blame. Our battleships in Hawaii were a little provocative to Japan — and, by the way, I had nothing to do with the causes for their attack. So cool it.”

There is only one message Trump should have sent Putin in this meeting: “You have attacked our democracy, as well as two core pillars of the global economic and security order that have kept the peace and promoted prosperity since World War II — the European Union and NATO. We are not interested in any of your poker-faced denials.

Just know that if you keep doing it, we will consider it an act of war and we will not only sanction you like never before, but you’ll taste every cyberweapon we have in our arsenal — and some of your most intimate personal secrets will appear on the front pages of every newspaper in the world. Is there any part of that sentence you do not understand?”

“So we will be watching you between now and our midterm elections,” Trump should have added. “I’m sure you know the date. If you behave well, we’ll talk again in December 2018 about anything you want — Ukraine, Syria, Crimea or arms control. Until then our CIA and NSA are on to you and your cyberspooks. And Vlad, as you may have noticed from my Justice Department’s recent indictment of 12 of your agents, you are not as good as you think.”

That is what a real American president, sworn to protect and defend the Constitution, would have said to Putin. He would have understood that this meeting had only one agenda item — and it was not developing an “extraordinary” relationship.

It was d-e-t-e-r-r-e-n-c-e — deterrence of a Russia that has been increasingly reckless and destabilizing.

In the past few years, what has Putin done to deserve an American president sucking up to him for an “extraordinary” relationship? Putin has seized Crimea, covertly invaded Ukraine, provided the missiles that shot down a civilian Malaysian airliner over Ukraine, bombed tens of thousands of refugees out of Syria into Europe, destabilizing Europe, been involved in the death of a British woman who accidentally handled a Russian nerve agent deployed to kill ex-Russian agents in England and deployed misinformation to help tip the vote in Britain toward exiting and fracturing the European Union.

Most of all, Putin unleashed a cyberattack on America’s electoral process, aimed at both electing Trump — with or without Trump’s collusion — and sowing division among U.S. citizens.

Our intelligence agencies have no doubt about this: Last week, America’s director of national intelligence, Dan Coats, described Putin’s cybercampaign as one designed “to exploit America’s openness in order to undermine our long-term competitive advantage.” Coats added that America’s digital infrastructure “is literally under attack,” adding that there was “no question” that Russia was the “most aggressive foreign actor.”

I am not given to conspiracy theories, but I cannot help wondering if the first thing Trump said to Putin in their private one-on-one meeting in Helsinki, before their aides were allowed to enter, was actually: “Vladimir, we’re still good, right? You and me, we’re still good?”

And that Putin answered: “Donald, you have nothing to worry about. Just keep being yourself. We’re still good.”

Thomas L. Friedman is a syndicated columnist for the New York Times News Service.

Water under the bridge

Compiled by Bob Duke

From the pages of Astoria’s daily newspapers



10 years ago this week — 2008

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has removed the Bradwood Landing liquefied natural gas project from its Thursday meeting agenda.

North Coast residents were gearing up this week for a possible vote by the five-member commission on a federal license for the proposed Bradwood LNG project 20 miles east of Astoria on the Columbia River.

But a notice issued by email today said the project had been “struck” from the schedule of discussion items.

FERC spokeswoman Tamara Young-Allen said the commission strikes items from its agenda all the time.

In the Bradwood case, the board needed more time to review a number of new comments on the project that have been submitted since Thursday’s meeting was scheduled.

A shortage of Alaskan pollock and other white-fleshed fish from around the globe has created a supply crisis among manufacturers of surimi, the processed fish protein used to make imitation crab and other shellfish-flavored products.

Jae Park, a professor at Oregon State University’s seafood laboratory in Astoria, is working with fellow researchers to find a solution.

The Port of Astoria Commission settled six months of disagreements with Bornstein Seafoods over the proposed Pier 1 parking lot at its meeting Tuesday.



1968 — This bulldozer, operated by Art McCoy, pushed the house at 10th and Grand over the bank this morning and demolished it. The ground there will be cut down and used to extend an apartment project.

In a 4-0 vote, with Commissioner Bill Hunsinger absent, the board approved a three-year lease of .61 acres of Pier 1 to Bornstein’s beginning Aug. 1.

Hunsinger and Commissioner Larry Phund had voiced the loudest opposition to leasing parking space on Pier 1 because they said it’s the only place the Port could potentially attract water-dependent cargo business.

Andrew and Jay Bornstein argued they needed at least a three-year lease of the Pier 1 space to secure investors for the Oregon Fish Factory, an attraction that will invite visitors to tour the Bornstein fish processing plant.

50 years ago — 1968

More than 1,000 members of the Oregon National Guard arrived at Camp Rilea Saturday and Sunday to begin two weeks of intensive field training.

Largest unit at the camp is the 3rd Automatic Weapons Battalion, 249th Artillery, Salem, commanded by Lt. Col. Claude W. Biehn. The unit is made up of batteries from Salem, Coos Bay, New-

port, Dallas, Albany and Lake Oswego. There are 590 officers and men in the battalion.

Businessmen along Marine Drive and 2nd to 7th laid strong protests Monday night before the City Council against elimination of parking in that area, as recommended by the Oregon Highway Department and city traffic safety committee.

The council heard the protests, agreed with many of the points made, and took no action on the no-parking proposal.

But Councilman Arnold Swanson warned that this was merely a postponement of what will undoubtedly be proposed again, and suggested that businessmen in the area get busy trying to line up off-street parking areas for themselves.

“A wave came up and there was a shark. Then I paddled in quick, he was toward me, that’s all I know,” said Gregg Gosser, vacationing in Seaside for the summer.

Gosser, surfing in the cove about 1:30 p.m. Thursday, was out beyond the last breaker waiting for a wave to ride in when he spotted the shark about 20 yards away, he estimated. He said the shark was facing him and he didn’t look back to find out where he went from there.

75 years ago — 1943

Maj. Eric K. Shilling, aviation liaison officer for Oregon and president of a special aviation cadet recruiting board, arrived here today for the first of three days of examining 17- to 26 year-olds for service in the air corps as pilots, navigators and bombardiers.

Shilling said the Army is working desperately to enlist candidates for bombardier, pilot and navigator assignments. He said it is no secret that planes are coming off production lines almost every 20 minutes, and they are rolling to fields faster than the Army is producing the men to fly them.

The wordy sham battle of Washington, D.C., was adjourned for the duration today on motion of President Roosevelt, who ordered his appointive officials to cease calling each other liars, obstructors and such-like, or to resign.